

THEOLOGICAL INSTRUCTIONS

[Āmūzish-e 'Aqā'id]

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY ISLĀMIC THEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

IT IS ALMOST A TRUISM to say that a person's beliefs play a central role in making up his personality. We are what we believe, and we become what we come to believe. It is our beliefs that determine how we look at ourselves, how we look at life, at the world around us and our own role and destiny in life. Our beliefs determine our ideals and actions and mould the conduct of our lives.

This is another way of saying that our understanding of what we are is the mainspring of our thought and feeling, conduct and behaviour. Our understanding concerning our own nature, our origin, our situation in the world of being, our relationship with other human beings, the purpose of our life, and the future destiny that awaits us-all these matters together determine the kind of person we are today and what we may become tomorrow.

This is as true of society as it is true of individuals. That is, the character of a society derives from its current beliefs. A society's culture, its ideals and norms, its social, educational, economic and political institutions-all are derived in some way or another from the beliefs prevailing in society and those that are held by various groups that play a dominant role in it.

Beliefs are ordinarily absorbed by human beings in the course of acculturation, that is, "the process by which the culture of a particular society is instilled in a human being from infancy onward." Yet beliefs are too important to be left to acculturation. In view of the critical role they play in the making of an individual and his destiny, they are immensely more important than other cultural modes like language, social customs, diet, dress, lifestyle and technology.

One of the greatest of human needs is the need to believe, and this poses a tremendous challenge to individuals and society. The challenge is truly stupendous because our need to believe pertains to matters of great consequence, answering which is apparently beyond the capacity of any individual or institution. How can I know where I have come from, why I have come into this world and what is the purpose of my life, how do I relate to this vast universe into which I have been brought, how can I know what is expected of me, how should I order my relationships with other human beings, how should I live so as to fulfil the real purpose of my life, what laws and regulations should I follow in order to achieve that purpose?

According to Islamic teachings, every individual does normally have the complete capacity to find true answers to these questions. Indeed, according to Islam, it is his duty to find the right answers. This capacity is represented by the faculty of reason or intellect, which is innate in every human being.

This faculty enables human beings to distinguish between true and false, just and unjust, right and wrong, straight and crooked, wholesome and unhealthy. Of course, the intellect by itself does not have the means and equipment to discover the truth concerning all the significant questions. However, by following its own criteria it can arrive at reliable sources of knowledge whose mainspring lies beyond the reach of reason as such. This source of knowledge is revelation.

According to Islamic teachings, the Source of Being, which has brought into existence the human being and the world, has provided not only for his physical and natural needs during life on this planet, but also the necessary nourishment for his mind and spirit. In fact, as man's intellectual and spiritual needs far exceed his physical requirements, the Source of Being has made appropriate and commensurate arrangements for the satisfaction of these needs as well. These arrangements consist of the messengers, prophets and sages who have been inspired by God to guide human beings throughout the course of history. And whenever the teachings, writings and scriptures brought by these prophets and sages have become corrupted and distorted in the course of time by priests, scribes, poets, and theologians, or entirely forsaken and abandoned by human communities, the Source of Being has dispatched further messengers and guides to restore guidance and the purity of divine teachings and to update them to bring them on a par with the needs of society.

From an Islamic point of view, religion is the pursuit of truth. In this sense, it is not intrinsically different from science which is the quest of the human mind to discover facts pertaining to the physical world. In fact, if we take the pursuit of truth in an absolute sense, science can be considered a part of religion, a component of the human quest for the truth. The respect for truth and the urge to discover is common to religion and science. The distinction between religion and science lies in the kind of knowledge they seek and the methods they use for obtaining that knowledge. Whereas science confines itself to discovering the laws governing the perceptible world-the part of the universe that is open to perception, experiment and empirical methods- religion directs its pursuit to the entire world of being and to domains that transcend empirical experience.

Hence, from the viewpoint of Islam, there can be no intrinsic conflict between science and religion, nor is there any contradiction between reason and revelation. Revelation is a source of knowledge for religious inquiry, whereas the empirical methods employed by science are a source of scientific knowledge. The use of reason as the basic instrument of inquiry is common to religion and science. Superstition, humbug, falsehood, falsification, forgery, distortion and perversion of truth and mental dishonesty are as much of an anathema to religion as they are to science.

When we understand religion as the pursuit of truth, there can neither be any conflict between it and science, nor can there be any conflict between those engaged in the religious pursuit, because their goal and objective is one. This is not to deny the unfortunate conflicts that have often arisen in the course of history between the savants of science and the self-styled patrons of religious traditions on the other.

Neither this is to deny the bloody conflicts that have at times plagued the relations between followers of different religious traditions.

During the last four centuries or so, modern science developed in an environment marked by the growing domination of secular and humanistic schools of thought in Europe. The historical conflict between scientific outlook and the religious worldview in the West has been mainly a conflict limited to Christendom and a product of the doctrines and dogmas of the

Church. These dogmas, which developed in the course of history as a result of the intellectual activities of Christian theologians, were based on certain interpretations of the scriptures. Hence it can be said that the Western conflict between religion and science was in fact not a conflict between reason and revelation as such, but one between reason and science on the one hand and a certain type of religious tradition on the other.

Apart from the conflict between science and religious traditions, we have the divergent and conflicting doctrines of the various religious traditions. Indeed even within the major religious traditions of the world such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism, we are confronted with different outlooks, doctrines, laws, and precepts. According to the Islamic view of the history of religions, the differences between the religious traditions derive not from authentic revelation but mainly from the theological, hermeneutic, legislative and interpretive activity of various generations of mankind through the course of centuries and belonging to different regions.

To a large extent, these differences of doctrine and religious law are a product of misunderstanding concerning the very meaning and purpose of religion as the pursuit of truth. Religiosity and piety have been understood to mean not loyalty and commitment to the truth, but as faithfulness to the religious tradition in which one has been born and which one was made to imbibe through the process of acculturation.

All the existing religious traditions of the world, including unfortunately even the Islamic world for the most part, base their following on imitation of ancestors and thoughtless adoption of current ideas, beliefs and norms through acculturation.

Children are expected to adopt the creed of their parents and ancestors, and adherence to any given religious tradition derives from imitation rather than individual research and quest. Imitation, acculturation and loyalty to the creed and beliefs of one's elders and ancestors rather than intellectual effort make the basis for the continuity of religious traditions. Such a view of religion is a travesty of the real meaning and spirit of religion as the highest and noblest of human pursuits for the truth.

According to Islam, imitation cannot be the basis of faith. Even if someone adopts the right beliefs by following and imitating others, it will not be acceptable and such a person cannot be said to possess a valid faith. Faith is something which is attained after a valid search for the truth. It may be said to be the religious equivalent of scientific knowledge and certainty, which can only be achieved through a valid process of scientific inquiry, training and research. Science is not a medley of unproved hypotheses, and a hypothesis does not become part of scientific knowledge unless it is proved by valid scientific methods. A scientific theory, even if it should be true and correspond to factual reality, cannot be accepted by the scientific community unless it can be established by valid empirical demonstration. Religious faith too is not blind faith; it is a knowledge that permeates deeply the heart of the faithful person as a result of valid intellectual effort, reasoning and spiritual endeavor.

The Qur'an is unique among the world's scriptures in that it not only lays down the doctrines and laws of the Islamic religion but also offers a critique of the religious traditions that existed in the Arabia of those days, namely Arab polytheism, Judaism and Christianity. The rejection of imitation and acculturation as a foundation for belief has a basis in the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an flatly rejects the rationale advanced by the polytheists for following the creed and practices of their ancestors:

When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We will rather follow what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither applied any reason nor were guided?! The parable of the faithless is that of someone who shouts after that which does not hear [anything] except a call and cry: deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not apply reason. (2:170-1)

According to the Qur'an, the most conspicuous characteristic of those who are devoid of real faith is that they do not apply rational criteria to their beliefs. As such they are considered creatures of a lower order than animals, because the animals simply follow their innate God-given instincts, whereas the faithless fail to use their God-given intellects and therefore degenerate to a level below that of animals:

Do you suppose that most of them listen or apply reason? They are just like cattle; rather they are further astray from the way. (25:44) Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and the dumb who do not apply reason. Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason. (12:2) According to the Qur'an, beliefs and religious rites should be derived from reason and revelation. Superstitious customs practiced in the name of religion are an affront to religion as the pursuit of the truth and conformity to the precepts of the Creator, received through genuine revelation, not through the muddy channels of theology:

Allah has not prescribed any such thing as Ba'rah, Si'ibah, Wa'lah, or Hjm; but those who are faithless fabricate lies against Allah, and most of them do not apply reason. And when they are told, 'Come to what Allah has sent down and [come] to the Apostle,' they say, 'Sufficient for us is what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided?! (5:103-4) According to the Qur'anic teaching, everything that exists in the world is a sign of God. The universe is a text, a Book that, albeit between the lines, speaks of the presence of its Source, Its compassion and care and Its perfect design and lofty purposes. The revealed Scripture is a commentary on this Book of Existence, and both of them are addressed to the intelligent, contemplative and thoughtful readers, "who apply their reason" and to whom the Qur'an often refers as "the Godwary," or as "those possessing intellects":

Have they not travelled over the land so that they may have hearts by which they may apply reason, or ears by which they may hear? Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but the hearts turn blind-those that are in the breasts! (22:46).

It is He who sends down water from the sky: from it you get your drink and from it are [sustained] the plants wherein you pasture your herds. With it He makes the crops grow for you and olives, date palms, vines, and fruits

of all kinds. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect. He disposed the night and the day for you, and the sun, the moon and the stars are disposed by His command. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason. And whatever He has created for you in the earth of diverse hues-there is indeed a sign in that for a people who take admonition. (16:10-13) In the earth are neighbouring terrains [of diverse kinds] and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root and from diverse roots, [all] irrigated by the same water, and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavour. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason. (13:4)

He brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living, and revives the earth after its death. Likewise you [too] shall be raised [from the dead]. Of His signs is that He created you from dust, then, behold, you are humans scattering [all over]! And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect. Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. There are indeed signs in that for those who know. And of His signs is your sleep by night and day, and your pursuit of His grace. There are indeed signs in that for a people who listen. And of His signs is that He shows you the lightning, arousing fear and hope, and He sends down water from the sky, and with it revives the earth after its death. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason. (30:19-24)

It is He who made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts. Little do you thank. It is He who created you on the earth, and you will be mustered toward Him. And it is He who gives life and brings death and due to Him are the alternations of day and night. Do you not apply reason? (23:78-80)

It is He who created you from dust, then from a drop of [seminal] fluid, then from a clinging mass, then He brings you forth as infants, then [He nourishes you] so that you may come of age, then that you may become aged-though there are some of you who die earlier-and that you may complete a specified term, and so that you may apply reason. (40:67)

And in the alternation of night and day and what Allah sends down from the sky of [His] provision with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the changing of the winds there are signs for a people who apply reason. (45:5)

“Those who reflect,” “those who listen,” “those who apply reason,” “those who take admonition,” those who keep their minds and ears open-these phrases describe the essential qualities of the genuinely religious human beings from the viewpoint of the Qur’an. Opinionatedness and dogmatic attachment to the beliefs of one’s denomination and theological tradition, and loyalty to one’s clan, tribe and ethnic ties do not make the foundation of religion but form the biggest hurdles in the way of genuine religious pursuit. The Qur’an condemns the Arab idolaters for their thoughtless loyalty to the polytheistic traditions of their forbears. The faithless are doomed on account of their refusal to use their rational

faculties, for defying the God- sent guide and denying the Qur'anic revelation:

For those who defy their Lord is the punishment of hell, and it is an evil destination.

When they are thrown in it, they hear it blaring, as it seethes, almost exploding with rage. Whenever a group is thrown in it, its keepers will ask them, 'Did there not come to you any warner?' They will say, 'Yes, a warner did come to us, but we impugned [him] and said, 'Allah did not send down anything; you are only in great error.' And they will say, 'Had we listened or applied reason, we would not have been among inmates of the Blaze.' (67:6-10)

Elsewhere it rebukes the Jews for their ethnic and racial pretensions as well for their extravagant theological claims of having a special relationship with God, a claim which is shared by some Christians, thus warning Muslims by implication against entertaining similar claims:

The Jews and the Christians say, 'We are Allah's children and His beloved ones.' Say, 'Then why does He punish you for your sins?' Rather you are humans from among His creatures. He forgives whomever He wishes, and punishes whomever He wishes, and to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, and toward Him is the return. (5:18)

Muslim scholars have developed the discipline of 'ilm al-kalam (literally, the science of dialectics) to deal with topics pertaining to belief and doctrine, which are often lumped together under the head of "theology." The tradition of theological discourse pertaining to matters of belief begins in the Qur'an itself. In fact, the greater part of the Qur'an deals with theological discussions pertaining to the nature and attributes of Divinity, the perfection of the system of creation, the role of justice in scheme of existence, the necessity of Divine guidance through prophets and scriptures, and the necessity of judgement and retribution and the pertinent details that go under the head of eschatology.

This tradition is followed up in the traditions of the Prophet (s) and the Imams (a). Among Shi'ah compilers of hadith, Kulayni (d. 328 or 329/939 or 940) devotes the first volumes of his al-Kafi, known as Usul al-Kafi, to issues of doctrine ranging from tawhid, prophethood and Imamate, to details pertaining to faith and unfaith. Shaykh Saduq (306-381/918-991), another prolific compiler of the traditions and a theologian, has a compilation, Kitab al-Tawhid, exclusively devoted to the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams surrounding the topic of tawhid. Muhammad b. Hasan al- Saffar (d. 290/903) had earlier compiled the Basa'ir al-Darajat, a collection of traditions dealing solely with the topic of Imamate.

Aside from the Qur'an and hadith, theological discourse in the Shi'i-Imami tradition has a long history. Shi'ah writers, right from the era of the Imams until the present day, have written hundreds of works on topics dealing with theological issues. Details of their theological works and polemical tracts dealing with debates and controversies can be sought from the Dhari'ah, an elaborate catalogue of Shi'ah works. After the era of the Imams and their disciples, the most eminent theologians of the early

centuries were Ibn Qubba al-Razi (fl. 3rd/9th century, Shaykh Saduq, Shaykh Mufid (336-413/948-1022), Sayyid Murtada (355-436/966-1044) and Shaykh Tusi (385- 460/955-1067), and their works have had a profound influence on Shi'ah thought of later centuries.

A major portion of Shi'i theological writings deals with the topic of Imamate, as this has been the most crucial issue in the Shi'i-Sunni debate. Two of the major works on Imamate were compiled in the Indian subcontinent, namely the *Ahqaq al-Haqq* by Qazi Sayyid Nur Allah Shushtari (d. 1019/1610) and the *'Abaqat al-Anwar* by Mir Hamid Husain Lakhnawi (1246-1306/1830-1888). Two other major works on Imamate, namely *al-Ghader* in Arabic by 'Allamah Amini (1320-1390/1902-1970) and *Imamshensi* in Persian by 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husain Husaini Tehrani, both of recent origin, are by Iranian scholars. Another contemporary work of significance is *'Adl-e Ilahi*, a monograph on the subject of Divine justice by Martyr Murtaza Mutahhari. He has also written a short work *An Introduction of 'Ilm al- Kalam*, which gives an excellent outline of the development of this discipline and the various schools of 'ilm al-kalam in the Islamic world, and describes the salient features of Shi'i theological thought.

Apart from monographs on Imamate and other theological subjects, and besides the polemical tracts, Shi'ah scholars have written comprehensive works with a didactic purpose dealing with almost all the basic doctrines of the Islamic creed. The most famous of the early works of this category are the *'Aqa'id* of Shaykh Saduq and Shaykh Mufid's *Tashih al-I'tiqad*. A later influential work of this kind is the *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* of Khwajah Nasiruddin Tusi (597-672/1201-1274) on which 'Allamah Hilli (648-726/1250-1325), another eminent theologian, wrote a famous commentary.

Three important contemporary works of this category are worthy of mention. The first is the encyclopedic trilogy in Persian, consisting of *Allah-shenasi* (Theology, in 3 volumes), *Imam-shenasi* (Imamology, in 18 volumes) and *Ma'ad-shenasi* (Eschatology, in 10 volumes), by 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husain Husaini Tehrani (1345-1416/1926-1995). This work has been translated into Arabic.

