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| **Date** | Saturday, September 19 2015 |
| **Topic** | The Ninth Word: Meaning of Prayers |
| **Part** | 3 |

The different timings in prayers mark important revolution manifesting various acts of creation. As human beings, we observe these acts of creation. As a result, we develop certain emotions and feelings towards what we experience which we express with our tongue and body. Prayer is responding back and expressing the emotions to the manifestations we experienced.

* **Seeds of prayers**: Glorification, exaltation and praise.

The seeds of prayers are expressed in prayers i.e. thanking the Creator for the innumerable bounties He endows us with. The meaning of prayers grows out of these seeds. As I express my feelings, I should be aware that the Lord also responds back to me. *How do I hear that voice?* I have a mutual relationship with the act of creation in the universe. Our human qualities yearn for observing the universe. Example: We observe a beautiful garden; we like it and get all excited.

* *How do you get excited?*
* With the qualities (ability to see, smell, feel…) that are given to me.
* *Who gave you these qualities?*
* The One who made me.
* *Who is this the one who made you?*
* The One who is manifesting the beautiful scenery here.

Similarly, disliking something in creation is as sacred as liking another thing. Both emotions have been given to me. **I need to use my freewill to direct my emotions in the right way.** The ability is already in my being. **My emotions need to be pointed towards the One who gave them to me. He introduces Himself to me through my emotions and makes me realize that I have a Creator and I belong to Him.**

The One who creates me with endless human qualities (senses, emotions, feelings…) has programmed me in a way that prompts me to connect with the whole universe (where I observe and experience qualities). **In this regard, my qualities and the qualities that I observe in the universe complement each other.** They go hand in hand together, that is how the order in the universe takes place. We have to realize this innate relationship. Let us use the following analogy:

Analogy: There is a TV and a broadcasting center. I turn on the TV to receive the message from the broadcasting center. As a result, I become aware that the TV and the broadcasting center are in communication with each other and they are following the same order of the maker.

* Similarly, the universe is the broadcasting center. The TV is my human qualities. I have the freewill to use these qualities. If I use the qualities (turn on the TV), I am letting myself experience the act of creation and ultimately getting acquainted with its Creator. On the other hand, if I ignore my qualities (turn off the TV), I am depriving myself of getting to know the Creator of my qualities. As a result, I never respond back to the manifestation I observed in creation, which in turn is nothing but rejecting the truth. I may admire the manifestations but I do not communicate that back to the One who Presents it.

**Only through utilizing my qualities, I realize that my qualities and the universe are made by the same Creator.** That is how the order of the universe is set. We usually misunderstand the notion of worship, thinking that we are getting something extra, something in return. As per the analogy, **when we pray, we are just acting in accordance with what the reality in creation is.** Alas, we are not accustomed with this reality and so we neglect or spoil our innate setting.

* My duty is to be consistent with the setting (the established order), not to spoil it.

*Question: If I do not feel that these qualities are given to me where I should start from?*

* **Ask yourself:** *Where did I get these qualities?* *How do I explain the existence of the qualities?*
* We cannot attribute the qualities of the things to the things themselves. It is illogical. Example: the qualities of the table are not coming from the table itself; it is very obvious. *Can we attribute it to something else?* Find out. The whole universe is within a perfect setting, order…

If you are aware of the order in the universe that is Paradise i.e. being aware of what you are doing. In Islamic terminology, it is empathetically stated that **Paradise is not a payment to your action BUT a Grace of God (turning the TV on and ready to receive the broadcasting on the screen). On the other hand, Hell is a payment of your action because you are choosing not to communicate with creation which contradicts your human qualities (turning the TV off).**

We are not just physical beings; we are made up of our qualities. We need to be conscious of the existence of our qualities. **Reflect on the fundamental existential questions**:

* *Where did I come from?*
* *Am I owned by someone?*
* *Am I the product of something?*
* *What am I doing here?*
* *I am given endless qualities, what are these qualities good for?*
* *Where do I go from here?*
1. ***What is my responsibility as a human being?***

**My responsibility is to use my freewill to employ** **my qualities to improve their capacity to get to know their Lord**. My qualities are given to me in the form of a trust (*amaanah*). They need to grow in appreciation of the Creator. The more I use them, the more I become acquainted with the Creator of these qualities, who happens to be the One who creates me.

* I need to get to know my Creator better as he is the One who has endowed me with these qualities.

**The more we develop our qualities, the more secure we feel in our existence**. It is due to this lack of security that most people suffer from psychological problems. They do not investigate the above questions. As a result, they shut themselves off from facing reality. Almost every other person now has this problem of feeling insecure in their existence. The number keeps increasing as our worldview keeps revolving around materialistic understanding. People do not realize that the more they run away from reality, the more they put themselves in trouble because they are going against their human innate nature (*fitrat*). In order to face reality, we have to use our freewill.

* 'Trust your instincts (*fitrat*)'- They have been given to you by your Creator. Use them to know your Creator.
* Analogy: When we enjoy a musical performance, we express our emotions by applauding. Applause is one way of expressing enjoyment, we are following our instinct. **The more you appreciate the art, the more you will develop an appreciation for the qualities in the art.**
* If you do not develop your senses towards witnessing the wonders in Creation, you are not improving your humanity.

