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| **Date** | Saturday, April 23, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Prophet Job’s supplication—The Second Flash |
| **Part** | 8 |

**FIFTH POINT consisting of three matters.**

**First Matter:** **True and harmful misfortune is that which affects religion. One should at all times seek refuge at the divine court from misfortune in matters of religion and cry out for help. But misfortunes that do not affect religion in reality are not misfortunes. Some of them are warnings from the Most Merciful One. If a shepherd throws a stone at his sheep when they trespass on another’s pasture, they understand that the stone is intended as a warning to save them from a perilous action; full of gratitude they turn back. So too there are many apparent misfortunes that are divine warnings and admonishments, others that constitute the repentance of sin; and others again that dissolve man’s state of neglect, remind him of his human helplessness and weakness, thus affording him a form of tranquility. As for the variety of misfortune that is illness, it is not at all a misfortune, as has already been said, but rather a favor from God and a means of purification. There is a tradition which says: “As a tree drops its ripe fruits when shaken, so do sins fall away through the shaking of fever.”**

My understanding of misfortune affects my belief. Religion is an extension to one’s belief. In and of itself, religion belongs to God. I, as a conscious believer try my best to follow religion i.e. I apply what I believe in to my life.

***What are misfortunes?***

* Illness, calamity, bankruptcy, disability, psychological distress such as depression, schizophrenia and more.
* They come in physical form or non-physical form.

What I make of an event affects my overall being. As long as my interpretation of the event does not affect that which I believe in, then I am on the right track. In and of itself, there is no misfortune in creation. As a human being, I may interpret something as a misfortune. Therefore, the only time that I can misinterpret an event is when the event affects my belief.

***How can an event hurt my belief?***

* When I solely concentrate on the misfortune only.

Disliking a misfortune is very human. However, I should not stop here. I need to question the feeling I develop when I experience the misfortune and extend this feeling to the existence of the misfortune and ultimately to the Source of existence of the misfortune. The purpose in the misfortune is for me to learn about my reality. That is, I am the created being. **If I do not realize that I am a created being, then I would never understand there is a Creator.** Similarly, if I were never given misfortune, I would never understand the value of a pain-free life. From this, we can deduce that **only through the opposite of something do we understand our reality.**  Example: If I were never deprived of pleasure, I would never understand the existence of pleasure and start questioning its Source of existence.

* Question the source of existence of the opposite of the misfortune you have been experiencing.

“Pleasure” and “health” in life can only be known when we experience that health is disappearing. For example ***if there was no death and transience in creation, would I ever be able to realize the existence of life and the value of that existence?*** If there was no transience in the universe, you will always stay as you are and not get old, as a result would never realize the source of existence of youth. **It means the nature of creation is such that reality is known by its opposite.**

*Why can’t we have a kind of existence in this universe that does not require reality to be known by its opposite?* Remember that this place is a training abode because of its temporary nature and existence of opposite. Everything comes to an end, life comes to an end. Every moment has a beginning and end. Our existence in this type of creation comes to an end. Nothing in this world is constant. The order of the universe seems to be constant but we realize that it changes continuously. Nothing remains static in the universe but everything is dynamic. In the way order changes, everything is continuously subject to change. For example a new day is given but with careful observation we can notice that it is always different.

We are brought into this type of existence for a purpose. Sometimes, we are given pain to make us aware of the “good feelings” which we usually may not wonder about. Sometimes some parts of the universe shakes for a couple of seconds to remind us that the earth is mostly made stable for us. I do not want any of the misfortunes! However, it prompts me to question the existence of the opposite. The most essential question for any human being is this: *“Why does the Source that gives me existence make me go through different phases, some of which are pleasant and some are not?*”

* **It is through this training do I understand that things are given existence. As long as I understand the purpose in creation, whatever training the Source puts me through in this universe is good for me. Whatever I experience enables me to fulfill the purpose of my existence which is to realize that I am given existence and everything that I experience is given existence as well.** Example: If I suffer from eyesight loss, I realize that I am given an extremely precious tool and so I have to question the opposite, a healthy eye sight. This, in turn, makes me question the Source of existence of eyesight.

**Generally, people mostly tend to think about the Source of existence when a calamity strikes.** The supplication of Job is conventionally understood as a magical formula to ones ailments. Just by reciting the verse does not really help anyone. The beauty of the Quran is that there is no supplication per se as everything is a guidance to realize my reality. For example illness is created in order to make the conscious being realize that healing exists and so question the source of existence of healing. ***Who or what is the Source of healing?*** As a consequence, you desire to be with the Source, followed by desiring healing. Even if you are in a condition that does not allow for healing to occur (worst case—terminal illness), your purpose is to seek out the Source of your existence through all possible means.