The second is a four-volume work *Mabani-ye Aqa'id-e Islami* by Sayyid Muhtaba Musavi Lari, which has been translated into English by Prof. Hamid Algar and has been published under the title *Lessons on Islamic Doctrine*.

The third noteworthy work, shortest of the three, is the present one by Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi, an eminent philosopher and prolific writer on a variety Islamic subjects. Despite its comparative brevity, it covers an immense range of topics from tawhid to ma'ad. Meant as an introductory textbook on Islamic doctrines for students, its format of short systematically arranged lessons, each dealing with a specific issue, makes it an ideal text for classroom purposes.

The book is entirely contemporary, both in its outlook and treatment of the subject. Shi'ah theological thought has always been known for its characteristic philosophical flavour and approach, and this quality is quite evident in the entire volumes of the present work.

It has been standard practice for works of this category to take almost no doctrinal notice of other religions and to show limited attention to the standpoints of other Islamic sects. They are written basically with the motive to explain and substantiate Islamic beliefs and display a healthy restraint in abstaining from distracting the student's attention by posing controversial and polemic issues. However, on the whole they remain largely indifferent to the intellectual climate and environment of their times.

But, all the three contemporary works mentioned above show varying degrees of awareness of the presence of other currents of thought in the contemporary world and offer an appropriate intellectual response. Among them, the present one is especially outstanding, as it reveals a keen awareness of the secular and materialistic philosophies and modes of thought that pose a broad danger to religion as a quest for truth beyond the limited concerns of modern science and a common hazard to all religious traditions of the world.

The Farsi original has received a warm welcome in Islamic seminaries and by teachers of courses in Islamic doctrine. It is hoped that the present translation of this outstanding work will as well be well received by teachers and students of Islamic studies and the general reader.

Sayyid 'Alī Qulī Qarā'ī Qum
al-Musharrifah
April 25th, 2005 CE

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This is a revolutionary work in the field Islamic Theology and also in the domain of seminary teaching. Theological Instruction is not only a traditional text on theology but it approaches the modern and post modern issues in a traditional style and replies the doubts raised by that domain on traditional bases. I am glad that we were taught this text while we were doing theology and for certain, this text has helped me in the field of propagation. This also portrays the uniqueness of this work because the text of hawza is usually difficult to be utilised in the field of propagation.

The Translation

The translation was begun in the year 2002 when Hujjatulislam Hayder Shirazi approached me and asks for this gracious work as he was teaching theology to the hawza students in London. He recognized the importance of this work and asserted that there is definitely a need in the west for this book for the students of the hawza and also for others. I translated lesson by lesson and emailed him from Qum eventually the task was accomplished in a year. However Mr Shirazi also translated eight to ten lessons which we are thankful to him. Those lessons have been re- translated in this final translation in order the uniformity remains in the work.

The translation focuses upon providing accurate translation of Ayatulla's work, rather than just transferring the meaning. However, a relatively academic English style has been utilised in order to facilitate the student of theology in the field of theology and others in general reading. An effort has been made to focus upon creating a uniformity between this translation and Philosophical Instruction of Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi translated by Professor Legenhausan and Dr 'Azim Sarvdalīr. I have tried to use the same terminology used by these two translators and also adapted the title of this translation and the style from Philosophical Instruction.

I am honoured, encouraged and quite grateful to Aga Qulī Qarā'ī for writing a very rich introduction to this work. I am obligated to thank my wife for her motivation provided and Hujjatulislām Muhsin 'Ahmedī, Hujjatulislām S. Sādiq Hāshimīyān, and Hujjatulislām Ahmed Hanif, who encouraged and provided assistance whenever needed in translating this work. I am also grateful to Dr. Rawand Osmaan for providing the work with proper transliteration of terms and also for the uniformity of the verses of the Qur'an from the translation of Aga Qulī Qarā'ī. However, if any lapses and errors remain, I accept the responsibility and humbly request the reader to provide their remarks and suggestion by corresponding on the postal and e-mail addresses provided herein. Finally this translation would not have seen the light of publication without the effort of Hujjatulislām Muhammad Shumālī, whom I sincerely thank.

The effort and work is very little for it to be a re-pay to the martyrs and to the Hawzah 'Illmiyyah (Islamic Seminary), whom I owe the most. I can only pray that this work be a piece of focus for the Imam of the time and that he prays for me and also all of those who have made this work possible.

Mīrzā Muhammad 'Abbās Rida

26 June, 2006 CE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Within the Name of God: the Infinitely Good, the Boundlessly Merciful

BELIEF AND IDEOLOGY are the sources and foundations of every valuable system; and every ideology gives form to an organization and affects the behaviour of man whether consciously or unconsciously. Therefore the establishment of such a value system based upon the Islamic beliefs and ideology - which is counted as being abundant and perpetual in their resources - must be engraved upon the heart of man, so that it can offer its sweet fruit and bring forth the felicity of the two worlds.

The Islamic scholars from the very outset of Islam have explained and propagated the beliefs of Islam in different ways. The scholars of theology have written numerous books covering and suitable for many different levels. In this present period while focusing upon more recent issues and doubts, these scholars have written books on distinctive levels. However the books we find in response to modern issues and doubts are on two completely different planes. The first is at a general level offering simple explanations and definitions and the second is much more complex, incorporating difficult and intellectual terminologies in a very condensed text.

Therefore, there remained a place and a need for a book, which could be taught at the intermediate level.

On account of this and due to the suggestions of the manager of the Islamic Propagation Organization (IPO) and with the help of the scholars of the institution Dar rah-e-Haqq, we have compiled this book. The features of this book are as follows:

1. The topics of this book are organized into a logical order, and when explaining the various issues, references from future lessons are not given.
2. We have tried our utmost to use simple and clear language and avoid complex and difficult terminologies in our explanations.
3. We have used clear and evident proofs in order to establish our points and escape complicated reasoning.
4. We have avoided superfluous information, which usually tires the reader.
5. As this book is for intermediate studies, we have not employed arguments that require a prior understanding of philosophy, the science of the interpretation of the Qur'an, jurisprudence or the discipline of hadith. However, in case of necessity we have employed enough premises and given references for those who want to continue research or study in detail about the subject.
6. The contents of the book are aimed at the students of intermediate level. Each chapter is a complete lesson.
7. Important issues have been emphasized and sometimes repeated, to ensure a complete and competent understanding.
8. Every lesson is followed by a list of questions to aid comprehension.

This book without a doubt is not free from error and mistake and I hope that with the help and advice of teachers, these errors and mistakes will be corrected in future editions.

It is greatly hoped that this small effort will be accepted by the Imam (a) of our time (Allah hasten his re- appearance) for the Hawzah 'Ilmiyyah (Islamic seminary) to which I am indebted (Islamic seminary), as well as for the martyrs.

Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi

Qum

September 1986

LESSON ONE: CONCEPT OF RELIGION

The purpose of this book is to explain the beliefs of Islam, known in Islamic terminology as ‘The Principles of Religion’ (Usūl al-Dīn). Before delving into this subject it is necessary to briefly define the word ‘religion’. A definition in the art of Logic marks the beginning of conceptualisation.

The Arabic word for religion is, ‘dīn’ and carries a lexical meaning of obedience, reward and subjugation.

In technical terminology, religion means to have a belief in the ‘Creator’ of man and universe. The prescribed actions that accompany such a belief also fall within this definition. Those who believe in a creator, even if their beliefs are mingled with perversions and superstitions are regarded as being ‘religious’. Those who consider the universe to be merely accidental, resulting from an effect of a material or natural cause are called ‘materialists’.

On this basis contemporary religions can be divided into true or false religions. A true religion can be termed as a tradition, which holds correct beliefs, which are consonant with the reality, and from which emanates behaviour, which is expounded and intensified with the sense of being right and secure.

The principles of religion and its branches

By understanding the technical definition given to the word ‘religion’, it becomes clear that religion can be divided into two major components:

1. The fundamental belief or beliefs, which are held to be the foundation.
2. The practical rules, which are related to, and emerge from the fundamental beliefs.

The section, which relates to the religious belief, is termed as its ‘principle’ (usūl), and the section relating to the practical rules are known as its ‘branches’ (furū’).

Islamic scholars use these terms to identify these two categories.

a. Worldview and Ideology

Worldview can be defined as being a series of universal and harmonious beliefs concerning man and the universe.

Ideology can generally be taken to mean a series of universal and harmonious views regarding human behaviour.

By consideration of the above, the term ‘worldview’ can be applied to the ‘principles of belief’, and ‘ideology’ can be used in connection with the branches or universal practical rules. It must be noted though, that neither worldview nor ideology includes the particular aspects of the principles or the branches. Also ideology can occasionally overlap with worldview and include some of the latter’s meanings.

b. Divine and Materialistic Worldviews

Throughout differing human societies, miscellaneous worldviews have existed and exist. They can be divided into the ‘divine’ and the ‘materialistic’. A divine worldview is based upon the metaphysical reality, whereas a materialistic worldview is not.

In the past, adherents to the materialistic worldview were known as atheists (dahrī), naturalists (tabī'ī) and occasionally as dualists (zindīq) or heretics (mulhid).

Contemporary materialism appears in various shapes and forms, the most famous being 'dialectical materialism', which can be witnessed within Marxist philosophy.

Through the course of this discussion it has become apparent that the terms worldview and ideology can also be applied in a non-religious context.

c. Revealed religions and their principles

There have always been differing opinions amongst the sociologists, anthropologists and religious historians with regards to the appearance of religion. However from evidence found within Islam, the appearance of religion is considered to be associated with the appearance of man. The first man on earth was Adam (a), the Prophet of God, who came to proclaim monotheism. The polytheism and distortion of the truth that we see around us is the result of man following his own desires and not adhering to the true guidance.

The monotheistic religions, also known as the 'Revealed Religions', have three common fundamental principles:

1. Belief in One God.
2. Belief in eternal life in the hereafter, and the recompense of reward or punishment for actions performed in this life.
3. Belief in the prophets of God sent to guide man towards perfection and towards attaining felicity in this world and in the hereafter.

These three fundamental principles provide the answers to the following questions, which could be asked by any intelligent person:

Who is the creator?

What is the ultimate end?

From where does one seek guidance in living a righteous life?

Such guidance has been secured through revelation (wahi), and is known as that religious ideology which has manifested itself from within the divine worldview.

The principles of religious belief are comprised of corollaries, implications and details, differences of which lead to the appearance of differing religions, sects and schools. Thus the difference in belief over prophethood, can be seen in the principle of trinity (as with the Christian belief), and the differences in belief over 'Imamate' (socio-political leadership), has led to differences of belief over the principle of succession (which has divided Muslims into Sunnite and Shiite).

The main point to consider is that monotheism (tawhīd); prophethood (nubuwwah) and resurrection (ma'ād) are the fundamental principles for all of the revealed religions.

Corollaries however can also be considered to be part of a fundamental principle. For example, belief in the existence and unity of God is a fundamental principle. Some Shiite scholars believe that justice ('adl) should be considered as a separate principle, but in reality it is actually part of the first principle mentioned. Another example is that of Imamate, which

some scholars consider as a principle in its own right, whereas in fact it is just a continuation of the principle of prophethood.

On this basis the term 'Principles of Religion' can be categorized into general and particular forms. The general use of the form, 'principle of religion' is vis-à-vis 'branches' and the particular uses of the term are for particular sects and beliefs.

The general form also includes the other revealed religions, which share the three common principles (tawhīd, nubuwwah, ma'ād).

Questions:

1. Explain the concept of religion from the lexical and terminological point of view.
2. Define the terms worldview and ideology, and explain the differences between them.
3. Briefly explain the two different kinds of worldview.
4. State the general and particular aspects of 'The principles of religion'.
5. What is the commonality between the revealed religions?

LESSON TWO: INQUIRING INTO RELIGION

The drive to investigate

It is within the intrinsic nature (fitrah) of man to seek and be aware of Reality. Man is born with this quality, which remains with him until his death. Sometimes this instinct for seeking the truth may be referred to as a 'sense of curiosity', whereby man is driven to ponder upon religious issues and it is this very action, which helps him to understand and realise a true religion. In the process of this realisation he is faced with the following Questions:

Is there an imperceptible and immaterial being?

If there is, is there a link between this immaterial being and our material world?

In the presence of this relationship, is there a Reality, which created the universe?

Is the existence of man limited to this material form/world?

If man is not limited to this material/worldly life, is there another world, and if there is what is the relationship between these two worlds?

Furthermore man requires knowledge concerning the best method by which he can live a righteous and fulfilled life, which will guarantee him felicity in this world and also in the next.

The primary attribute man requires in seeking reality is thus his intrinsic nature.

Man's desires are another factor that may encourage and consolidate him into seeking the truth. Such desires may not necessarily be of divine origin but may be desires that wish to accomplish worldly or materialistic bounties. This is dependant upon his struggle within the fields of knowledge and upon the advancement of experimental sciences. If religion can provide man with the means to achieve worldly goals without loss, this will inspire him to further investigate religion, because it is within man's nature to move towards success and further him from failure.

With the understanding of the realm of realities being vast, difficult and out of reach, man escapes by choosing realms whose understanding is easier and experimental. He has doubts whether he will receive any benefit from inquiring into religion, and whether he will gain any result at all due to its complex nature compared to that knowledge which is easily acquired and straightforward. Man must recognise that investigating any issue other than religion has no subjective value, whereas religious issues are of the highest value.

It should be noted that psychologists account the worship of God to be one of the independent instincts of man, which manifests from the 'sense of religiosity', which runs parallel to the sense of curiosity, goodness and elegance. History can confirm for the psychologist and anthropologist that the worship of God in diverse forms has always accompanied the path of man. This further goes to prove that it is an intrinsic quality within him.

The fact that this intrinsic nature is inherent within man does not necessarily mean it is always active and alert. It does though attract the aware and conscious among men towards their true nature. Lack of

awareness, atmospheric consequences and perverted influences might deprive man from the realisation of this nature; furthermore these distortions can also occur in our other instincts, which stem from this very intrinsic nature.

The argument for inquiring into religion is strengthened by the independent instinct of man, which does not require any reason or proof for its accountability. However the Qur'an and traditions provide us with testimony that religion is intrinsic to man, despite the fact that men in their ignorance may deny this fact. "Rather man desires to go on living viciously". (al-Qiyamah:5) If man is not consciously aware of his inherent nature, he will fail to witness its effects and thus deny its existence. Due to this fact we will provide the reader with the following intellectual proofs.

a. The significance of inquiring into religion.

It has become clear that the inherent nature of man to know reality and the desire to accomplish worldly bounties are the impetus for the realisation of different beneficial perspectives and knowledge.

By looking back into history man becomes aware that the best of men have all proclaimed that they were sent by the Creator in order to deliver a message and guide mankind. Furthermore, for this deliverance they have achieved all that they could and have even sacrificed their lives for it. On this basis the natural instincts of man will inspire him to inquire into religion and to perceive whether the messengers and their messages are true and in line with logical reasoning or not. When man realises that such invitations encompass felicity and eternal pleasures, resulting in departure from eternal chastisement and loss, what reason will he have for not investigating religion?

There is the possibility that man may not decide to pursue such a line of inquiry, due to his own laziness, apathy or prospect of religion bringing undesired restrictions. In this case man should prepare himself to face the consequences of his actions, which may result in eternal chastisement.

The condition of such individuals, who are indifferent to religion, has been likened to being more severe than that of an immature sick child, who for the fear of bitter tasting medicine avoids approaching a doctor. The child due to his young age is unable to calculate such loss or gain, but an individual who is aware and has the intellectual capacity to determine and foresee the outcome, cannot exchange such worldly and temporal pleasures for eternal punishment. The Qur'an has regarded such heedless individuals who barter eternal loss for the worldly and timely pleasures as animals or even worse.

"They are like cattle; rather they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless". (al-A'rāf:179)

In another instance, the Qur'an has mentioned:

"Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and the dumb who do not apply reason". (al-Anfāl:22)

b. Resolution of a doubt

It is possible that certain individuals may view inquiring into religion as unbeneficial, as it would not provide them with the desired or sufficient

results. They therefore prefer to utilise their time and energy pursuing issues, which will produce for them a fruitful outcome.

