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| **Date** | Wednesday, October 10, 2015 |
| **Topic** | Ninth Word |
| **Part** | 6 |

**FIFTH POINT:**

“*By nature man is extremely weak, yet everything touches him, and saddens and grieves him. Also, he is utterly lacking in power, yet the calamities and enemies that afflict him are extremely numerous. Also he is extremely wanting, yet his needs are indeed many. Also he is lazy and incapable, yet life’s responsibilities are most burdensome. Also his humanity has connected him to the rest of the universe, yet the decline and disappearance of the things he loves and with which he is familiar continually pains him. Also his reason shows him exalted aims and lasting fruits, yet his hand is short , his life brief, his power slight and his patience little*.”

***How does the fifth point relate to the meanings in the specific times of prayers?***

There seems to be a riddle in the way I see my existence. I desire something and yet I cannot get it on my own. The author points out this seemingly contradictory human nature. In order to understand the wisdom in prayers, we need to first understand our human nature. We need to first become aware of what constitutes a human being, i.e. *discover who I am. Why do I have to worship?* The author is indicating that if a matter is not related to human beings then it is not worth discussing.

We have to learn how to speak from a human perspective. Saying for example, “in Islam, we have to pray five times a day” or “during the month of Ramadan, we Muslims fast” is no different than someone saying “on Sunday, we go to church”. This is simply information and has no bearing as to why do I do it. If something does not include the human perspective, it is meaningless.

Every religious tradition claims to befit humanity. We need to learn how to build our own conclusion so we can back it up with proper evidence. *How do you locate yourself as existing with the rest of the world? More so, how do you see your existence?*

We need to connect with anyone as a human being by taking into consideration his/her level as a created being. A child needs to be talked to at his level and an adult needs to be talked to accordingly. Therefore we need to speak to everyone according to their capacity.

***What about other times than the five daily prayers?***

There are many forms of prayers. For example, the sunrise prayer marks the beginning of the day. However, after that, the sun is still rising, yet another opportunity to be in a state of consciousness. We are given endless opportunities to pray. **Prayers should not be reduced to a one time performance at a specific time only.**

Clarification on the word *Salaat*: The word “***salaat***” for prayer has many meanings; it could mean support, connection, relationship, throwing… Equating prayer to “namaz”, a certain form of prayer, is a reduction to the actual meaning. The plural form of *salat* is *salawat* and the first thing that comes to our mind is *Alaihi* *As salat wasslaam ya Rasul Allah*. Substituting the word “*salaat*” with “namaz”, saying “namaz and salaam be upon the prophet” does not make much sense.

What is important is that I realize my reality and whether I am indeed in need of prayers. Since we are talking about the wisdom in the timings of prayers, we should not lose ourselves with the literal meaning of prayer as a physical activity. Many books describe “prayers” but do not go into the core of the matter. For example can we describe an egg just saying that it is a shell. What about the whites, yolks, molecular structures inside the shell? Similarly, the words “Judaism” and “Islam” are taken in their “literal sense” as “adopted identity” in the context of their secular establishments. “Muslim”, “Jew” or “Christian” community is a social secular construct. Some scholars explain that after several hundred years, “Muslim” became an identity for a certain group of people. Similarly, Prophet Jesus never claimed the “Christian” identity but it was later on given to a group. *Aslamna rabila’ lalmeen*: we submit to the Lord of the world. *Muslim* comes from the word *aslama* which means to submit to the Lord of the world.

**“Calamities and enemies that afflict him are extremely numerous”***:* Anything that threatens my existence is my enemy.

* Quran is telling us what our reality is.
* For example, I am created with the need for nourishment and there is no nourishment, this phenomenon is my “enemy”.
* Another example, I see that as I age I start losing my abilities but my desire is to have them forever. This feeling of losing them is my “enemy”.

Quran should be read with the existential lens instead of the secular conditions. I need to get out of the material understanding of what an enemy is. Quranic teaching of an enemy is never about an “individual” or a “nation” but it is at the existential level of what is represented by them, i.e. that idea or understanding highlighted in the Quran is the enemy. For example when the Quran mentions of not having Christians and Jews as friends, it is never about individuals which is a purely materialistic view. One has to see what is represented by Christianity and Judaism and whether the ideas and concepts presented are befitting as conforming to the reality I observe.

* Quran says that I put you in a straight path of thinking i.e. I am going to make you understand your human reality. It teaches me that I am created, I am needy, I need help, and I need guidance…

***What is the reason that the Quran mentions eternal bliss and punishment being given?***

When I do not confirm my reality, I go against it. When I contradict my reality, I do not acknowledge my Lord; I leave myself to my own being. Then, I will have no way to satisfy my expectations as a human being. Thus, I deprive myself of the protection that I am in need of. What am I left with when there is no Absolute Creator, Protector? I become a conscious being on the verge of being executed because I have no Owner, Protector. This is where rejecting the truth of my reality takes me.

**If you lose the connection with the Creator, you will be the loser.** That is how we should read the Quran. We have to do act in order to make an Eternal connection. Anything which does not have an existential connection to its source lacks its security in existence.

By definition Quran claims to be the guidance of my Creator, guiding me in my being. It helps me decipher the meaning in my existence. Just like the manufacturer of a machine provides an instruction manual (guide) to tell the users how to use the machine. When the manual says protect the machine from direct sunlight, I understand that I should keep it in the shade away from direct sunlight as that would harm the machine. It does not mean that sunlight is evil/bad and I should try to eliminate sunlight. The manual is simply guiding me on getting the best out of the machine. The fundamental teaching of the Quran guides me in my existential being. **Reducing the teaching of the Qu’an to the secular materialistic life is not related to the existential reality of my human being and thus violates the Quran’s basic definition.** Once I understand the foundational teaching, I can extend my understanding to the material world and establish my way of living accordingly. For example, I know that the property does not belong to me but it has been given to me by the Owner of this universe. I will thus treat the property accordingly.

Contextualize the Quran within the purpose of its definition which is to find out our existential reality. Do not use the Quran to fit secular conditions only like the human made laws. The fundamental teaching of the Quran is to guide you to your true nature. It helps me decipher my own reality. Thus, I should read the Quran accordingly within the conditions of my own existence. “*Alladhi khalaqa fasawwa walladhi qaddara fahada*…” (Qur’an, 87: 1-2) He made you adjustable to your reality as a human being and gave you a right proportion (put you to the right path).