*Comment:* I am created with the ability to like what is joyful for me and I am created with the ability to dislike what is harmful for me. *If you experience something that you dislike, you do not feel like responding back.*

* That sense of dislike is given to you. Perhaps you need to avoid what you dislike. Keeping away from harmful element is a blessing.
* In your avoidance lies the response.
* Express your acknowledgment.
1. ***What does prayer mean to me?***

We are trying to understand the gist of prayers. Every moment is a time in prayer. We are always engaged in prayer (both in our expressions of liking and disliking). Additionally, we should not label prayer as being just a 'break'. Taking a break from daily life (where I am heedless most of the time be it at work, school, home…) does not explain why I should pray? Due to my shortcomings, I do not keep the awareness of my purpose in existence “always alive”. **Only when I am aware of the purpose in my existence, will I properly understand the reminder at certain times during the day.**

* *Where should I learn my lifestyle from that is inline to the purpose of my existence?*
* **The best way of responding to the Creator is shown to us by the best of responders (the Prophet SAW)**. Instead of seeking ways of 'connection', look to the best of creation to find the best way to 'connect'. That's where we find the five daily prayers. **ASK:** *why was the Prophet doing what he was doing? Why did he fast? What could be for him the meaning behind fasting?*
* *Why should I pray?*
* **In order to feel the need to pray, I have to be aware of the meaning of my own existence**. *Do I really think about my relationship with the universe, how the order takes place of which I am part of?* I have to be in correspondence with the Creator of the universe because the ability is there. I have to practice it and not block it. You can understand the purpose of existence through the senses given to you.
* *How can I get excited with praying?*
* *The qualities of excitement are already in you. You just need to let it out by questioning*: *Where did I get them?* Eventually, you will start being aware of the purpose of your existence which will give way to a convincing and everlasting reason to pray. **When that certainty becomes consistent you live life accordingly.**

Imitative prayers look comfortable but are empty inside. Filling up your day with activities may feel meaningful but it lacks “conscious awareness”. **ASK:** *How can I make things meaningful for myself? What kind of perspective does prayer bring into my life?* The “conscious awareness” have endless degrees of realization. **That is why in order to start searching; we have to feel the need for seeking the truth.**

**NOTE:** Don’t waste your life by imitating others! One has to look for the meaning in things. *Does it make sense to follow a Prophet who teaches me how to understand the meaning of what my existence is?* The Prophet says that he is employed to teach such.

1. ***How do I start implementing the belief process within myself?***

**Methodology for establishing belief** **needs to first start with establishing a worldview:**

**First**, I accept that I am a created being. I must have a Creator. This Creator cannot be part of this universe. He must be Absolute. Here, I am trying to makes sense of my existence:

1. ***What does my existence mean to me?***
2. ***How do I make sense of something in existence?***
3. ***Which kind of message do I get from this existence?***
4. ***How do I communicate with it?***

**Second**, I find myself to be a conscious receiver of messages. Everything I see/feel/touch/hear does not exist independently. *How am I receiving the meaning of the messages?* It must have a “conscious Creator” transmitting the message through “conscious beings”. These (latent connectors/meaning givers) in all of creation refers to “Angels”.

**Third**, as an extension to believing in angels, I realize that I seek to understand what the meaning within Creation is. Yes, there is a Creator and everything is created by the Creator but why? There has to be a verbal explanation of the purpose of creating this universe, so I can understand the message clearly.

As a human being, I find myself composed of an outer (physical) and inner (senses) qualities. I need a practical way of using my whole being (my senses) to make sense of the message. I need an example demonstrating the message in a human form. I find this exemplary behavior in the Prophets, who are the teachers of the message. This leads us to realize that we are given a meaningful existence in a meaningful world.

**Fourth**, I face the reality of death. Everything is so perfect and meaningful and yet it is dying, I am dying too. The end seems unpleasant. *How can it be?* It is easy to solve this dilemma once we realize that everything seems to be coming from an Absolute Eternal Source and I have to connect myself to this Absolute Source. It means that my existence is not coming to an end when I die.

When the first two fundamental pillars become clear in our mind, believing in the necessity of messages and messengers and resurrection of our physical existence in another form of existence by an Absolute Eternal Source follow with a logical conviction. (By following this methodology, we will stop jumping from believing in God to ritual performances.)

When we respond back to the manifestations of qualities observed in the universe, it is actually the Creator responding with what He has endowed us with: **He connects us to His creation**. In this regard, **the qualities manifested in the “observed” and the “observer” are the same.** We are either tuned in to the acts of creation or disengaged from its Creator.

* We experience what the Creator wants us to experience.
* Connect yourself to the Creator in every experience by using your free will.

Tune in at every moment because He is teaching you. It means that “the broadcaster” is demonstrating what is broadcasting on the screen of my TV. The TV receives broadcasting when I tune to the broadcasting properly (through my freewill). What I see in my screen is the manifestation of the qualities of my Maker, my humanity. **What I experience is what my Creator wills to show me, I become conscious of it.**

* Response is from Him not from me.