In order to resolve this doubt it must be argued that the resolutions of religious issues are in no way inferior to other sciences. We are also aware that resolving a scientific issue can be a lengthy and drawn out process, therefore investigating religion cannot be forsaken on the basis that it will utilise too much time and energy.

Furthermore probability is not a rationale; the revenue from this probability must also be taken into consideration. For instance:

in business 'A' there is a 5% chance of being successful and in business B a 10% chance. However the revenue provided in A will be \$1000 and in B will be \$100. Hence business A is five times more preferable than business B because of the prospective profit.

We would conclude therefore that the possibility of the outcome of inquiring into religion is of infinite benefit, even if the result of arriving at certainty is weak.

Research made into religious matters is significantly more important than those made into more limited issues, unless one can reach certainty that investigating religion is pointless; but where would man find such certainty?

Questions:

1. Why does man not research into all the different realities?
2. Explain the necessity of investigating the principles of religion.
3. What is the meaning of a 'sense of religiosity', and what are the proofs for its existence?
4. Can researching into religious issues be abandoned with the excuse of there being no hope of reaching certainty? Why?

LESSON THREE: THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO LIVE AS HUMAN BEINGS

Introduction

In the previous lesson we have relatively proven the need for searching for a true religion, which relies upon man's intrinsic nature and the inherent instincts of seeking profit. These motives can be found in all men who are unbiased and who hold an intuitive awareness of their natural self.

We aim in this chapter to explore the same subject from a different angle with different subtle preliminaries. The result of such arguments is that if an individual does not investigate religion nor hold a correct worldview or ideology, they will never reach human perfection. Thus an essential condition for the success of one's livelihood is to hold a correct worldview or ideology.

The above result depends upon three preliminaries:

1. Man existentially pursues perfection.
2. Man's perfection is achieved in the light of active 'free-will', which arises from the command of the intellect (hukm al-'aql).
3. The practical rules of the intellect take form under the light of understanding speculative realities. However the most significant of all realities are the three fundamental principles of worldviews: Belief in the creator. The eventual end of life A program that guarantees success in this life and in the Hereafter.

Man is a creature that pursues perfection.

A person who is aware of his intrinsic nature and psychological tendencies will discover that through his actions it is possible to attain perfection. No individual likes to be defective or imperfect; he tries to rid himself of imperfections so as to reach the state of perfection. Furthermore he tries to conceal his faults in-front of others. The desire for pursuing perfection is only effective when it is regulated by the course of intrinsic nature, as opposed to the path of perversion, which will lead him towards the diseased qualities such as arrogance, hypocrisy and self-praise etc.

Hence the drive for achieving perfection is a powerful intrinsic element, which can be sensed in the depths of the human soul by those conscious individuals.

a. Man's perfection is achieved by following the intellect.

The perfection of plants in the plant kingdom is to bear specific fruits, which are dependant upon the conditions available for the development of that particular fruit.

However these conditions are determined for them as there is no element of free-will in the vegetative domain.

In the realm of the animal kingdom, free-will is limited to the level of instincts, which are confined to the corporeal senses.

Human beings however in addition to the animalistic and vegetative domain have two spiritual privileges:

1. Intuitional desires, which are not limited within his physical needs.

2. The power of the intellect, by which man can expand his realm of knowledge infinitely.

These two privileges increase the domain of 'free- will' towards the infinite.

In the same manner by which the specific qualities help the vegetative realm to reach perfection, and corporeal senses aid the animal realm to its perfection, man accomplishes perfection on account of the intellect in association with awareness. It is this very intellect, which can determine the different levels of desirability and select the best choice at the time of multitude.

Based on the above, we can deduce that human behaviour is firmly established on the quality of free-will, which evolves from special desires that are selected and approved by the intellect.

b. The practical rules of the intellect require the basis of speculation.

Human behavior used in conjunction with free-will is a means to attain the desired objective. This behavior, because of its objective is valuable as it affects human perfection. A behavior however, that alters perfection will subsequently have a negative value.

When the intellect is able to judge human behaviour and ascertain its worth, man should then be aware of his existence and of the levels of perfection. He should thus know the different dimensions of his being and the purpose of his creation.

On these grounds the correct ideology, which governs the valuable system of human behavior becomes intermixed with the correct worldview. However we cannot judge human behavior unless we have arrived at these principles. Thus the speculative understanding, which composes the worldview, is the basis for the practical rules of the intellect.

c. Results to be achieved

By taking these preliminaries into consideration, we can comprehend the importance of inquiring into religion and of holding a correct worldview or ideology.

Man by his nature pursues perfection and aims to reach the state of perfection through the performance of actions and behavior. However in order to know which kinds of behavior will assist him in reaching this goal, he first needs to be aware as to what is his infinite level of perfection. To understand this it is necessary that he understands his own being, knowing its beginning and its end, and then to understand the positive and negative relationships between different types of behavior, and their effects thereon. He should also be able to recognise the different miscellaneous levels of perfection. Until he realises these prerequisites, which are basically the speculative knowledge (principles of worldview), he will not be able to grasp the practical rules of the intellect, which is the ideology.

To conclude, we can claim that inquiring into a true religion, which is composed of a correct worldview and ideology is essential. Without such a belief man will never achieve perfection, because behavior based upon an incorrect worldview and ideology will lead him nowhere.

Those who persist in their arrogance, ill desires and unfaithfulness after recognising the truth are in reality no less than animals. They are content by satisfying that aspect of their nature and are described as such in the Qur'an:

“They enjoy and eat, just like the cattle eat” (Muhammad:12).

Since man has destroyed his potential to become perfect he will face the consequences of eternal chastisement:

“Leave them to eat and enjoy and to be diverted by longings. Soon they will know”. (al-Hijr:3)

Questions:

- 1- What are the preliminaries for the second proof of investigating religion?
- 2- Explain man as a creature that pursues perfection.
- 3- What are the fundamental qualities of man?
- 4- How are the fundamental qualities related to true perfection?
- 5- In what way does ideology depend upon a worldview?
- 6- Explain the logical form of the second argument.

LESSON FOUR: THE WAY OF RESOLVING FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

Introduction

When man enters the domain of resolving the fundamental issues of the worldview and the way of realisation of understanding the principles of a true religion, he will initially encounter the following question:

How can these issues be resolved? And how can one discover the fundamentals of epistemology and the means to achieve it?

Intensive and professional research of this understanding in philosophy is known as 'epistemology', where the different understandings of man are discussed and their values acknowledged.

To embark on a discussion of all the different types of understanding would sidetrack us away from the aim of this book. We have thus summarised the required subjects, which are presented as follows:

The different types of epistemology

Man's understanding can be divided into four parts:

1. Experimental understanding:

The understanding we perceive through our bodily senses is known as experimental understanding. Intellect however plays an active role in refining and analysing these sense perceptions.

The experimental sciences such as physics, chemistry and biology are founded upon experimental understanding.

2. Intellectual understanding:

Intellectual understanding is formed through the abstraction of concepts. The process is greatly assisted by the intellect; however syllogisms may sometimes be used as a premise. The domain of intellectual understanding is logic, philosophy and mathematics.

3. Devotional understanding or religious understanding:

This understanding is based on information that has been previously gained through a reliable source and has been accepted because of coming from a trustworthy person or authority. This type of understanding can sometimes be stronger than those beliefs, which have evolved from sense perception and experimental knowledge.

4. Mystical or intuitive understanding:

This type of understanding is contrary to all of the above-mentioned understandings.

The essence of reality is known without any assistance from mental concepts, intercession or any procedure whatsoever.

However as intuitive or mystical understanding is based on the interpretation of a witness, who is capable of making mistakes, there is thus the possibility of this understanding also being wrong.

a. Different types of worldview

By considering the above divisions of epistemology, worldview can also be divided as follows:

1. Scientific worldview:

Based on the results of experimental knowledge, man develops a universal vision, which can be known as the scientific worldview.

2. Philosophical worldview:

This worldview is based on the vision that is acquired from intellectual arguments.

3. Religious worldview:

Man on account of his faith and trust in religious leaders comes to the realisation of a vision, which can be classified as a religious worldview.

4. Gnostic Worldview:

The Worldview achieved through purification, which results in Illumination (kashf) and Witnessing (shuhūd).

We will now look at whether the above four procedures will solve the fundamental issues of the worldview and provide wise solutions. We will then deduce which view is the most superior.

b. Criticism and research

Experimental understanding is limited to the realm of matter. The scientific and experimental sciences have yet to prove or falsify the issues relating to the principles of the worldview. For instance, one cannot prove or disprove the existence of God with the help of a laboratory experiment. Furthermore the realm of experimental understanding is limited to understanding and answering the issues concerning the metaphysical realities.

Hence it becomes clear that one cannot understand the principles of the worldview resolve the issues relating to it or even be concerned with the enigmas relating to it on the basis of the experimental/scientific understanding.

The understanding that emanates from devotion and religion requires as already mentioned, the establishment of a reliable source. Firstly the existence of the Originator must be proven, followed by the proof of prophethood, so as the message will be recognised and secure. The principle of the existence of the Originator and of prophethood cannot be proven through the message.

For instance, one cannot argue that because the Qur'an has mentioned that God exists therefore He is proven.

Verily after proving the existence of God, identifying the Prophet, and the truthfulness of the Qur'an, one can accept the auxiliary beliefs and practices based upon the trustworthy channel (Prophet) and reliable source (God).

Hence the issues concerned cannot utilise the medium of devotion to answer the fundamental questions of principles (existence of God, prophethood etc.) relating the worldviews.

However the means of gnosis and illumination requires a field of discussion.

1. A worldview is an understanding that is achieved by virtue of mental conception; nonetheless there is no place for mental conception in the realm of witnessing.

2. The interpretation of witnessing and its expression in words requires a skilful and intellectual mind, which has a background of extensive research into philosophy.

Those who lack such intelligence and the skilful means to accurately convey the meanings use concepts and words those are similar. Nevertheless, they lead to major distortions and perversions.

3. Most of the time the reality, which has been witnessed, is under the influence of the imagination and the explanation that a mind gives, even for the witnessing one, is inaccurate.

4. Acquiring the reality, which is known as the worldview (as interpreted by the intellect) is bound to spiritual journey. Accepting the path of spiritual journey (sayr wa sulūk), which is itself from the practical understanding, requires the basis of speculation and issues of worldview.

Prior to starting upon the path of spiritual journey, one has to resolve the fundamental issues of the worldviews. The fulfilment of these issues will instigate gnostic understanding. Essentially true mysticism (‘irfān) is only realised for an individual who is on the path of servitude and who strives sincerely for the truth. This process is subservient to the previous understanding of God and the path of servitude and submission.

c. Results to be achieved

The only way to resolve the fundamental issues of the worldview is intellectually, i.e. through the use of the intellect. For this reason the true worldview should be known as the philosophical worldview.

However knowing the way to resolve problems through a philosophical worldview is not sufficient, but to achieve a correct worldview it is also not necessary to resolve all of the philosophical issues. But it is enough to resolve some of the simple philosophical issues which are virtually self evident for proving the existence of God (basis issue of the worldview). It must not be overlooked, that to be specialised in religious issues in order to have the ability to answer questions and doubts requires a deep study of philosophy.

Furthermore, it must be realised that just because the other types of epistemology are limited compared to the intellectual understanding, it does not mean that they are irrelevant; rather information from them can be also employed in resolving issues.

The majority of intellectual arguments use a combination of intuitive knowledge, experimental understanding and sense perception as premises.

Therefore after concluding a correct worldview and ideology one can arrive at a mystical vision (mukāshafah) through spiritual wayfaring without any intermediary mental concepts. However these mystical intuitions can be proven by intellectual arguments.

Questions:

- 1- Explain the different types of epistemology and their limitations.
- 2- How many types of worldviews can be assumed?
- 3- How can one solve the fundamental issues of the worldview?
- 4- Give a critical analysis of the scientific worldview?

5- How can one utilise experimental understanding to explain the issues of the worldview?

6- In what way is devotional or religious understanding fruitful?

7- What is the gnostical or mystical worldview? Explain whether the essential problems relating to the worldview can be solved on the basis of witnessing? Why?

LESSON FIVE: KNOWING GOD

Introduction

The foundation of religion is the belief in the Supreme Creator of the universe. This point constitutes the divisive element, which separates the divine worldview from the materialistic worldview. The primary factor to be established in the search for reality is whether or not God exists. We have to arrive at a positive or negative conclusion through the utilisation of the intellect.

If the conclusion is positive then we proceed to review the secondary issues (such as unity, justice and other divine qualities). If on the other hand the result proves to be negative, then we accept the materialistic worldview and there is no further need to investigate into religion.

Cognition through knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquisition

There are two ways of knowing God; one way through acquired knowledge and the other way through knowledge by presence. The meaning of knowledge by presence means that an individual knows God through a type of inward witnessing, without any intermediary or mental concepts. It is self evident that if someone has conscious witnessing with regards to God - the way that the great gnostics have claimed - then he does not require any intellectual proof or reasoning. However for the average individual this type of knowledge and vision is only possible through self-building and spiritual wayfaring. Although a weak version of it is present in the average man it is not combined with awareness and is not considered sufficient enough to acquire a worldview.

The meaning of knowledge by acquisition is that an individual with the help of universal concepts -such as the Creator, All Knowing, Omnipotent, etc -realises intellectually the existence of God.

However this understanding is limited and inadequate because it adheres upon the intellectual capacity of that individual and subsequently he associates the additional acquired knowledge to this base in order to establish a harmonious system of belief (worldview).

Acquired knowledge is established upon intellectual proofs and philosophical reasoning. Once acquired man can enter the realm of understanding and realising knowledge by presence.

Cognition through intrinsic nature

In most of the discourses of the saints, gnostics and philosophers we find that knowing God is a natural instinct of man, and something that is inherent to him through his intrinsic nature. In order to understand these definitions one has to define the meaning of intrinsic nature.

In Arabic the word 'fitrah' is used to imply a 'type of creation'. Such things, which are related to this intrinsic nature, are called 'fitri', and are those things whose creation depends on something already existent.

We consider those things, which are fitri to have three distinctive features:

1. Different creatures all have a similar intrinsic nature within their species, although there may be variations with regards to it being strong or weak.

2. Things related to the intrinsic nature in the course of history have been determined as being permanent and perpetual. “The origination of Allah according to which he originated mankind (there is no altering Allah’s creation)”. (al-Rūm:30)

3. The intrinsic nature is self-sufficient from education and training, however it can be intensified and guided through the assistance of discipline.

This intrinsic nature of man can be divided into two parts:

a. Cognition related to the intrinsic nature endowed to man and not acquired through learning.

b. Those tendencies and impulses, which are related to the intrinsic nature and are essential elements in the creation of every individual.

On this basis, if awareness of God is established within every human being and is not a thing that man needs to acquire through research, then it can be called, ‘Knowing God through intrinsic nature’.

If all humans have the tendency towards worshipping God, then it would be known as, ‘Worshipping God through intrinsic nature.’ In lesson two we have indicated that most of the experts in the fields of anthropology and psychology have regarded the tendencies towards religion as psychological and have labelled it as a ‘sense of religiosity’ or as ‘religious sentiment’. We must emphasise that ‘knowing God’ is based on man’s intrinsic nature. However the intrinsic nature of knowing and worshipping God is not with full awareness in a manner that it will suffice ordinary men from intellectual reasoning.

One should not forget that the element of knowledge by presence exists in every individual to a lower degree and is perfected through intellectual reasoning.

In conclusion, cognition of God based upon intrinsic nature means that man’s heart is aware of God, and his spirit has the potentiality of knowing God with full awareness.

Questions

1. Name the most fundamental issue of a worldview? Why it is considered the most fundamental?

2. Explain the meaning of knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquisition?

3. Is it possible to acquire knowledge by presence through intellectual reasoning and philosophical proof? Why?

4. What is the role of acquired knowledge for an individual, who wants to arrive to knowledge by presence?

5. What is the meaning of intrinsic nature - fitrah?

6. Explain the specialties of those things, which are related to the intrinsic nature of man.

7. Explain the different types of things considered as ‘fitri?

8. Which particular aspect of intrinsic nature is in relationship to God?

9. Define cognition through intrinsic nature. Is the intrinsic nature of man sufficient in itself for the average man to know God, without resorting to intellectual reasoning? Why?