Lack of anything makes you realize the abundance of it (positive). Death is inevitable and makes us realize the Source of existence of life. **Death is a reminder for you that you are given life.** Most people focus on the existence of the negative side to find the Source. **There is wisdom in the creation of the negative side as it makes you realize and appreciate the positive side.** **A better approach would be to look into the positive side of existence as well to find the Source.**

By following the methodology under discussion, we learn that there is no evil in creation. Everything that we feel and experience in this universe ultimately depends on our perception of events we encounter. **If there was no change in creation, we would be ignorant and never be able to understand that we have been given the ability to learn; the learning process is created for us**. As a result, I would never question the source of existence of the ability to learn. ***Who enabled me with learning and getting pleasure from learning?***

* If I am not aware of the existence of any phenomenon, I would never be able to question the existence of its Source.

**If there is pain, suffering, negative attitude and depression experienced in creation, then it is to teach me something so I may come to the realization of who I am and what my Source of existence is. Definitely, I am not the Source of existence of anything. That is how the order of the creation has been established in this universe.** Everything is prepared by the One who arranges everything in the wisest manner. **I am here to learn this reality, which is belief.** **If one understands this, then misfortune is perfect.**  If one does not understand this, then he starts complaining about the Creator of misfortune to the extreme where he denies the Creator. As a result of denial, some people start attributing happenings to chance or luck. They claim that order came out of chaos because they decided from the beginning with no evidence that there is no Creator. It is an illogical inconsistency because everything comes into existence within a deliberate order demonstrating that it is the result of a conscious choice. *Can you demonstrate a leaf coming into existence accidentally without following the order of the whole universe?* Demonstrate that the leaf is giving existence to itself. Nothing comes into existence by itself (***lailaha***); everything is subject to the order of the whole universe whose existence can only be explainable by attributing it to the choice of a Conscious Being (***illallah***).

* Order is a conscious action.

Prophet Job’s supplication is a way of understanding my reality. That is, how to interpret events happening to me? I need to read the Quran in order to understand how to interpret an event in a certain situation. Quran is guidance and the verses in it can only be read as a supplication if and only if I am aware that by reciting it, I understand what my reality encompasses (what we have been studying thus far). **The Quran fulfills its mission when the verse acts as a reminder to my reality.**

For some people, supplication is just a matter of reciting verses. That is their choice because they have reduced their capacity to reading without deeply understanding. Anyone with a general notion of God is considered among the people of the book. At least, they are not deniers. On the other hand, people who want to use their ability to question, they should move forward to further develop in their understanding.

The word “harmful” is used by the author to make us realize how misinterpreting an event can impact belief. If I do not get a lesson from an event pertaining to my belief, then I am misinterpreting the event. **We mostly misinterpret because we choose not to use our abilities and hence we do not develop.** If a student does not go to class and learn, he remains ignorant. No one is innocent unless there is a learning disability.

Death means that all my qualities that I am acquainted with will be taken away from me. I will lose my power of sight, hearing, breath…etc. If I am satisfied with losing all this and liking the pain which means I am indifferent and do not have the ability to distinguish between having the qualities or not, then I am not responsible. However I am made with the ability to realize pain and I should be happy with the way that I am made, i.e. to dislike some things in creation. Yes, I should avoid it but when it is given, I understand the purpose of their existence in this universe. Simply put, I realize the Source of their existence and attach my being to its Being.

**Analogy:** A janitor working in a school does his duty with cleaning, gets paid and is happy with it. A student on the other hand goes to class to study. Neither does the janitor have the right to complain about the student for not cleaning nor does the student have the right to complain about the janitor for not studying. In principle, everyone should take care of their own responsibilities and leave people to their own doings. Also, the student should not take the position of the janitor. If I reduce my position to that of a janitor by not studying and performing, I am expelled from school while the janitor keeps his duty until retired though s/he never attends any class.

* Similarly, a person who wants to use his ability to question will use the scripture as an instruction manual. One should not reduce scriptures as a book of supplication (generally done by most people).
* I cannot imitate those people who have never been trained in questioning. If I imitate them, I am not being truthful to my capacity. **This is the start of hypocrisy in one’s being.** Quran spares a lot of verses to describe the psychology of the hypocrites because it is within us. We have to be watchful! (Further elaboration to be followed below.)