 **HADITH:** (Ibn Majah collection #3804, volume 5 book 33, hadith #3784)

*It is narrated that Abu Hurairah said:* “I have heard the Messenger of Allah say”:

**"Allah said:** ***I have divided the prayer between Myself and My worshiper into two halves. And My worshipper shall have what he has asked for...”***

1. One half is the worshipper (*abd*) and the other is the worshipped (*Ma’bood* or Creator). Whatever I ask, I will have it because I am the other half.
2. Analogy: Mirror is in my hand. I use my freewill to turn the mirror towards light. **We are created with the need to get light.** Adjust yourself in order to get the light otherwise youwill remain in darkness and your humanity will not be at peace.
3. ***How can I make sure that I tilted the mirror properly?*** No one can be sure. Just be consistent, sincere within yourself. When you do something wrong, the human side will be disturbed. It is the way the order has been established. When light is reflected on the mirror, you get it. If you see something meaningless, you are not getting the light. It means check your adjustment (use freewill), something is wrong (you are running away from your reality). Instead of complaining I did not get light, ask why don’t you have light? **The fact of the matter is that your ego may not be submitting.**
4. By default, the mirror should receive light as there is no inconsistency in the universe. When I use my freewill in the appropriate way, I will understand that what I am doing is according to the Will in my existence.
5. **Human beings consist of the summary of the universe.** **The Creator of the universe manifests all sorts of qualities and our humanity has the capacity to receive all of them.** **We can easily conclude that whoever made the universe is my Creator.** Whatever qualities are manifested in the universe, the same qualities exists in my being as well. Therefore, **the relationship between human beings and the universe is so harmonious or compatible because they are the product of the same Source.**

 ***“…And when the worshipper says: All praise is due to Allah the Lord of all the Worlds.”***

***“Allah says: My worshipper has praised Me and My worshipper shall have what he has asked for…”***

1. The gist of the prayer is found in these phrases. It helps us understand what is going on while praying which is nothing but the correspondence between “me and my Creator”.
2. “Appreciation” of the manifestation of the qualities in the universe is already in existence. When I communicate with it through the quality of “praise/appreciation” in me, the mutual relationship between me and my Creator gets established.
3. Conventional way of thinking is that I am praying and God will respond/pay/reward. In reality, when I am responding, in my response lies His response. (What I am seeing in my screen is nothing but what the broadcaster is broadcasting). **So when I say: *All praise is due to God*, I am in connection with the Lord of all the worlds.**

***“…when My worshipper says: the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”***

***“Allah says: My worshipper has extolled Me and My worshipper shall have what he has asked for…”***

1. It means that you will receive His Mercy, Compassion in your feeling of belonging to Him (which is already endowed in you, just turn the TV on).
2. My Lord is the Owner of this universe. *What am I fearful about then?* Even death is from the One who gives life. No one can die by themselves. If you panic about death, it means that you are contradicting your reality and therefore you need to check whether your mirror is tilted the right way to receive the light (as in the mirror analogy above).

***“…And When he says the only Owner of the day of recompense.”
 “Allah says My Worshipper has glorified Me. This is for Me, this verse is between Myself and My worshipper in two halves...”***

1. My awareness that whatever is judged or whatever happens is according to His will which ultimately must be my will. If I don’t will what He wills, there is a contradiction i.e. I am depriving myself of the message from my Creator.

***“…When He says You alone we worship You alone we ask for help.”***

***“He says: this is between Me and My worshipper and My worshipper should have whatever he is asking for...”***

1. **The awareness of** **totally submitting my existence to Him**.
2. If a drop falls in the ocean. *Did it lose anything from itself?* No. It belongs to the Creator of the whole universe, its existence does not belong to it, It has no power to create, preserve its own existence.
3. If I see the world from my own perspective, dependent on my own capacity, I will have no confidence in my existence. I will always be irritated and hesitant.
4. **Only when I submit to my Creator, I feel confident because whatever He does is full of wisdom**. Example: the galaxy dying are signs in creation that nothing can sustain its own existence, everything is in need to be given existence. This makes me realize that I do not own my existence; I have no claim of ownership over my existence.

***“…The end of the sura is for my worshipper”. When he says: Guide us to the straight way, the way of those who have bestowed Your Grace on, not of those who have earned Your repelling or those who have gone astray”.***

***“Allah says: this is for My worshiper and My worshipper should have what he has asked for.”***

1. If I attribute my being to the Creator of the universe, I feel confident. Because of this realization of belonging to the One who gives me existence, I develop a sense of security within myself. I am asking for help and the answer lies in my feeling confident in my existence. **The beauty of prayer is that within the realization that He is your Creator, you find yourself with Him.**

In conclusion, “Prayer” means “acknowledging my reality”. My reality is to acknowledge that everything is created by Him and to be connected to Him. This reality is nothing but what God creates: my freewill/His will/choice/order/plan/creation. Prayer in its ideal form is an act of consistency with the reality of who we are. This implies that if we don’t pray, we lose the opportunity to tune in with our reality.