LESSON SIX: THE SIMPLE WAY OF KNOWING GOD

The ways of knowing God

There are numerous mediums through which man can know God, many of which are mentioned in the different books of philosophy, theology and in the discourses of saints. These mediums or ways have used distinctive forms of reasoning and proofs:

for example some have utilised (corporeal) senses and experimental sciences, on the other hand some have applied only intellectual arguments as a premise for knowing God. Certain schools attempt to prove God directly and certain schools to only prove His existence, which does not depend on any existent (necessary existent). In order to understand His complexity (attributes), the establishment of other arguments is required.

The proofs and reasoning of knowledge about God can be compared for example to the multiplicity of ways by which one can cross a river: some are like simple wooden bridges which are drawn over the river, by which a light-weight traveller can easily cross and reach his destination. Other bridges may be built of stone, which results in them being strong but also longer, the way thus becomes lengthier. Finally, some bridges such as intricate iron bridges, which contain tunnels for trains, provide a more complex way of travelling.

An individual with a simple mind can recognise God through a very simple way and fulfil his responsibilities of servitude. If one has encountered many criticisms, which caused him to doubt, then he should prefer the stone bridge. The man who is entangled with extreme doubts and questions must choose the complex path; it is essential for him, even though his path may be lengthened.

We now aim to outline the three different levels by which man can know God. Firstly by defining the simple way, then the intermediary way and finally the more complex way, this way resolves several fundamental issues of philosophy and is for those minds, which are full of doubts and that have become deviated from the reality and goal.

a. Specialties of the simple way

The simple way of knowing about God is bestowed with different merits and peculiarities, the most important of them are mentioned as follows:

1. The initial way is the most simple of all and does not require any intricate or proficient premises. It is easily understood by all degrees of mind.

2. This path directly accepts God as the Wise Creator. In this way it is unlike philosophy or theology (kalām) where the proof for the existence of God is first accomplished and then followed by the proof for the establishment of His attributes through intellectual reasoning.

3. This way is based upon and emphasises upon the intrinsic nature of man. Through reflection man will come to witness the beauty of God in the creation as well as in other manifestations.

4. The saints for guiding the masses utilise this path, which is based upon the intrinsic nature of man. However when discussing or debating with atheists, materialistic philosophers or sharp-minded individuals, the leaders would choose a different method by which to debate.

b. Familiar signs.

By reflecting upon the signs (āyāt) around us, man can arrive at an understanding of his Creator. In Qur'anic terminology such reflection is termed as 'contemplation upon the signs of the Lord'. Hence everything that is in the heavens and the earth and within man himself reflects God and channels the heart to feel the presence of God's guidance in the universe.

This very book that you have in your hand is a sign from the author. Is it not true that by reading it you are becoming aware that the writer is intelligent and has a purpose?

Have you ever thought that this work is the result of a chain of reactions without any intent? Is it not an absurd idea that an encyclopaedia of a hundred volumes could have come into existence as an effect of an explosion which came to occur in a metal mine, the fragments of which took the form of letters and through accidental encounters with pieces of paper made writing appear and then the papers also accidentally became arranged and bound into volumes?

To accept blind accidents as a means of explaining the vast universe as a phenomenon, with all the hidden and uncovered secrets and wisdoms behind it is a thousand times more absurd than the above-mentioned idea!

Every determined order is the sign of a determiner who is orderly and has a determination. This type of order can be perceived all over the universe. These orders bring together a universal orderliness, which has been brought about by a wise creator who perpetually manages it.

Shrubs of rose stem out from mud and clay in a beautiful garden, with distinctive colours and a variety of fragrances, an apple tree originates from a small seed and every year gives a good amount of apples which are fair in taste, colour, and fragrance.

Furthermore the song of the nightingale, the chicken hatching out of an egg, by beating the ground with the beak, and the newborn calf suckling its mothers for milk, at the same time the breasts are ready with the supply of milk for the baby etc. These are all signs from Him.

Is it not surprising that the honeybees, cows, and goats provide man with honey and milk especially for his use and in unlimited quantity? Ungrateful man however does not recognise these familiar bounties and encounters them with confrontation and dissidence.

In his very body man can see the outstanding effects of wise supervision: the shape of the body with balanced functional division, the external vital structure with harmonious internal organs composed of millions of cells, which are all from a mother cell, each cell containing a specific portion of special material to function properly, such as breathing oxygen through the lungs, which is then transported by the red blood cells, and the liver which produces sugar necessary for the human body, and the replacement of destroyed cells with new cells, and the protection of the human body by the white blood cells against viruses and microbes, and the various hormones

which are produced by different glands- organising the physiological tasks of human body, all the abovementioned are signs reflecting Almighty God.

This physiological system is mysterious, and even though dozens of centuries have passed, man still has further ground to discover. If one investigates the smallest details of the living cell, he would undoubtedly question as to who was the administrator and originator behind it all.

It is the Wise Creator who holds the utmost perfection and orderliness, who manages such affairs:

“That is Allah! Then where do you stray?” (al-An’ām:95) It is apparent, that as knowledge expands and grows resulting in more discoveries of natural laws and their relationships, it will result in the unveiling of the secret wisdom behind the creation. However contemplating on these simple, visible, and clear signs is sufficient enough for pure and uncontaminated hearts.

Questions:

- 1- Explain the different ways of knowing God and what their peculiarities are?
- 2- Define the simple way of knowing about God and its peculiarities.
- 3- Explain the determined signs of creation.
- 4- Give the logical proof for ‘order’.

LESSON SEVEN: PROOFS OF NECESSARY EXISTENT

Introduction

In the previous lessons we have indicated that the philosophers and the scholars of theology (mutakallimīn) have established several arguments for the proof of God. In this lesson we have brought one of their many arguments, because of the fact that it is elementary, simple and requires less of an introduction in order to establish an existence as necessary (wājib). However the validity of this argument is only for proving necessary existent (wājib al-wujūd), i.e. an existent which does not need, require or depend upon any other existent for coming into being and in order to proof its positive attributes (knowledge, omnipotence, and being above time and space) requires additional arguments.

Text of the proof

Existence through intellectual perception is either necessary existence or possible existence. Intellectually, no existent lies outside these two assumptions and every existent cannot be known as a possible existent because a possible existent always needs a cause ('illah). If all the causes were possible existents, each one of them in turn requiring a cause, no existent would ever come into being, in other words an infinite series (tasalsul) of causes is impossible (muhāl). Therefore an infinite series (backwards) of causes is compelled to terminate in an existent (mawjūd), which is not a caused thing (ma'lūl) of any other existent, i.e. the necessary existent.

This argument is the simplest argument in philosophy for proving the existence of God. This argument has been constructed with a few intellectual syllogisms and does not need any form of sense perception or experimental sciences as premises. However it has used philosophical concepts and terminologies, hence it requires an explanation about these premises and terminologies mentioned in the argument.

Possibility and necessity

All propositions have two fundamental concepts (subject and predicate) regardless of them being simple or complex, for example in the following axiom, 'The sun shines', which establishes shining for the sun, 'sun' is the subject and 'shining' is the predicate. The establishment of a predicate for the subject has no more than three states:

it is either impossible, such as 'the number three is greater than the number four,' or it is necessary, such as, 'the number two is half of four' or it is neither impossible nor necessary, for instance, 'the sun is above our head'.

In logical terminology the first proposition has the state of impossibility (imtinā'), the second proposition is given the attribute of necessity (wujūb), and the third state is considered as possible (imkān) However in philosophy only existence is discussed and those things, which are being incapable of being or of occurring and impossible (mumtani') will never have an existence (al-wujūd al-khārijī). For this reason philosophy regards existence

from an intellectual perception as being either necessary existence or possible existence.

Necessary existence is known as an existent, which exists in-itself and does not depend upon another existent. Naturally such an existent will have no beginning and no end, because the non-existence of something in a particular time is an indication that its existence is not from itself. In order for it to come into existence it needs another existent, which, is the cause or the condition for its realisation. The absence of this condition or cause would be the reason of annihilation.

Possible existence (mum'kin al-wujūd) is known as an existent, which does not exist in-itself and depends on another existent in order for it to be realised.

This division, which has taken place through intellectual perception, essentially disregards the existence of the impossible (mumtani' al-wujūd), but it does not have any indication whether the existent is either a possible existent or necessary existent.

In other words the genuineness of this perception can be conceptualised in three essential forms:

1. Every existent is a necessary existent.
2. Every existent is a possible existent.
3. Some existents are necessary existents and some are possible existents.

On the basis of the first and third assumptions, the existence of a necessary existent is established, therefore the assumption that should be reviewed is whether all existents are possible existents or not?

However by disproving this assumption (that all existents are possible existents), the existence of the necessary existent is definitely and confidently proven. The establishment of unity and other attributes must be proven with other arguments.

Therefore in order to disprove the second assumption additional arguments must be utilised one of which, is that it is impossible for all of the existents to be possible existents.

As this argument is not self-evident, it will be explained as follows:

Every possible existent needs a cause and it is impossible to have an endless chain of causes. Thus the endless chain of causes is compelled to terminate at an existent, which is not in need of a cause, i.e. the necessary existent. This argument has introduced other philosophical concepts, which require a brief explanation of it and things related to it.

a. Cause and effect

If an existent requires another existent and depends upon that other existent for its being, then in philosophical terminology the caused existent is known as the effect and the other existent is known as the cause. However it is possible that a cause can also be an effect, and be a dependable existent, not absolutely free from need. If a cause is absolutely free from need and does not depend upon any other existent then it will be the Absolute cause.

By now we have become familiar with the definition of the terms cause and effect.

We will now provide an explanation of the premise mentioned (every possible existent needs a cause).

Possible existence does not exist in-itself and has no alternative other than to depend upon another existent. Thus every predicate, which is recognised for the subject is established either by itself (bi-l-dhāt) or by means of other than itself (bi-l-ghayr). For example every thing either shines in and of itself or requires something else for its illumination, or every body is oily in itself or needs oil for becoming oily. It is impossible for something in itself to not be illuminating or oily and not receive light or oil from something else, and at the same time be oily and illuminating!

Hence the establishment of existence for a subject is either through its essence or by means of other than itself, and when it is not through its essence then it has to be by means of other than itself. Therefore every possible existent, which is not realised through its essence, is bound to be realised by means of other than itself, which implies that it is an effect. This provides us with the fundamental principle of the intellect, that every possible existent needs a cause.

However, some have conceived that the principle of causation means that all existents need a cause and therefore God needs a primary cause. They have overlooked the fact that the subject of the principle of causation is existence in the possible sense and its effect and not in the absolute sense. Not all existents require a cause, only those which are dependable and in need.

b. The impossibility of an endless chain of causes

The last premise used for this argument is that the chain of causes should terminate at an existent, which is not an effect. In technical terms an endless chain of causes is impossible. It is thus established that the necessary existent is the initial cause, which is self-subsistent depending on no other existent.

Philosophy has come up with many arguments in order to disprove infinite series (tasalsul); nevertheless with the minimum of reflection infinite series would almost seem to be self-evident. That is to say, considering the existence of an effect requires a cause and is conditional upon that cause. Furthermore if this state of being caused (ma'lūliyyah) and this conditionality is universal, then no existents would be realised anywhere. This is because the assumption of a few existents that are dependent without the existence of an existent is against the intellect.

Let us assume that a group of runners are waiting to begin a race. They have all decided that they will not commence running until the others have. If this decision prevails among all of them, then none of them would begin to run.

In the same manner if the existence of every existent is conditional upon the realisation of another existent, never would an existent come into being. The realisation of an external existent indicates that there is an existent, which is needless and unconditional.

c. Affirmation of the argument

At this moment, with the understanding of the premises mentioned, we would like to re-affirm our argument:

Every thing that can be considered as an existent has no more than two states:

1. The existent for which existence is necessary and exists by means of its own essence. In technical terms this is known as the necessary existent.
2. The existent for which existence is not necessary and depends upon another existent in order to be realised. In technical terms this is termed as the possible existent.

It is self-evident that if the realisation of a thing is impossible, then it will never come into being; hence every existent is either a possible existent or a necessary existent.

By focusing upon the concept of possible existence it becomes clear that the every referent of this concept is an effect and requires a cause. Furthermore if an existent does not exist by means of its essence then it becomes necessary that it came into existence through another existent, because every attribute that is not existent by means of its own essence has to exist by means of other than itself.

The principle of causation affirms that every existent that is dependent and possible requires a cause. But not every existent requires a cause; otherwise one would conclude that there must then be a cause for God.

From another angle it must be seen that if all existents were possible existents, an existent would never then be realised. This is like assuming that a group of people had conditioned their actions upon each other, which implies no activity. However the external activity of existents establishes the existence of the necessary existent.

Questions:

- 1- Give the philosophical and logical definition of possibility and necessity.
- 2- Define necessary existence and possible existence.
- 3- Define cause and effect.
- 4- Why does every possible existent need a cause?
- 5- Explain the principle of causation.
- 6- Is God subject to the principle of causation? Why?
- 7- Explain the impossibility of infinite series.
- 8- Does the belief in a non-created God contradict the principle of causation?
- 9- Elaborate more on the impossibility of the infinite series? And explain the aim of this argument!
- 10- How is the logical form of the argument of impossibility of the infinite series?

LESSON EIGHT: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Introduction

In the previous lessons we have discussed arguments for proving the necessary existent. By subordinating other arguments we will now prove the negative and positive attributes of this existence. This is so we can recognise the Creator distinctively from His creation. It is not sufficient to merely know Him as the necessary existent, because some may conceive of energy or matter as being the referent -of a concept- (misdāq) for this necessary existent.

The following discourse is from two standpoints:

By establishing the negative attributes so that the necessary existent is glorified from anthropomorphic temperaments and not compared to His creation.

By establishing the positive attributes so that the Creator will be recognised as being worthy of worship, and for laying the ground to prove other principles such as prophethood, resurrection and their branches.

From the previous arguments we have realised that the necessary existent does not require any cause and that He is the cause for the possible existent.

We have thus already established two attributes of the necessary existent:
Not being dependent on any other existent.

The necessary existent is the first cause of the possible existent.

By application of these two results we would like to further illustrate and establish the negative and positive attributes of the necessary existent through arguments, which are familiar and related to the previous arguments.

The eternal nature of God

If an existent is an effect of, dependent or in need of another existent, this needy existent will come after the cause. If the cause is annihilated or not actualised then there will be no effect (existence). In other words, for an existent to be non-existing in an interval of time, indicates that it is a dependent and possible existent. As the necessary existent exists by means of its essence and does not require any existent for its being, it will always exist and is therefore unlike the possible existent.

By means of the above argument one can prove two more attributes of the necessary existent:

God was without beginning, meaning that He never had an antecedent of non-existence.

God is without end, meaning that He will never be non-existent.

Occasionally these two attributes are brought together under the epithet of (eternity) sempiternity (sarmadi). Therefore every existent that has a past of non-existence or has the possibility to become extinct will never be a necessary existent. This very fact will prove the assumption of material (māddah) as being the necessary existent as wrong.

a. Negative attributes

Another essentiality of the necessary existent is to be separate and invisible, because every composite thing is a synthesis or in need of parts to

be complete. The necessary existent is glorified and independent from needs.

The necessary existent is not made up of parts. This is because a thing, which has the potential to be divided, intellectually then has the possibility of being annihilated. It has already been established that the necessary existent cannot be annihilated. As the distribution of parts in potency (bi-l-quwwah) and in actuality (bi-l-fi'l) is peculiar to corporeality, the necessary existent will be established as being non-corporeal and immaterial. This will therefore imply that the necessary existent cannot be seen with the corporeal eye and cannot be sensed through the corporeal senses.

By disassociating bodily existence from the necessary existent, several other possibilities are also nullified. Necessary existence is thus not limited to or subjected to time (zamān) and space (makān). This nullification is because space is imagined for a thing, which has a body, and on the other hand every temporal object has the potentiality of being divided at intervals. As temporality is not attributed to the necessary existent, transition, growth and movement can also be invalidated because there is no movement without time and space.

Based on the above, those who believe that God sits on a throne, descends from heaven to earth and can be seen by the naked eye are thus regarding Him as being subjected to space, growth and movement. This indicates that they have failed to fully grasp true recognition of Him.

