Halaqa: Wednesday, May 21, 2014

Topic: What is “worship”?

How can we really practice our worship of God?

* We need to take it beyond just believing that God is the Creator
  + Almost everyone believes that there must be a God
  + Belief is innate EXCEPT for the obstinate disbelievers
  + Even the pagans believed in a Creator
  + It is easy to accept that this universe must have a conscious Creator
* Worship, however, needs to be substantiated with awareness
  + Belief in God is necessary but not sufficient
* Whenever the Quran mentions the word ‘worship’ it is accompanied with a description of God so that we may KNOW Him

**001.002**

http://allahsquran.com/read/images/chapters/1/1_2.gif

**“All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds,”**

**001.005**

http://allahsquran.com/read/images/chapters/1/1_5.gif

**You alone we worship, and you alone we ask for help.”**

Worship means an acknowledgment of God’s qualities

* An appreciation, adoration, thankfulness of Lord (*rabb)*
  + I have to acknowledge His sustainer-ship
  + Only then can I truly acknowledge Him as a deity (*ilah)*

We have to focus on *rubbubiya* (His sustainer-ship)

* In doing so, I am connecting myself to His qualities through a personal experience of conviction

We need to train ourselves to ask the right questions.

Think about in terms of these two seemingly similar statements:

* Who is God vs. Who sustains me?
  + The former points to a transcendental being that is beyond my scope whereas the latter is real for me because it refers to my practical life
  + I am aware that I am being sustained, so by starting the questioning process with myself, I am grounding myself in reality
  + If we start with questioning God, without experiencing Him in our own personal lives, we will end up with an imaginary and abstract notion of Him.

In order to be able to worship Him, I have to experience Him

* I cannot experience something beyond this universe
* I have to experience Him in my own existence
  + See His ownership and control in your:
    - Sight
    - Life
    - Emotions
    - Capacities
    - Growth etc.

The description of God when the word ‘worship’ is mentioned in Surah Fatiha:

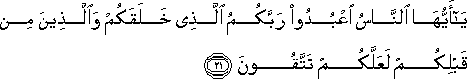
1. Sustainer/Lord of all the worlds

* In reference to the ‘worlds’, we are guided to see God as the Lord (Sustainer)
* We are trained to see the Creator as the Sustainer and not just as a deity because that distances Him from us

**You alone we worship**: Who is the ‘you’ referring to?

* Sustainer/Lord (rabb) OR God?
* Our worshipping attitude is an acknowledgement of all His Created actions that I have experienced in my own existence
* Hence, to increase one’s worship, we have to simply increase our acknowledgement of His ownership and lordship in my perception of existence

**002.021**



**“O human beings! Worshipyour Lord, who has created you and those before you, so that you might remain conscious of Him.”**

This verse is not speaking to ‘believers/muslims/jews’ BUT to **human beings**

* A human being is one that makes use of his/her intellect and human qualities
* In order to understand the matter, we need to use our human qualities

Use your human qualities and decide who is your Lord (Sustainer)

* To help us, the Quran guides us: Figure out the one who **created you**
* There is no need to ‘dream’ or ‘imagine’ Lord
* Just focus and concentrate on our own existence

Use your human qualities to acknowledge and adore (worship) your Lord

* How?
* Ask, ‘Who is the creator of me, my feelings, my emotions, my qualities, etc?’

Quran says: You have to worship God by referring all the manifestations of His Sustainer-ship (rabb) that you experience in your own life

* In order to worship the *rabb* we have to connect our human qualities to the Sustainer
  + Your abilities to laugh, cry, walk, talk, enjoy, rebel are ALL given to you
  + We have to reflect on these abilities
  + They will lead us to the Creator these abilities

When we are eating, we should ask: Who is sustaining me?

* The food itself OR the creator of the quality of sustenance?

Example: See His Lordship *(rubbubiya)* manifested in the field of sustenance

* Is the food we are eating nutritious?
* Can the food itself be nourishing?
  + The One who is nourishing you is your Lord
  + We have to acknowledge the true Sustainer OTHERWISE we will end up adoring/worshipping the food
  + Just by saying God created the food BUT not practically experiencing the special treatment you are receiving through the food, distances us from Sustainer and ultimately from God.

To understand the source of earthquakes (exception), we have to be aware of the source of earth’s daily rotation (normal- majority case scenario)

* If we do not know the source of general rule, we cannot find an explanation to the source of the exception to the general rule.

Similarly, to understand the source of so-called calamities (exception), we have to first be aware of the source of the order of the universe (normal – majority case scenario)

Commonly heard: I think, therefore I am

* But who am I?
* Where does the ability to think come from?
* Don’t separate your qualities and give them an independent existence!
  + It results in delusional living because we end up attributing an independent existence to things that in reality cannot sustain their own existence.

Quran offers a perspective: The One who created you and all of your qualities is your Lord

* We have to start from our own qualities
  + Look within because that is as real as anything can get for you
* Then search for the creator of those qualities
* The search will lead you to Sustainer (*rabb)*
* Once you find the Sustainer, you have found God (the Absolute Creator) because you would have realized that everything is part of a complete and Absolute order

Only when I am aware of my Creator can I be conscious of Him.

* Without connecting myself to Him (through my qualities), how can I be conscious of Him?
* I have to be aware of my own awareness (that it is created and given to me,) which is called, “self-awareness”

Methodology of approaching the Quran:

1. Focus on receiving the message, which is guidance for your human qualities
2. When you are trained in how to receive the message of the Qur’an, then turn to learn the Qur’anic Arabic language so that you may receive a deeper level of meaning

* If you focus on learning the Arabic language without orientating yourself to receiving the book’s message (i.e. as a book of guidance), the language itself might be an impediment because you’ll get caught up in technicalities instead of seeing the guidance that it is meant to impart.

Dealing with day-to-day difficulties

* The existence of events have to be explained
  + I might prefer a different reality, but I have to first understand and establish the existence of the event as is
  + Only when we explain the order, can we find a meaning to the ‘exception’

Think about the existence of the ocean BEFORE asking about the existence of the tsunami

* Unless we understand the existence of the reality, we should not trick ourselves into ‘escapism’
* Don’t escape from the responsibility upon ourselves that demands we question the existence of the ‘normal’ way of creation
  + Once we establish the foundation, we will be able to explain the exception to the rules.

**006.102**



**“Such is God, your Lord: There is no deity save Him, the Creator of everything. Then, worship Him alone, for it is He who has everything in His care.”**

Your God is the One who is sustaining you.

* There is no God but the Sustainer, the Creator of everything

How to worship by employing the Quran’s methodology:

1. Pay attention to the act of Creation

* I am given the ability to observe it
* It is not an imagination
* I experience it realistically
* There is no way to deny creation regardless of the stance you take in your life (atheist, agnostic, etc.)

1. The existence of all of creation must be sustained by a Sustainer
2. The One who sustains is the Creator

* He is Absolute because everything in every moment points to Him
* There is no way to explain Him with the limited concepts of this world

There is no way to establish belief and perform worship WITHOUT basing it on evidence we experience here in this universe.

* Otherwise religion has absolutely no connection to me and my life and we turn religion into a mythology
* To believe the One who is beyond my width of perception (Allah) because He is not of the nature of created beings, I have to start from that which I have within and around me.