***Why is something a divine favor or a means of purification when it is given?***

When illness is given, it is mostly understood as washing out sins. The author is alluding to the fact that a misfortune is nothing but a friendly reminder to come back to your senses. That is, **when you forget your reality or your true purpose of existence, you need a reminder.** Now, you start the reverse process in reasoning i.e. the opposite things were deliberately given to me in order to understand the source of their existence. **Thus, I will refer everything to the source of their existence, which is the way I get introduced to my Maker and thus become fully aware of who my Maker is. This is the source of Eternal happiness i.e. I belong to the Eternal Source who has given me all my desires, senses, wishes…etc. I understand from the transience of this creation that everything is given to me by a generous Creator who is Eternal and Absolute. The act of creation is continuous and thus shows that the Source is not transient. I belong to this Absolute Eternal Source!**

* Washing out sins occur when I start realizing the true nature of my being and the transience of the universe.
* Refreshing your belief through realizing the mistakes done is repenting i.e. re-interpreting the event and thus finding the Source. When you sincerely repent, forgiveness is guaranteed. (please refer to the notes from 03/26/16 on repentance)

Traditionally, most of us are taught to understand repentance in terms of action oriented understanding of religion only. In it, the belief aspect is missing. I need to understand that **I commit sin when I am being neglectful of my reality and thus I am not appreciating the event.** When I realize the sin and aim not to commit it again, I repent. Only when I feel satisfied in my repentance by acknowledging my Owner, do I find myself as been forgiven.

Every event/object is an opportunity to fulfill the purpose of my existence. I may appreciate an object/event but without proper consciousness, nothing can become permissible (traditionally known as “halal”) for my use. Example: if I am given an orange, I may eat it as a fruit to stay healthy. Even if I say *bismillah* (in the name of Allah), it is non-permissible (traditionally known as “*haram*”) because I am not fulfilling my mission. It means God’s direct act of creation and His special gift to me has not been remembered on the orange.

* **I can make the orange permissible (*halal*) as follows:** The orange is given to me, prepared for me deliberately to make me realize that I am being taken care of by a Merciful One who has prepared this orange for me to fulfill my needs. Otherwise, whatever I am eating is *haram* because the name of God is not remembered on them.

Some people recite *bismillah* as a way of remembrance (known as “***zikr”***), a process most often misused. In order to perform *zikr*, I need to have something to remember. **Analogy:** If I have never been to city Z and someone mentions city Z to me, I would be indifferent to it because I cannot make any connection to it. Similarly, in order to say *bismillah*, I need to have a prior concept of who Allah is. Saying *bismillah* should remind me of and refresh all previous concepts of Allah i.e. the Merciful, the Educator…

Prophet Job’s supplication, the verse we are studying is a reminder of all the previous contemplation that Prophet Job (pbuh) went through to come to this conclusion (the verse in particular). We have to decipher the meaning of this verse for us right now, so we are trained enough to confront any situation which requires us to be saved from the misfortune of heedlessness. That is how the verse can be used as a reminder in the form of “*zikr*” for us.

Going back to hypocrisy, **reading without understanding is hypocrisy**. Either confirm or deny but do not be indifferent towards what you believe in because your capacity is endless. Similarly, blunt denial or blunt confirming is very easy. If you do not want to investigate, it is your choice which means that you do not want to be serious in your existence.

**Hypocrisy takes place when you contradict yourself**. That is, you have the ability to learn and you choose not to learn. You contradict your reality with what you believe in. You present yourself under the name of a certain religion, but you do not know what that religion actually is. For example: a janitor claiming to be a Chemistry professor. This causes confusion in society and it misleads other innocent people. That is, if an intelligent educated person presents religion in an imitative way does not make sense to the new generation.

* Denial is acceptable but hypocrisy is not acceptable.

The sad reality of this era is that religion is not taught in a way that prompts you to question and reason your actions in order to make you realize what it actually entails i.e. belief. **You can imitate an action but you cannot imitate belief.** Action can only be imitated if it is used in order to understand your belief system. Then it works to your advantage because you are reasoning and no longer imitating. Otherwise one may be doing certain rituals heedlessly which only consolidate a false identity.

**Continuation to the text: Job (Upon whom be peace) did not pray in his supplication for the comfort of his soul, but rather sought cure for the purpose of worship, when disease was preventing his remembrances of God with his tongue and his meditation upon God in his heart. We too should make our primary intent, when making that supplication, the healing of the inward and spiritual wounds that arise from sinning.**

Through making supplication, I am expected to see what the supplication means to me. Prophet Job (pbuh) is realizing the content of the verse and putting it into his practical life. That is, he will not be cured from the pain itself but he will be cured by utilizing the pain to question the Source of existence of the opposite of pain i.e. health. I am made to like the Source of existence of health and I do not want to lose the Source. That is the purpose of the supplication to make you realize the Source which gives existence to everything.