Generally speaking every concept that indicates an imperfection, need or limitation is negated from the Almighty and is classified as His negative attribute.

b. The cause that bestows existence

The second result to emerge from the above argument is that the necessary existent is the reason or cause for the possible existent. We now intend to specify the different types of cause and the specialties of the cause that bestows existence.

Cause in the regular sense means that every existent is dependent on another existent, and includes the conditions and circumstances as-well. God not having a cause means that He is not dependent on any existence, nor requires a condition for Him to come into being. God is the cause of creation and has the attribute of bestowing existence.

This is known as a special type of efficient cause ('illiyyah fā'iliyyah). Before explaining this cause it is necessary for the reader to become acquainted with the different types of causes, which are mentioned in detail in the books of philosophy.

In order to cultivate a seed, we know that there must be factors such as the seed, soil, water, a conducive environment and an active factor (man or nature) that can plant the seed and nurture it. All of these referred agents are regarded as different reasons and causes that help the plant to grow.

These various causes can be classified into distinctive categories, for instance the cause, which is constantly needed for the existence of an effect is known as the real cause (al-'illah al-haqīqiyyah).

The subsistence of the existence of an effect is not dependent upon the subsistence of that cause (like the farmer for the plant), this type of cause is known as the preparatory cause ('illah mu'iddah).

The causes, which have a possible alternative, are known as the substitute causes ('illah inhisāriyyah).

However there is another type of cause, which is quite distinct from the above example and can be discovered through our soul and its functions. When an individual imagines something or intends to carry out an act, he will have a configuration in his mind called an 'image' (sūrah dhihniyyah), which is actualised by the means of 'will', which is dependent upon the existence of the soul. As it is dependant it will be known as an effect, but this effect is an effect, which is not independent from the cause at all and cannot have any existence by itself.

The activity of the soul with regards to the 'will' and 'idea' is conditional upon the limited elements, which manifest from the possible existent. When this activity is compared to the activity of the necessary existent, we realise that the latter is exalted and sublime and that there is nothing comparable to Him and all effects are totally dependant upon Him.

c. Peculiarities of the cause that bestows existence

Taking into consideration what has just been mentioned we can classify a few of the unique features of the cause that bestows existence:

a. The 'cause that bestows existence' must be complete in the perfection that exists in the effects to its absolute sense. This is so that the cause can provide the existent with its required need as opposed to those material or preparing causes, which only create an environment. It is not necessary for these causes to have the relative perfection of the effects; for example it is not required for the soil to have the perfections of the plant or the parents to have the perfections of the child.

Hence the God that bestows creation must be absolutely perfect in essence.

b. The 'cause that bestows existence', brings its effect from non-existence to existence, it creates, by the intermediacy of which, it (the cause that bestows existence) is not deprived from and does not lose anything from its existence.

c. The 'cause that bestows existence' is the real cause upon which the effect is completely dependent for its subsistence as opposed to the preparatory cause, upon which the subsistence of effect is not dependent.

On this basis we can refute the claims made by some of the Sunni theologians who state that the universe does not require God for its subsistence, as-well as those western philosophers who claim that the (natural) world is like a clock that has been wound up and left to operate free from God.

On the contrary the universe is dependant on God in its entirety, and if He were to withhold His grace for one moment, the whole of creation would be as nothing.

Questions:

- 1- Why should one be familiar with the attributes of God?

- 2- How can you establish that God possesses sempiternity?
- 3- How could one prove that the essence of God is absolute and not comprised of parts, whether actively or potentially?
- 4- How can you prove that God is not a corporeal being?
- 5- Why is God not visible?
- 6- Why is God not subject to time and space?
- 7- Can we assign mobility and immobility to God? Why?
- 8- Explain the different types of cause.
- 9- Explain the peculiarities of the cause that bestows existence.

LESSON NINE: ATTRIBUTES OF ESSENCE

Introduction

God is the primal cause and the Bestower of existence. He contains the utmost perfection and is responsible for all the perfection that we witness in existence, without any deprivation from His essence. This can be compared for example to a teacher who teaches his students from knowledge he has without losing any of it.

However the ontological perfections of Almighty God are superior to the example compared. A more accurate description would be to say that creation is nothing but the manifestation and dissipation of the sacred essence of God. The Qur'an has mentioned:

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth”. (al-Nūr:35) As God's perfection is eternal, then every concept that holds perfection without representing any deficiency or limitation can be true for God as well. Furthermore in the verses of the Holy Qur'an, the sacred narrations and the supplications of the Infallible Ones (ma'sumīn) (a), concepts like Light (nūr), Perfection (kamāl), Beauty (jamāl), Love (hubb), and Bliss (bahjah) etc are all related to Him.

The books of philosophy and theology have categorised the attributes of God into two groups (attributes of essence and attributes of action). We will provide a brief explanation of these two groups, followed by a discussion and proofs for establishing the most important one.

Attributes of essence and attributes of action

Attributes related to God the Supreme, are either concepts which are abstracted from the divine essence by focusing on a kind of ontological perfection, such as life, knowledge, and power or they are concepts abstracted from a kind of relationship that exists between God and His creatures, such as being the Creator, and Sustainer. The first group of concepts is called the attributes of essence and the second group is called the attributes of action.

The essential difference between these two groups of concepts is that the first group concerns the qualities of the sacred divine essence, whereas the second group relates the relationship and connection between God and His creatures. These attributes are additional concepts abstracted from the relationship between God and His creatures.

Such concepts abstracted from the creature's dependence on the Creator are: the Creator, the Sustainer and the Originator.

The most important attributes of the essence of God are Life, Knowledge and Power.

However if hearing and seeing are taken as having the power (ability) to see and hear or to be being aware of hearing and seeing they will return to the attributes of essence.

If the meaning of these attributes are with an activity that is abstracted because of a relationship between the viewer of an object and a hearer of a sound then they will be regarded as the attributes of action.

Occasionally the attribute of Knowledge is used in the mentioned manner and is regarded as active knowledge (al-‘ilm al-fi’li).

Some of the theological scholars have regarded Speech and Will as attributes of essence, this will be discussed later.

Proofs for the attributes of essence

The simplest way of proving that God is Life, Power and Knowledge is to first realise that when these concepts are used for creatures, it is the ontological perfections, which are referred to. The ultimate and perfect form of these ontological perfections must then be within the cause that has bestowed existence. The Creator has to have full possession of all perfection that is in creation, since it is not possible that the provider or giver of life is void of it, or the bestower of knowledge and power is Himself ignorant and helpless.

The existence of these ontological perfections in creatures thus indicates their presence within the Supreme Creator without any limitation or deficiency. In other words God the Supreme, has the eternal attributes of life, power, and knowledge. We will now provide a brief explanation regarding these attributes.

a. Life (Hayāt)

This concept (living) is used for defining two groups of creatures: for vegetation, which is characterised by growth, and for man and animals, which are characterised by possession of will and consciousness.

The first meaning cannot be associated with God because it is limited and imperfect, as vegetation requires external factors for development and growth in order to reach perfection, and this pertains to the negative attributes of God as mentioned in our previous lesson. However the second meaning of life although it comprises of limitation and defects, could be applicable to God but with the consideration of it being infinite and unlimited.

Fundamentally, life is an essential characteristic of immaterial existence. Likewise knowledge and activity, which are also implied by life, are immaterial. Although life is related with living material creatures, in reality it is the spiritual attribute of a material creature and the material body in effect of it (the spirit), which is regarded as living (application of attribute of life to the material existence is accidental). In other words, just as progression is essential for the material existence, similarly life is essential for immaterial existence. By focusing on this subject another argument can be established, that as the sacred essence of God is immaterial and all of the immaterial existents have the essential attribute of life, therefore God has the attribute of essence of life.

b. Knowledge (‘ilm)

The concept of knowledge is the most apparent and self-evident of all concepts, but the referents of this concept within the creatures are limited and deficient, and with these peculiarities it is not possible to generalise it for God the Supreme. However, it has previously been indicated that the intellect, for this ontological perfection could suppose a referent, which does not have any limitation or deficiency (ontological perfection) and be the essence of knowledge itself. This is knowledge of the essence of God the Exalted.

God's knowledge can be proven from different angles. One such way is the same employed method used for proving all the attributes of essence. Since knowledge exists within the creature, verily the ultimate and perfect form of it must exist within the Creator.

The second way to prove God's knowledge is through the argument of 'order':

The orderly and perfect presentation or manifestation is clearly an indication of a precise and perfect knowledgeable manifestor. An intellectual book, eloquent poetry and outcome of all arts are the signs of wisdom, taste and qualification of the artist, it could never be supposed that such work could be produced by someone dull and ignorant. Therefore how could someone presume that this great universe with all its secrets and perplexities is an effect of an existent, which is un-knowledgeable (ignorant)?

The third way to establish God's knowledge is through the premises of speculative philosophy, which are not self-evident, such as the principle 'that every immaterial existence is self-contained with knowledge', as has been proven in the related books (of philosophy and theology).

Focusing upon the knowledge of God, plays an important role in self-building (purification of the soul), and from this standpoint it has been mentioned in the Noble Qur'an: "He knows the treachery of the eyes, and what the breasts hide". (Ghāfir:19)

c. Power (qudrah)

When an agent produces an action with an intention and free-will of its own, it is said that this individual has the ability and power of performing an act. Therefore power means a living voluntary agent being the origin (mabda') of its action.

The level of power is dependent upon the level of perfection of an existent; therefore an existent with infinite perfection will have infinite power.

"Indeed Allah has power over all things". (al-Baqarah:7) However one must be mindful of certain points:

1. An action that comes under the surveillance of power must have the possibility of actualisation, thus a thing that is essentially impossible or necessarily absurd will never have any connection or relation to the power. The fact that God possesses power does not mean that He will create another God or that He will make the number two greater than the number three, while the value of two remains at two, or create a son before father while the son is supposedly after father.

2. The fact that God possesses the power to perform everything, does not necessarily mean that He will perform everything, but whatever He intends He will execute, and God who is all Wise cannot perform an act which is unwise, even after having the power to performing an indecent act. In the following lessons we will explain more about God's Wisdom.

3. Power in this sense includes the quality of free-will. God the Supreme has infinite power, which implies He has perfect free-will, which is uninfluenced by anything.

Questions:

1. Which types of concept are applicable to God the Supreme?
2. Explain the attributes of essence, the attributes of action and the difference between them.
3. What is the simplest way to prove the attributes of essence?
4. Life has how many meanings and which one can be posited to God?
5. Give a specific argument for establishing the attribute of Life for God.
6. Establish the knowledge of God in three ways.
7. Explain the concept of power, and how one can prove the infinite power of God?
8. What are the things, which even God's power would not achieve?
9. Why does God not perform indecent actions?
10. Explain the meaning of the free-will of God.

LESSON TEN: ATTRIBUTES OF ACTION

Introduction

We are now aware that the attributes of action are concepts, which are abstracted by the intellect that makes a special comparison between the divine sacred essence of God and His creatures and considers the relationship that exists between the two. In this context, the Creator and the created engender a bilateral relationship from which the very concept of creating is itself abstracted. If this bilateral relationship is not considered then this concept will not be realised.

Consideration of the relationship that exists between God and His creation does not have any boundaries or limits, however it can be classified into two general groups:

1. The direct relationship that exists between God and His creation (such as direct creation, initiation and origination).
2. Relationships that are consequent upon immediate relationships (such as the relationship that is due to the sustenance provided by God for His creatures).

Before abstracting an attribute of action for God it is sometimes necessary to first abstract several forms of relationship. It is also possible that a relationship is further based upon several bilateral relationships between God and His creatures. An example is forgiveness, which is based upon the lordship of divine legislation, where the rulings issue from God and transgressions issue from the servants.

The substance of matter for the realisation of the attributes of action is through the comparison between God the Supreme and His creatures.

As already indicated, it is possible that the actualisation of an attribute of action is with the consideration of its origin, which will allow it (attributes of actions) to return to the attributes of essence. For instance if the Creator is defined as someone who has the power to create, then it returns to the attribute of Power, the attribute of hearing and seeing is interpreted as the knowledge of audible and visible, and will return to the All-Knowing ('alīm).

It is possible that some of the concepts of the attributes of essence are regarded as relational or actively related. In this case they are known as attributes of action. The concept of knowledge for instance has been used several times in the Noble Qur'an as an attribute of action.

It must be noted however that when an attribute of action for God is abstracted from the relationship that exists between God and a material existent, it is conditional upon time and space. However this condition is limited to the material side, the other side being free from and exalted far beyond such limitations. For example, to provide sustenance for a need, which is confined to time and space, is a characteristic attributed to the need and not to the Sustainer.

The Holy Divine essence is beyond any frame of time or space. This point requires special attention and is the key for many difficult issues and problems, which arise between the scholars of polemics, when trying to understand the attributes of essence and action.

a. Creatorship (khāliqiyyah)

Having established necessary existence as the first cause for the appearance of possible existents, the concept of creatorship can be abstracted and applied to the necessary existent, and the concept of creation applied to the possible existents. The concept of creator, which is abstracted on the basis of the existential relationship, is equivalent to the cause that bestows existence. All of the possible existents, which are in need of this cause, are thus regarded as the creation.

The word ‘creation’ can at times be used in a limited way, such as when it defines material existence as compared to the concept of ‘primordial innovation’ (ibdā’) where the existents, which are prior to matter are also considered. To bring into existence can be divided into primordial innovation and creation.

The ability of God to create can never be compared to human activity, which requires movement and the utilisation of equipment, which pertains to action. The achievement of this action is known as the result of this action.

It is not the case that ‘creating’ is one thing and ‘being created’ is something else, because God transcends motion and the peculiarities of bodily existence. If God’s ‘creating’ has a real referent of a concept (misdāq ‘ayni) in addition to His essence, it would have been counted as possible existence and the created thing from among His creation and the discussion of creation would have been repeated (in relation to it).

Rather attributes of action are concepts abstracted by a special comparison between God and His creation and consistence of it due to the intellect.

b. Lordship (rubūbiyyah)

The relationship that exists between God and His creation is not only because of the creation being the effect of God, but the creation from all its existential aspects needs God the Supreme. The creation is entirely dependent upon God, and He can intervene and manage affairs in whichever way He wishes.

When this relationship is considered in a general form, the concept of Lordship is abstracted. The management of affairs is the necessary factor here, from which several other referents for this concept can be derived: maintenance and protection, giving life and causing death, providing guidance and sustenance, etc.

Stations of Lordship can be divided into two general groups:

i. Metaphysical lordship, which includes the managing of affairs of all the existents and provision for their needs - thus engendering the universe.

ii. Legislative lordship, which is peculiar to those existents, which have intelligence and free-will. It includes issues such as the deputising of the prophets (a), sending heavenly books, prescribing responsibilities and discipline and the making of rules.

The absolute lordship of God means that all creatures depend upon God. The dependency that exists between creatures also returns to dependence upon God.

He is the one who manages His affairs through His creatures, and guides the intelligent existents (through intellect and other perception) and assigns responsibilities, rules and regulations for them.

Lordship is similar to Creatorship in its being a relational concept, however with the difference that sometimes the relationship between the creatures is also considered, as mentioned in earlier while discussing sustenance.

c. Divinity (ulūhiyyah)

With regards to the concept of the Divine (illah) and divinity (ulūhiyyah), several discourses have been discussed, which are recorded in the books of commentaries of the Qur'an. The meaning preferred by us for the divine is: the One who is worshipped (ma'būd), or the One worthy of being worshipped. This is in the same manner as which, 'a book' means a thing written and a thing, which has an eminence of being written.

According to the mentioned meaning, the attribute of Divinity must be abstracted through the relation of responsibility, obligation and worship. Although those who are misguided have recognised a false deity for themselves, the only one who deserves worship is the one who has created them and that is the Lord of the universe. Apart from recognising God as the Necessary Existent, the Creator, the Omnipotent and the Originator, every individual must know that He is worthy of being worshipped. Hence this very aspect is acknowledged in the testimony of Islam, 'There is no God (divine) but Allah' (La ilāha illa Allah).

Questions:

1. Explain the relationship between the attributes of essence and the attributes of action, and how they return to each other.
2. From which aspect are the attributes of action conditioned to time and space?
3. Give an explanation for the concept of Creatorship.
4. Can we imagine that creatures possess an additional separated form of existence from the action of creating by God?
5. Define Lordship?
6. Explain the general stations of Lordship.
7. Explain the necessary connection between Divinity and Lordship.
8. What is the meaning of Divinity? And why should it be combined with Creatorship and Lordship?

LESSON ELEVEN: ADDITIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF ACTION

Introduction

The issue of Divine Will is a matter, which has been frequently debated. Various views have been discussed and disputed over, such as whether it is to be considered as an attribute of essence or action, whether it is pre-existent (qadīm) or temporal (hādith) and is it singular or multiple, etc.

These elements and peripheries of the will and especially of the Divine Will are discussed in philosophy. This topic is quite extensive and cannot here be discussed in detail, but we will provide a concise definition of the concept of 'Will', followed by a brief discussion on the peripheries of Divine Will.

Will

The expression 'Will' in common use ('urf) is employed in at least two senses: one is wishing or desiring, and the other is deciding to perform an action. The first meaning is more extensive compared to the second meaning because the first meaning includes desiring one's own actions, the actions of others and desiring things in the external world. The second meaning however includes only one's own actions.

Will in the first sense is equivalent to loving (mawaddah) to whatever degree. In the case of man it is from the accidental and psychical quality (kayf nafsāni) and can be abstracted in an unlimited sense (as a general concept) through the assistance of the intellect. This general concept can be applied to the substantial existents (mawjūdāt jawhariyyah) and even for God, the Supreme, as was discussed previously with regards to knowledge. From this standpoint we can consider love (hubb), which can be applied for God's loving in relation to His own essence (or in other words God loving His own essence) as an attribute of essence. Hence the Divine Will means love of ontological perfections, which on the initial level is directed towards the infinite perfection and on the subordinate level is directed towards the perfections of existents, which overflow from the perfections and goodness of the Divine essence.

However the second meaning of Will, which requires the making of decision in order to perform an action, is an attribute of action as it is related to a temporal decree which has a spatial qualification. Furthermore the Noble Qur'an has also utilised this meaning on several occasions, such as:

"All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be', and it is" (Yāsīn:82).

It is important to remember that by relating an attribute of action to God, it does not mean that a change has occurred in the Divine essence or that an accidental quality has happened to evolve for God. On the other hand it can be considered as a relational attribute of action applied to God, which is abstracted by comparing the actions of creatures to the divine essence.

Concerning Will, the relationship, which is taken into consideration, is that the created things have been created from the aspect of having goodness, perfections and benefit (maslahah). Their existence is in a special

time and space and is associated with Divine knowledge and love. He created them out of His own desire and not because He is forced into doing so. Observation of this relation becomes the reason for the abstraction of a relational concept called Will, which in relation with a limited and restricted thing becomes limited and restricted. Hence this relative concept (mafḥūm idāfi) is given the attribute of temporality and multiplicity.

a. Wisdom

It becomes clear by the explanation given with regards to Divine Will, that Divine Will is not to be associated with creating things absurdly; rather it is to be fundamentally associated with the aspect of goodness and perfection of a thing.

Nevertheless due to the fact that the collision of matter, results in its own destruction and deterioration, the determination of Divine love for the perfection is that their overall production (creation) is in such a fashion that they receive as much goodness and perfection as possible. By pondering upon this type of relationship, we come to grasp the concept of benefit, which does not exist independently from the existent of creations, and therefore will not cause their production, far from being an effective agent for the Divine Will (irādah).

We can conclude that as the Divine actions find their source in the knowledge, power, and love towards perfection and goodness, which are the attributes of essence, they will always be realised as being beneficial. This type of Will (which desires to deliver the ultimate perfection and goodness) is known as the wise Will (irādah hakīmah). Another attribute of action can here be abstracted, by the name of Wise (hakīm), which also like other attributes of action returns to the attributes of essence.

One should remember that just because the benefit fulfills a task it does not mean that that benefit is the ultimate cause (‘illah ghāi’yyah) for God the Supreme. Rather it is counted as a type of branch or adherent for the purpose. The fundamental final cause for the accomplishment of a job is love towards the essential infinite perfection, which is also subordinately related to the perfections of the creation. Hence it is from here that it has been said: that the final cause for Divine actions is that very active cause (‘illah fā’iliyyah) and God the Supreme does not have any other extra purpose other than essence. However this subject does not contradict the understanding that the perfection, goodness and benefit of existents are counted as a secondary goal. For this very reason the divine actions in the Noble Qur’an are considered as the causation of affairs, which returns them all towards perfection and goodness for creation.

b. Speech

One of the concepts associated with God the Supreme, is the concept of speech. Discussions with regards to the speech of the Divine existed in the past among the scholars of philosophy and theology and it has even been said that this was the very reason why they named theology as the knowledge of speech (ilm al-kalām). The companions of this knowledge used to debate about whether Divine speech is an attribute of essence as the Asharites (ashā’irah) believed or whether it is related to the attributes of

action as believed by the Mutazilites (mu'tazilah). One of the strongest conflicts between these two schools of thought, was whether the Qur'an, which is the speech of God is created or uncreated. This sometimes led to the two groups damming each other upon this issue.

By focusing on the definition given for the attributes of essence and for the attributes of action it becomes clear that speaking is an attribute of action. In order to abstract this concept, one has to consider a person who is addressed (mukhātab) and who understands the purpose of the speaker through the means of listening to the sound, reading a text, or by understanding a concept in one's mind. In reality this concept is abstracted from the relationship that exists between God and the addressed, whereby God intends to unveil the truth to the addressed, who realises the truth. To the contrary, if speaking is taken as the ability or power for speech, then it will become an attribute of essence. These types of occurrence have been mentioned earlier with regards to other attributes of action.

However the Qur'an in the sense of letters, words or concepts present in one's mind is indeed created.

If someone regards the knowledge of God as the reality of the Qur'an, it will then become the attribute of essence. However this type of interpretation is far from common parlance and must be disregarded.

c. Truth

If God's speech is referred with the structure of, or as a command (amr), prohibition or assertion, it charts out the practical responsibilities of servanthood, where it cannot be attributed as being true or false. However if it (speech) is in the form of a prophecy, then it will be attributed as the truth, because the Noble Qur'an has mentioned:

“And who is more truthful in speech than Allah?” (al-Nisā':87).

Hence no-one would have any reason for not accepting it.

This attribute is considered as a foundation for different types of arguments (known as traditional and devotional), which are employed for proving topics relating to the worldview and ideology.

On the other hand, intellectual arguments for proving this attribute can be established, God's speech is from the station of lordship, and the management of the universe and man is based upon knowledge and wisdom. In other words it means that guidance for the creation and means for the realisation of the truth for the addressed is provided.

Questions:

1. From which angle is Divine Will considered as an attribute of action and from what perspective is it known as an attribute of essence?
2. For abstracting the concept of Divine Will as an attribute of action, what relationship must be considered?
3. How can Will be associated with temporality and multiplicity?
4. Explain Divine Wisdom (hikmah).
5. How can one arrive at the concept of the benefit (maslahah)?
6. In which sense can benefit, perfection and goodness be considered as the purpose of creation?
7. Explain God's speech (kalām).

8. What is the argument for the Divine Truth?

LESSON TWELVE: ANALYSING THE REASONS FOR DEVIATION

Introduction

As indicated in the first lesson, the worldviews can be divided into two groups; the divine worldview and the materialistic worldview. The major difference between the two is that the divine worldview accepts a wise creator as the fundamental principle, whereas this is rejected by the materialistic worldview.

In the previous lessons we have provided appropriate discourses for proving God's existence, established the most important positive and negative attributes and given discussions pertaining to the attributes of essence and action.

In order to acknowledge belief with the fundamental principle we will give a brief criticism of the materialistic worldview by establishing the divine worldview, which will unveil the former as being baseless and impotent.

In order to realise this, we will be initiating the following discussion by providing the reasons for the departure from the divine view towards heresy, followed by an explanation of the weak elements in the materialistic worldview.

Reasons of deviation

Heresy, atheism, and materialism have a long past in human history. However there have always been traces in human societies of there being a belief in a creator.

Nevertheless the ubiquity of being irreligious started in Europe during the eighteenth century and gradually expanded to other regions of the world.

Although the advent of this irreligiousness was a response towards the system of the church and aimed at opposing Christianity, its waves nevertheless swept the other religions away with it. This anti-religious inclination, along with industry, art and Western technology was exported to other parts of the world. Furthermore in the more recent centuries this transformation and diffusion was with sociological and economical; Marxist thought, which was applied in many countries, the outcome of which was the fall of humanity.

The reasons and factors that necessitated the appearance and development of this distorted thought are numerous, an investigation into which would require a separate book. However they can be generalised into three groups:

a. Psychological reasons for deviation

Qualities such as irresponsibility, carelessness and desire towards pleasure seeking are all tendencies, which may delude an individual towards atheism.

For such an individual, from one side it means the pain of research and investigation is necessary, this is especially so when those issues, which provide no bodily or material pleasure, are concerned. So for those who are

lazy such an effort becomes a big obstacle in their way. From another angle man's inclination towards animalistic freedom, carelessness, freedom from limitations and discipline will only act to distance him further from the divine worldview.

Acceptance of a divine worldview based upon belief in a wise creator, establishes a series of beliefs, which obligates responsibility upon man in all voluntary actions.

This responsibility requires sacrifice and discipline in many areas; the acceptance of discipline with carelessness is in itself contradictory. Hence the tendency towards the love of animalistic freedom, even though the individual may be unaware of it, becomes the very reason by which the roots of responsibility are cut, which leads more fundamentally to the denial in the existence of God.

There are other elements, that also incline man away from his religiosity, and these become more apparent once the other tendencies have been exposed.

b. Sociological reasons for deviation

When a deformity appears within a society, partially due to the custodians of the religion, then this occurrence can be classified as a sociological reason. The deformation of a society could force men to blame the caretakers of religion, resulting in the society becoming dissatisfied with the religion and doctrine itself. The reason behind this is that most men are intellectually weak, and are unable to analyse, interpret and realise the true reasons behind the corrupt events. They think that these confusions and chaos are because of the involvement of religious authorities and as a result of religion, they thereby form the assumption that religious beliefs are the reason for this deformity and distortion. They subsequently become dissatisfied with the religion and doctrine itself.

Obvious illustrations of the mentioned elements can be seen in the social order of Europe during the Renaissance. The inappropriate response of the church in the field of religion, politics, and law (civil rights) was one of the major reasons by which the people became tired and disinterested in Christianity, and more generally in religion as a whole.

Focusing upon this element of deviation indicates that it is necessary for all of the religious authorities and institutions to understand the sensibility of time and importance of responsibility, as their mistakes will result in the misfortune and deviation of the society.

c. Intellectual factors for deviation

Intellectual deviations can occur through the doubts and confusions that appear in one's mind, or through things that one hears. As a man's intellectual and rational capability may be weak, he may not be able to respond to these doubts, and thus he becomes influenced by them. This obstacle then becomes a hurdle in his way to achieving tranquillity and certainty.

However there are other factors, which can be divided into different branches such as:

doubts based upon sense perception, doubts emerging from legends and myths, doubts evolving from false explanations, doubts based upon weak arguments, doubts related to unexpected incidents and events, that are claimed as being against the wisdom (hikmah) and justice ('adl) of God, doubts arising from scientific hypotheses which oppose religious belief, doubts associated with the practical laws, especially in the field of politics, jurisprudence and law (huqūq).

Occasionally two or more factors can together become the reason for confusion, doubt, disagreement and atheism. Distinctive psychological disorder can also sometimes create the grounds for doubts and confusion.

Campaign against the elements of deviation

With the understanding of the different reasons and elements of deviation, it becomes clear that campaigning and dealing with each one requires special conditions with a unique procedure. For example, psychological and ethical deviations must be cured by means of the correct training and also by focusing upon the disadvantages delivered through it, as was mentioned in lesson two and three, where the need for investigating religion was discussed. Likewise, in order to protect oneself from the effects of social disorder (sociological deviation) one must differentiate between a religion and its caretakers. However at least an individual is unaware of the influences of psychological and sociological deviations but for the intellectual influences one has to choose a special method. Such a method for instance could be by discerning between the differences of distorted beliefs and true beliefs, and by never proving the religious beliefs through illogical or weak arguments.

Questions:

- 1- What is the benefit of analysing and criticising the materialistic worldview?
- 2- What is the reason for the expansion of atheism in the recent centuries?
- 3- Explain the reasons behind psychological deviation.
- 4- Explain in detail the sociological reasons for deviation?
- 5- Explain the intellectual reasons and its branches for deviation?
- 6- How would legends and myths negatively affect faith?
- 7- How can one combat the elements of deviation?

LESSON THIRTEEN: RESOLVING SEVERAL SPURIOUS DOUBTS

Believing in an intangible existence

One of the simplest doubts in the field of theology (knowing God) is how can one believe in the existence of an existent, which is not perceivable?

This doubt is held by the simpleton who finds it hard to grasp the concept of there being an intangible reality. However one will also find reflective thinkers who base their thinking upon the principle of sense perception, and also deny the possibility of an intangible existence, hence they are also influenced by this doubt.

The answer to this spurious argument is that the perceptions of the senses are due to an outcome of coherence between bodily parts and bodies or substances etc, which is attained by virtue of corporeality. Each one of our senses perceives a particular material form, which is proportional for that sense with defined conditions. In the same way, one cannot expect the eyes to have the sense of sound, or the ears to have the sense of sight and ability to see colours, hence one must not expect our senses to perceive each and every existent.

On the basis of the following reasons we will establish that we cannot perceive all existents through our outward senses:

Firstly, among the material existents, there are things, which are not competent of being perceived through our senses such as: electrical waves or ultra-violet rays.

Secondly, we perceive many realities through other than the means of our outward senses and we confidently believe in their existence. For example, the states of love and fear, or of conscious intentions are psychological stations just as the spirit is not perceivable by the (bodily) senses. Essentially perception itself is immaterial and imperceptible (through the senses).

Therefore just because a thing cannot be perceived through bodily senses, does not invalidate its existence and should not be the reason for such a thing being improbable and remote to the mind.

a. The role of fear and ignorance in belief in God

Another spurious doubt asserted by the sociologist is that belief in God is an outcome of fear, especially of the dangers of natural disasters such as earthquakes, lightening etc. They believe that man in order to calm his mind has imagined an imaginary existence and named it God and started to worship it. Due to this reason, belief in God becomes subsequently weaker as the causes of, and safety precautions against such disasters are known.

Many Marxist's in their books grandiloquently regard this as an accomplishment of the science of sociology and use this as a means for deceiving many immature people.

In order to answer their allegations we would say:

Firstly, the bases of this argument are suppositions made by some sociologists and they do not have any logical ground for validity.

Secondly, in the present century itself there were and indeed are many great thinkers aware of the causes behind these phenomena, and who at the same time have a firm belief in God. Belief in God is thus not an outcome of fear or ignorance.

Thirdly, if the fear of some natural phenomenon, or being ignorant of the causes becomes the motive to focus upon God, then it does not mean that God is an outcome of the fear or ignorance of man. Many psychological instincts such as pleasure seeking or lustfulness become the impetus for philosophical, scientific, and technical investigations but do not negatively affect their authenticity.

Fourthly, if people recognise God as the originator of that phenomenon, whose causes are unknown and if with the discovery of their natural causes their faith becomes weak, then surely it is their view and faith, which is weak. This does not provide us with a valid reason to disbelieve in God, because the reality is that the Divine causation with regards to the occurrences in the universe is from the source of the efficacy of natural causes. These causes are not parallel to the Divine causation but rather the Divine causation is transcendental to every material or immaterial cause.

Furthermore the recognition and unrecognition of natural causes will have no efficacy in establishing or not establishing the existence of God.

b. Is the principle of causation, one universal concept?

Yet another spurious argument put forward by some of the Western thinkers is that if the causal nexus (asl al -'illiyyah) is universal, then God must also have a cause. To accept a God without cause is thus a defect in the principle of causation. If we do not accept this rule to be universal then we would not be able to prove necessary existence through this principle, because it is possible that someone could state that the origin of matter or energy was by itself, and through its mutation things originated.

This argument, as indicated earlier in lesson seven is due to the improper interpretation of the principle of causation. It has been recognised as 'every existence needs a cause' but the reality of the matter is that 'every possible existence or every existent that is dependent or needy requires a cause,' and this rule is universal, essential, and unexceptional.