Reciting a verse several times as a remedy to alleviate a misfortune is contradictory to the purpose of the existence of the misfortune. This act of reciting is harmful. **What is important for me is to get rid of the misconception of the creation of the misfortune.** Reciting a verse to be saved from a misfortune really means that if I reflect on the content of the verse, I will understand the purpose of existence of the misfortune and thus, I will utilize the misfortune to my advantage. As a result of such realization, I will feel relaxed. The order in creation is such that when you are relaxed, healing takes place quickly. If you are left to focus on the misfortune only, it prolongs the misfortune because you are not fulfilling the purpose of your existence. The order in creation is perfect.

***How do you apply the “relax” feeling?***

* Verily harm has afflicted me but I realize that You are the most Merciful One. It means that in this harm, I can see the Mercy of the Creator of whatever I am missing in my ailment. If I am ill I will realize that the health exists and it is given to me freely by the One Who creates it as favor for me. **When you see the Mercy in the creation of the harm, you immediately understand that you belong to the One who is the Source of all Beauty.** That is why you are made to experience pain from the misfortune which is a reminder: “hey (insert your name) are you aware that I am the Source of your existence blessing you with what you perceived to be a misfortune”

Relaxation comes with:

1. Having a positive outlook towards life.
2. Within this positivity, connect everything to the Source of its origin.
3. **Be thankful to the Creator for the reminder.**
4. **The order of the creation is such that if you have a positive attitude you will be cured sooner.**

If one concentrates on the misfortune only, they are bound to develop a negative attitude towards the Creator. With b and c respectively, I am bound to develop a positive attitude towards the Creator. My purpose in this world is not to “not desiring” any form of suffering but to understand my reality. **I am not concerned with not having misfortune (secondary) but I am concerned with understanding what my reality is (primary):** Who I am and who my owner is. **Having a** **positive attitude is necessary in the relaxation process but it does not guarantee that you will get rid of all sufferings, however, it may lead you to conclude your reality and thus, help you fulfill the purpose of your existence in this universe.** That is why we are here in this universe to fulfill our mission. **The better we understand our Source and connect our existence to It, the happier we will be.**

* Having pain or not having pain is not the point. Using the pain to realize the opposite and connect with the Source of existence of the opposite of the pain (pleasure) is the point.
* Who is the One that gives existence to a pain free life?
* The sense of disliking pain is given to me by my Source of existence, so I do not seek pain, which is the way I am created.

***Would this be a negative attitude if I ask the Source that has given me a misfortune for a long time to take it away?***

* **Again, as stated above, it all depends on my realization of the event. The problem arises when I do not recognize the Source. However, if I do recognize the Source i.e. that which I perceive to be misfortune is coming from the Creator of ”health”, then asking for the misfortune to be taken away is human and not associated with a negative attitude. The purpose of feeling pain experienced from misfortune is to remind one what the Source of “health” or “pain-free life” is. Through this realization the person in pain should turn to the Creator of the “pain-free life” and ask It to bestow “health” on him.**  The ability to ask is given to me and it is a deliberate act of creation so that I may be in a state of awareness of my reality i.e. I am created and I have a Creator. This act of asking for a long time is a training itself so I may train myself to feel secure in my existence that I belong to an Absolute Eternal Source. Thus, I carry this sense of security with me throughout my journey here until death is given which I welcome with this sense of feeling. Hence, I fulfill the purpose of my existence.

**Lesson:** Use pain in order to understand the Source of the creation of health: “You are the One who favored me with this feeling of disliking pain and liking health, I am happy with you.” Hence, the feeling experienced through pain is a reminder to question the source of existence of health. I can cope with the pain by having a positive relationship with the Creator, that is how we are made and I have to utilize the pain, misfortune to my advantage.

**Short reflection**: Positive attitude towards creation leads to positive attitude towards the Source. Similarly, negative attitude towards creation leads to denying the Source. Maintaining positive attitude towards creation does not mean that misfortune will be gone. Positive attitude helps you find the Source of well-being. **When you find the Source of well-being, your main concern is to be with the Source or attach your being to the Source that gives existence.** **When you find the Source, the misfortune becomes less significant because you used the negative feelings to realize the Source of your existence.**  Nothing bothers you anymore. Finding the Source entails knowing your reality: “I am the needy One and I have an Owner”. As a result, you are happy with the Source because it gave you a reminder. That is, the misfortune is a rare gift which makes you aware of your reality. All these moments you have been numb to appreciate all gifts. Now, realizing the existence of this rare gift shifts your focus to the Source that has blessed you with endless gifts.

“May the Source that gives us existence make us among those that are grateful towards everything!”