However, accepting the origin of matter or energy without a cause, and its mutation as the basis for the origination of the world has several controversies, and will be discussed in future lessons.

c. Achievements of sociology

Some believe that the belief in the Creator of man and universe does not correspond to the accomplishments of modern sociology. For example, it has been proven in chemistry that a certain amount of matter and energy is always subsisting. On this basis, it is not possible for any manifestation to come into existence from nothing and no existent can be completely destroyed. Those who believe in God believe that God has brought creation from non-existence into existence.

They claim that this same argument has been proven in biology. A living creature has evolved from non-living matter and gradually mutated and

reached perfection when it attained the position of man. Those who believe in God believe that God created human beings separately.

We will now aim to answer these controversies:

Firstly, the principle of the continual subsistence of energy and matter is a scientific rule and can only be regarded and applied to those concrete perceptible things. On this basis, philosophical issues such as whether matter and energy are eternal and pre- eternal are not resolved.

Secondly, the subsistence of energy and matter does not imply that one is needless of the Creator, but with the ageing of the universe the more need it has for a creator, because every effect requires a cause. Possibility and dependency are the essence of a possible existent (an effect), rather than it being accidental or temporal.

In other words, matter and energy form as a material cause ('illah māddiyyah) for the appearance of the universe, and as opposed to being an active cause, is itself in need of an active cause.

Thirdly, the subsistence of certain matter and energy does not obligate the coming into being of a new creation, its growth and reduction. Entities like spirit, life, sense and will etc, are not from matter and energy until their growth and reduction would contradict with the rule.

Fourthly, the presumption of evolution - despite it being scientifically unauthentic and disproved by several great thinkers - does not contradict the belief in God. At its highest level it proves the supportive causation between the living existents. It does not neglect the relationship between them and the necessary existent. It is probably because of this reason that several supporters of this thought believe in God.

Questions:

1. Explain the controversies for denying intangible reality and sense perception.
2. How can one criticise the opinion of sociologists who assert, that belief in God is out of fear and ignorance?
3. Does belief in God contradict the principle of causation? Why?
4. Is the rule of the subsistence of matter and energy incompatible with belief in a creator? Why?
5. Does the presumption of evolution nullify belief in God? Why?

LESSON FOURTEEN: THE MATERIALISTIC WORLD VIEW AND ITS CRITICISM

The principles of the materialist worldview

In order to define the materialist worldview the following principles can be applied:

1. Existence is equivalent to matter and materiality. An existent is either matter, having three dimensions (length, width, and thickness) or volume, or it is counted as having the properties of matter. Naturally matter has the capability of being quantitative and divisible. Hence on this very principle the existence of God as being immaterial and supernatural is denied.

2. Matter has no beginning or end, resulting in it being uncreated and without any need for cause. According to our philosophical terminology it is the necessary existence.

3. The universe cannot be considered as having a final cause and purpose, because the active agent (fā'il) does not seem to have any intelligence and will for being identified as having a purpose.

4. Phenomena in the universe (not matter itself) come into existence as an effect of the shifting of material particles, which influence each other.

From this standpoint one can recognise the former things as a type of condition and as a preparatory cause ('illah i'dādiyyah) for the subsequent phenomenon or at-most it can be considered as natural activity among materials. For example, a tree can be known as a natural agent for the fruit that it bears, or the phenomena of chemistry and physics can be considered as the agent. However, none of the phenomena require a divine agent that bestows existence.

5. The fifth principle can also be added to the above and is related to theology. However from a certain aspect it precedes the other principles and is the only authentic cognition. It is the principle, which comes forth from sense experience. As the experience of the senses only confirms matter and materials, it will thus not accept any other existence.

Nevertheless we have mentioned in the previous lesson the defects of this principle and it is not required from us to criticise this principle over again, therefore we will analyse the remaining principles of materialist worldview:

a. Investigating the first principle

This principle is the most fundamental principle in the materialist worldview, however its proclamations are nothing but absurd. It has failed to establish any argument for denying metaphysics, particularly on the basis of materialist epistemology, which is founded upon the principles of sense and experience. It is clear that no sense experience, which itself is matter, would be able to articulate in the domain of metaphysics and either deny or establish anything. The utmost thing stated in the logic of empiricism is, that existence beyond the physical realm cannot be established on its basis. It should therefore at least accept the possibility of the existence of this realm. We have indicated earlier that it is possible for man to perceive various immaterial phenomena, which do not have the peculiarities of matter, such as spirit through the immediate knowledge ('ilm hudūri). Furthermore

several intellectual arguments have been established for proving the existence of the immaterial realm in the books of philosophy. The best attestations for the existence of the immaterial spirit are the true dreams, several practices of the yogis, and also the miracles of the prophets (a) and saints.

In any case the arguments mentioned in lesson seven and eight are sufficient enough for proving the existence and non-corporeality of God the Supreme.

b. Investigating the second principle

The second principle emphasises upon matter having no beginning or end and thus being uncreated.

Firstly, matter having no beginning or end cannot be scientifically or experimentally established. This is because the experimental dimensions are limited and no experiment can prove the infinity of the universe from the point of view of time and space.

Secondly, the assumption that matter has no end does not necessitate it having no creator. The assumption of a spatial movement requires the supposition of everlasting force from the moving agent, rather than not needing an impetus for the moving agent.

In addition, matter uncreated implies that it is a necessary existent and we have already established in lesson eight that it is impossible for matter to be a necessary existent.

c. Investigating the third principle

This principle denies that the universe is purposeful. This will naturally result in the denial of the existence of the Creator and consequently once the existence of God the Wise is proven this principle will be nullified. In addition to this, one might question as to how it is possible for an intelligent individual, after witnessing the astonishing order and harmonisation of the universe and the benefits that emanate forth from it, could fail to realise that the universe is purposeful.

d. Investigating the fourth principle

This principle of the materialist worldview recognises causation as being limited to the material realm and material phenomenon. This view has been severely criticised, the most important points are as follows:

1. According to this rule a new (immaterial) existent could never come into existence.

However we witness the commencement of subsequent existents, especially in the realm of the human being and animals. The most significant of them are life, intelligence, intellectuality, emotions and will etc.

The materialists assert that these phenomena are also nothing more than the special characteristics and properties of matter.

In order to answer their claim one must say that, firstly the peculiarity that cannot be separated from the matter and from those things belonging to matter is it that it accepts division and it has a magnitude. These peculiarities are not present in the phenomena mentioned.

2. Secondly, the phenomena, which are said to be the special properties of matter, also exist in lifeless matter. In other words matter was lacking these special characteristics and subsequently they appeared. Therefore the appearance of these existents, which are known as special properties, require an originator who has initiated this into the matter. This originator itself is the cause that bestows existence or is the creating cause.

3. Another serious criticism for their claim is based on their principle, that all phenomena in the universe must be pre-determined (jabr), because by effecting and becoming effected in matter there is no place for choice and free-will (ikhtiyār).

Opposing free-will in addition to it being against self-evidence (badāhah) and commonsense, necessitates it denying any type of responsibility and value for spirituality and ethics. By denying responsibility and any ethical value system, the results for human life are surely clear.

4. Finally with the understanding, that matter cannot be the necessary existence, as already established, one must consider that it (matter) has a cause, which cannot be classified as a preparatory or natural cause. This is because this type of relationship and correlation can only be imagined between the materials with each other. However not all types of matter can have this type of relationship with its cause. Thus the cause that brought matter into existence is the cause beyond the physical realm, and is the creating cause.

Questions:

- 1- Explain the principles of the materialist worldview.
- 2- Define matter and material (corporeal).
- 3- Criticise the first principle of the materialist worldview.
- 4- Criticise the second principle.
- 5- Criticise the third principle.
- 6- Explain the problems of the fourth principle.

LESSON FIFTEEN: DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND ITS CRITICISM

Mechanical materialism and dialectical materialism

Materialism comes in different forms, and each one has a distinctive explanation for the beginning of the universe and its phenomena. In the beginning of the modern age, materialism by utilising the concepts of Newton on physics, interpreted the appearance of phenomena on the basis of mechanical movement. They considered every movement as an effect of a particular moving force, which entered from outside upon the momentary body.

They assumed that the universe was like a large machine from within which there was a moving force. This force would then transfer itself from one section to another causing the 'large machine' to move.

This theory was named as mechanical materialism. This belief however contained many weaknesses and was subsequently criticised by their adversaries. An example of such a criticism was:

If every movement is an effect of an external moving force, then there must be an external force for that prime matter (māddah al-awwaliyyah). This therefore necessitates the acceptance of a force beyond the physical realm (metaphysical), which has become the source for the initial movement in the realm of matter.

Another such criticism was that only conventional and transitional movements could be interpreted as mechanical forces. The phenomena in the universe could not all be limited to spatial changes, and this further necessitates the acceptance of other causes and agents for the appearance of several such phenomena.

The incapacity of mechanical materialism to answer these criticisms caused the materialists to search for other reasons to explain the metamorphosis of the universe.

They sought to at least prove that some movement was based on dynamics and that matter was in some way self-erupting.

Some of the founders of dialectical materialism (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles) by using the philosophical concepts of Hegel regarded the cause for movement to be the internal contradictory factor of the phenomena. In addition to accepting that matter is eternal and uncreated, and in the acceptance of the universal movement and the efficacy of the phenomena upon each other, they explain their assumption based upon three subjective principles:

1. Principle of internal contradictions.
2. Principle of sublimation or conversion of quantity (kammi) to quality (kayfi).
3. Principle of negating the negation or the dialectic of nature.

It is here that we will give a brief explanation of these principles followed by a criticism:

a. The principle of contradiction

Dialectical materialism recognises every phenomenon to be composed of two incompatible elements: thesis and anti-thesis. They cause the transmutation of the phenomenon in such a way that the anti-thesis dominates, synthesising a new phenomenon.

For example an egg, which contains within itself an embryo, eventually develops by consuming the food provided and turns into a chicken, through the processes known as synthesis. Positive and negative electricity are a good example of contradiction within the phenomena of physics. Also addition and subtraction is known as antilogy in elementary mathematics, and integral and non-integral are known as antilogies in higher mathematics.

These consequences are also present in the sociological history of man. For example, in Capitalism the working class is the anti-thesis for the capitalist class. If they gradually take over, then this synthesis will result in a socialist and communist society.

Criticism of the principle of contradiction

It cannot be denied that by arranging two material existents next to each other, it can result in such a way that one affects the other by weakening or even destroying it. For example we know of the effects that water has on fire. However this outcome is not universal and cannot be recognised as a principle. There are several instances contrary to this rule.

The presence of this type of contradiction between the phenomena is not considered impossible under the understanding of classical logic, philosophy and metaphysics.

Rather it is the combination of two opposites in one subject, which is considered impossible. They have brought absurd examples for the combination of two opposites, such as the combination of addition and subtraction or integral and non-integral etc, as well as the false prediction for the establishment of a dictatorship of proletarianism in capitalist countries.

If every phenomenon was composed of two opposites, then there must be another combination for every thesis and anti-thesis. Each one is a phenomenon and according to the principle mentioned they must have a combination of two opposites. This would mean that every limited phenomenon would have to contain infinite opposites.

However, the most basic criticism, that can be levied against this assumption (internal contradiction being considered as the cause for movement, supposedly compensating for the flaw in mechanical materialism), is that there is no intellectual argument to support it. In addition to this there is no denial in accepting the existence of a mechanical movement due to external force acting upon it. Unless of course, it can be accepted that the movement of a football is an effect of its internal contradictions and not an effect of the contact of the foot of a football player!

b. The principle of the quantum leap

By focusing upon the transformations in the universe, we realise that not all these transformations are gradual or step-by-step. In several instances a subsequent phenomenon may appear, but is dissimilar to the former phenomenon, and therefore cannot be counted as a result or outcome of a

former movement and transmission. The materialists have interpreted another principle for this process known as the quantum leap or conversion of quantity to quality. They explain that the conversion of quantity occurs when it reaches a special point and causes the appearance of quality. For example, when water increases in temperature to a degree whereby it changes into a vapoury state, and when metal changes its form and state from a solid to a liquid when it is heated to a certain level. Also an example can be that when conflicts in a society reach a certain level, they can cause a revolution.

Criticisms of the principle of the quantum leap

Firstly, a quantity could never be converted into a quality. At most, it is possible that the appearance of a phenomenon could be conditional upon the existence of a specific quantity. For example, it is not the temperature level of water, which changes it into vapour, (which is another quality), but this change is conditional upon the existence of a certain temperature.

Secondly, it is not necessary that this quantity is acquired as an effect of the gradual increase in the temperature of antecedent quantities. However it is possible that it is acquired as an effect of the decrease of antecedent quantities. For example vapour changing into water, is conditional upon the decrease in temperature.

Thirdly, the qualitative transformation (quality related) is not always sudden and impulsive, rather in many cases it occurs gradually, as the melting of glass and wax is gradual.

On these bases the only thing that can be accepted is that the necessity of a particular quantity is needed for the actualisation of some natural phenomena. However this cannot be considered, as the conversion of quantity to quality and one cannot accept the gradual increase of quantity as a necessity for the transformation of a phenomenon. Furthermore one cannot accept this condition as universal for the qualitative changes (of phenomena). Hence sublimation cannot be recognised as a universal rule.

c. The principle of negating the negation

The meaning of negating the negation, sometimes also known as the principle of exploring nature or the perfection of contradiction, is that during the course of change in dialectics, a thesis is always negated by an anti-thesis, and an anti-thesis is negated through synthesis in turn. A plant negates the seed and is negated by subsequent seeds, and an embryo negates an egg and is negated through a chicken. The new phenomena however, are always more perfect than the former ones, and the dialectical course is always vertical and towards perfection. This is the most significant element in the principle of negating the negation, which highlights the developing aspect with a tendency towards perfection.

Criticisms of the principle of negating the negation There is no doubt that in every transformation and transition there is the disintegration of previous states and circumstances, before the appearance of a new state and environment. If this is considered as the principle of negating the negation then this principle is nothing but solely a change or transformation. However the explanation -they give for this principle, with which they

justify the direction of movement being towards perfection, and upon which they claim that all movements are towards perfection, as well as each transformation of the universe is evolutionary, meaning, that every new phenomenon is necessarily more perfect than the previous one- is not acceptable. Is uranium, which turns into lead through the effect of radiation more perfect? Is the plant, which dries producing no seed or fruit more perfect? Therefore the only conclusion that can be accepted is that some natural phenomenon can, as a result of movement and transformation, reach perfection. Perfection cannot be considered as a universal rule for all of the phenomena in the universe.

It would be appropriate here to remind the reader that the assumption upon which these principles were universally established, only define the rules which have already been proven in the natural sciences, such as how the phenomena come into appearance.

However the existence of universal rules does not mean that we are without need of an originator or the cause, which bestows existence. We have already established in our previous lessons that matter and materiality are possible existents and they require a necessary existence.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between mechanical and dialectical materialism?
2. Explain the principle of contradiction and its criticism?
3. Explain the principle of the quantum leap?
4. Explain the principle of negating the negation?
5. Does the universality of the assumption of the principle of negating the negation, establish the needlessness of the cause that bestows existence?

LESSON SIXTEEN: ONENESS OF GOD

Introduction

In previous lessons the essentiality of the existence of God the Creator of the universe was established. In later lessons we investigated the materialist worldview and provided an explanation of their various criticisms. To assume the universe was free from a creator became apparently absurd and the interpretations given were unacceptable.

It is now an appropriate time to expand upon the issues relating to the oneness of God and unveil the flaws in polytheistic thought.

With reference to the appearance and alteration of polytheistic beliefs, there have been distinctive opinions between the sociologists. However none of these arguments can be considered as clear or authentic.

It may be possible to state that the initial reason for the inclination towards polytheism was the appearance of numerous heavenly and earthly phenomena, which, lead to the view that a particular god manages each phenomenon. Some related goodness to the god of good and evil to the god of evil. This resulted in the belief of there being two sources for the world.

From another angle by focusing upon the effect of the light (nūr) of the sun, moon and stars, upon the earthly phenomena, they discerned that the celestial objects have a type of lordship (rubūbiyyah) compared to the earth.

In addition to the above, man's tendency towards having a tangible God became the reason for creating different idols, signs and symbols for worshiping their presumed gods. These idols and symbols then gradually became the fundamental aspect of belief among the less intelligent. Every nation, perhaps every tribe on the basis of ambiguity and doubt established customs and rituals for idol worship as an answer for the intrinsic tendency of god worshipping. Furthermore, in order to sanctify their animalistic and egoistic tendencies, they moulded these tendencies into religious rituals. Such rituals like dancing festivals, wine-drinking fiestas, Epicureanism, etc still exist among the idol worshipper.

However more significant than the mentioned reasons, were the egotistic interests and arrogance of tyrants and authoritarians, which caused them to abuse the beliefs of simpletons in order to expand their power and rule. Furthermore they considered a type of lordship for themselves and also regarded satanic worship as part of their rituals. Such examples can be seen in the past empires of China, India, Iran and Egypt.

Nevertheless polytheistic religions came under the influence of different factors and discernment among humans. Thus a barrier was formed preventing people from understanding the true perfection, which was supposed to be applied by the divine and monotheistic religions. The Noble Qur'an portrays such struggles encountered by the prophets (a) of God and the polytheists.

On these bases, the foundation of polytheistic belief is to believe in the lordship of an existent other than God the Supreme, for the appearance of some of the universe's phenomena. Furthermore many polytheists had faith in the oneness of the Creator, and in reality they accepted the oneness of creatorship. However on a lower realm they recognised other second level

gods who administrated the world independently, and they called God the Creator, the God of gods or Lord of the lords (rabb al-arbāb).

These gods, who administrate according to some, were known as angels, and were called by the polytheist Arabs, the daughters of God. Some recognised them as fairies and genies or some regarded them as the spirits of stars or humans from the past, or as a type of invisible existent.

In lesson ten indications were made that creatorship and true lordship are inseparable from each other, belief in the creatorship of God and the acceptance of the lordship of others is not compatible. By explaining the contradiction in this belief, it is possible to nullify the argument of those who held such a view.

In order to establish the oneness of God, the Supreme, many arguments have been demonstrated in the different books of theology and philosophy. Here we are going to demonstrate an argument, which encompasses the oneness of lordship and rejects the polytheistic beliefs.

Proofs for the Oneness of God

The assumption that the universe has two or more gods can solely be imagined through a few possibilities:

Firstly it can be considered that every phenomenon of the universe is created and is an effect of all the assumed gods. The second assumption could be that each particular group of phenomena is an effect (or created by a particular god) of one of the assumed gods. Finally the third assumption is that all of the phenomena are created by one of these assumed gods and the other gods are recognised as the managers of the universe.

However it is impossible to assume that every phenomenon has several gods. If two or more gods created an existent, it would imply that each of the assumed gods would create an existent. This would result in many existents, whereas in reality there is only one.

If it is to be assumed that a particular god creates each particular phenomenon, this will imply that each phenomenon exists because of its particular god. Furthermore they must not require or depend upon any other existent unless the (dependency) need returns to their particular god. This type of requirement or need must be upon the existent, which is created by that very creator who has created that particular group.

In other words, the assumption of having more than one god necessitates the order in the universe to be multifarious and deteriorating. In reality there is only one order and all phenomena are related and effectual upon each other and at the same time need each other.

Furthermore the present phenomenon is linked with the former phenomenon and every coexisting phenomenon creates grounds for future phenomena. Hence a universe, which is linked and related to each other (interwoven with each other) is governed under a sole order and it (this universe) cannot be an effect of several causes that bestow existence.

Moreover, if the assumption is made that the creator of the creation is one, and other gods are the administrators and governors of the universe, this is also incorrect, because every effect with all its being is established on the cause that bestows existence ('illah mufida lil-wujūd). No independent existent has the means to interfere unless the results and outcomes of effects

of a cause are all under the authority of the existence-bestowing agent and take place with the will of the Divine. In this case none of them would be considered as lord because the true meaning of 'lord' means the one who can freely and independently intervene in the creation. However there is no intervention, but in the dissipation of the lordship given by the Creator and with the power He has bestowed. This form of executing does not contradict with the oneness of lordship because the oneness of creatorship, does not contradict 'the creating' with the Divine decree of the Creator. In the Noble Qur'an and traditions we find a similar type of creation or origination based on Allah's support and godly power. As it has been mentioned with regards to Prophet Jesus (a) that: "and when you would create A from clay the form of a bird, with My leave, and you would breathe into it and it would become a bird, with My leave" (al-Māi'da:110).

And also in another verse we find:

"And those who direct the affairs [of creatures]" (al-Nāzi'āt:5).

It can be concluded that the illusion of having several gods, stems from the comparison made between God and material causes, where many causes are not unusual. However it can never be accepted that several causes can bestow existence for an effect, or that several lords and independent administrators can be assumed for administering the universe.

Based on this argument for nullifying this illusion, one must focus upon the meaning and the peculiarities of this cause that bestows existence until it is known that the profusion of this cause is impossible. Furthermore one must contemplate upon the coherence of the creation until reaching the realisation that several gods could not possibly create this type of order, or numerous lords administer this type of universe.

Likewise it became clear for some of the qualified and saintly individuals of God, that by accepting Divine authority (wilāyah al-takwīniyyah) in a setting where there is no independent lordship or creatorship over them, the oneness of God would not be negated. The legislative authority (wilāyah al-tashrī'iyyah) of the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) is not inconsistent with the Divine legislative lordship (rubūbiyyah al- tashrī'iyyah), because it comes with the Divine degree.

Questions:

- 1- Explain the causes for the development of polytheism.
- 2- What is the basis of polytheism?
- 3- Why can one not assume that a phenomenon has several gods?
- 4- What difference is caused if one considers that the creation created by one god has several lords to administer it?
- 5- Why can one not regard every group of creation to be created by its particular god?
- 6- How would you criticise the assumption that the entire universe is created by one God, and at the same time claim that there are many lords and executors?
- 7- From where does the illusion of several gods come from, and how can it be nullified?
- 8- Why does it make no difference to the oneness of lordship and creatorship, if one believes in the Divine authority for the saints?

LESSON SEVENTEEN: THE MEANING OF THE ONENESS OF THE GOD

Introduction

The word monotheism from the lexical point of view means ‘oneness or unity’, but in philosophy, scholastic theology, ethics (akhlāq), and mysticism it has been applied with various different meanings. However it gives the same basic meaning in all of these sciences, but when viewed from different aspects it can be regarded differently, such as ‘the different forms of oneness’ or ‘the different levels oneness’. The investigation of these offshoots cannot be comprised in these writings.

Therefore from this angle it is sufficient enough that we bring the most significant and befitting arguments for our explanation:

The negation of plurality

The initial and distinguished meaning of monotheism is that very believing in the unity of God and negation of plurality and multiplicity outside its essence. This belief is in complete opposition to polytheism, and the belief in two or more gods who are independent and apart in their existence from each other.

The negation of composition

The second terminological meaning of monotheism is to believe in oneness, and to believe that the essence is self-evident and not composed of actual or potential parts.

This meaning is usually interpreted as the negative attributes (al-sifāt al-salbiyyah) (mentioned in lesson ten), because our mind is more familiar with compositional concepts as compared to the concept of self-evidence.

a. The negation of attributes as additional to the essence

The third meaning of monotheism is to believe in the unity of the attributes of essence with the essence of God Himself, and the negation of considering the attributes as being additional to the essence. This is known as the unity of Divine attributes (tawhīd al-sifāti). Furthermore this Divine unity of attributes in the traditional texts is known as the negation of attributes, which is in opposition to those Ashirites (ashā’irah) who have regarded the Divine attributes as additional to the Divine essence, and believed in the Eight Ancients (qudama al-thamāniyah).

The proof for the unity of Divine attributes is that, if all of the Divine attributes have separate referents or affirmations then they can be solely imagined through a few possibilities:

It would be either that the referents or affirmations would be assumed to be within the Divine essence, which necessitates the Divine essence being compound, and this we have already proved as being impossible.

Or that the referents are imagined to be outside the Divine essence, and are regarded as possible existents. However if they were assumed as being necessary existents then it would bring about plurality in the essence and polytheism, which cannot be considered by any Muslim. However if they are assumed as being possible existents then it means that the Divine

essence, which is deficient of those attributes, has created them and has then later been given them. For example the essence even after lacking 'life' creates an existent by the name of life and through this creation the essence comes to life, the same is the case for knowledge and power.

It is impossible for the cause that bestows existence to be deficient of the perfections of creation. More significantly the provision of its creation and the cause that bestows existence retains life, knowledge and power, and is also attributed with the different attributes of perfection!

By the nullification of these assumptions it becomes clear that the Divine attributes do not have distinctive referents and are not separated from the Divine essence. On the other hand they are single self-evident concepts abstracted from the Divine almighty essence.

b. The unity of Divine actions

The fourth terminology used for monotheism, which in the parlance of philosophy and scholastic theology is known as the unity of Divine actions, is that God the Almighty is self-sufficient in His works, He does not need anybody or anything and no existent can aid Him.

This subject is proven with the understanding of the peculiarities of the cause that bestows existence, which is self-existing when compared to its effects, because the effect of this particular cause with all its existence is dependent upon this cause. This is known in philosophical terminology as the manifestation of need and dependence ('ayn al-rabt wa-l-ta'alluq) to the cause and the effect does not have any independence of its own.

In other words:

Everything that is actualised is because of Him and is obedient to the realm of power, sovereignty, and true and original mastership. The power and mastership of others is in line with Divine power and an offshoot of it. The ownership of a slave's ('abd) possessions is perpendicular to the ownership of his master. Hence how can it be possible that God the Supreme requires aid from someone who with all its existence is dependent upon Him.

c. Independent effectuality

The fifth meaning of monotheism is independent effectuality. This means that the Divine creation is not independent from God and the influences that are made by them (the creation) are with the permission of God and under the strength that has been provided by God the Supreme. The only existent that can influence independently - without the aid of any other creation - and in all time and space is the Divine essence of God. The actions and influences of others are vertical to the influences and actions of Him and are at the dispersal of God the Supreme.

On this base, the Noble Qur'an associates the actions in nature and in the corporeal world (like the ownership of humans and jinn) to God. For instance a tree giving fruit, or the falling of rain and emergence of a plant from a seed are all related to God. The Qur'an continuously emphasises that humans must focus upon and realise that these actions in the natural and corporeal world are parallel with the actions God.

In order to bring our mind towards the realisation of this reality we have brought the following relative example:

If a supervisor of a firm orders his workers to undertake a project, and the project reaches success, the credit will go to the supervisor, even though the instrumentality of the project was in the hands of the workers. The supervisor is referred to as the intelligent and effective agent, due to accomplishment of the project.

The original action is also comprised of consequent levels, and from this aspect Divine Will establishes the existence of every agent. From another view they are like mental forms, which are established by the one who imagines. From this point of view the influences of every agent and of the one who influences on a higher level is dependent upon the Divine original will and permission of God:

“[This is] as Allah has wished! There is no power except by Allah!” (al-Kahf:39).

d. The two important results achieved

The result of the unity of Divine action is that nothing other than God deserves worship, because as we have indicated before, a being does not deserve to be worshipped by just being a creator or a lord. In other words Divinity (ulūhiyyah) is the necessary condition of lordship and creatorship.

From another angle, the result of monotheism in the latter meaning is that the entirety of human reliance must be upon God, and in all of works He must be trusted and solely from Him help must be requested. Man’s fear and hope ought to be from Him, and when the sources for the completion of needs are out of reach, one must not despair, because God is capable of furnishing all needs from His distinctive and hidden source.

Living under such monotheistic circumstances results in mankind enjoying a special Divine authority (wilāyah) and having a unique and tranquil soul:

“Look! The friends of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve” (Yūnus:62). These two results have already been placed in the verse that a Muslim recites at-least ten times a day:

“You [alone] do we worship, and You [alone] do we turn for help” (al-Fātiha:62).

e. The resolution of a doubt

It is possible that one may question, that if the necessity of perfect monotheism is that humans seek help exclusively from God, they should not then seek intercession from the saints of God.

The answer to this is that if by seeking intercession from the friends of God in the meaning that they are independent and without the permission of God, acts or fulfills the need of the seeker; this type of intercession is not harmonious with monotheism.

However if it is the case that they are the means through which the bounties and mercies of God can be reached, and then there is no contradiction in it. On the other hand these intercessions are considered as the illustrations of monotheism in worship, and obedience, because it has been originated from His command.

Nevertheless, someone may question as to why has God regulated these types of intercession? And as to why God has ordained humans to seek intercession from His saints? The answer to these questions would be that the command of God is with wisdom and the wisdom behind these ordinances can be categorised in the following way:

For the recognition and understanding of the great station of servanthood, motivation for others in the performance of worship and obedience, which are the means of reaching this station.

In order to prevent those who become arrogant from their worship and consider themselves as having a position and station in the realm of perfection.

This trait had been found to be in those who have departed from the Divine authority of the Prophet's household (a) (ahlul-bayt).

Questions:

- 1- Give the terminological and lexical meaning of monotheism.
- 2- What is the proof for the unity of divine attributes?
- 3- How can one establish the unity of divine actions?
- 4- Explain the meaning of monotheism through independent effectuality.
- 5- What are the two most significant results?
- 6- Is seeking intercession from the saints of God considered as contradictory to monotheism? Why?
- 7- What is the wisdom behind God's decree for seeking intercession?

LESSON EIGHTEEN: FREEWILL AND DETERMINISM

Introduction

As indicated in the previous lesson, monotheism in independent effectuality is of significance in the Islamic sciences, which substantially play a great role in the composition of man. Due to this very fact the Noble Qur'an has emphasised upon this subject several times in different occasions. The Noble Qur'an, in order for the correct realisation of this issue has created distinctive grounds and regarded all phenomena to be dependent upon the Will, consent, and the Divine decree and destination of God.

However true realisation of this subject requires intellectual capacity and developed thinking, and from another side it requires correct teaching and explanation. Those who fall short in their intellectuality or those who did not utilise the teachings of the Infallibles, who were the true interpreters of the Noble Qur'an, deviated and presumed that monotheism in independent effectuality means that all causation is specified to God. They illustrated the negation of all causation from any intermediary cause, such as the existence of heat is parallel to the existence of fire or the existence of becoming quenched is created correspondently to drinking. In other words there is no effect of fire upon heat or the drinking of water upon being quenched, and these imaginations are totally against the clearly defined and undisputed verses of the Noble Qur'an.

The unfortunate effect of this intellectual perversion is manifested when the actions and capabilities of man are investigated. This means that the result of this investigation is that all human actions are entitled to God and human activity with regards to its action is completely negated, and due to this, none can be considered as responsible for their action.

In other words: one of the destructive conclusions of this distorted thinking is fatalism and the negation of responsibility for man, which means denying the most important characteristic of the human soul. Furthermore this assumption also becomes absurd and vain for any ethical, legal, and educational system and likewise for the Divine Islamic legislative system. If man does not have any freewill or choice for his actions then there will be no question of responsibility, reward or chastisement for the actions performed. It also necessitates the absurdity and purposelessness of the universe.

However, from the noble verses, the immaculate traditions and intellectual arguments, one can understand the purposefulness of the universe. The purposefulness of the universe is to create grounds where humans by their activity, out of freewill, carry out their worship and obligation towards God and reach high levels of perfection, proximity to the Divine and acquire unique mercies from God.

Besides, if there were no such thing as human volition then there would be no meaning of responsibility. There would also be no eternal recompense or bounties for the actions provided. Furthermore the purpose for creation would be defective resulting in the mechanism of creation being as a puppet

show, where humans are the puppets acting without any determination, and at the end of the day some are rewarded and some are punished for their actions!

The substantial cause for the expansion of these inclinations was the evil political desires of the tyrannical regimes, which nullified and rectified their ill actions and behaviours and hampered resistance from overthrowing them.

From another angle, those who were aware of the weak elements of this thought but had no vision of how to associate between absolute monotheism and the negation of determinism and were also remote or did not benefit from the teachings of the Prophet's household (a), acknowledged delegation. They regarded human activity to be completely out of the realm of Divine activity. This itself became another branch of distorted thought, which deprived them from achieving great results from the Islamic sciences.

However those who had the capacity to recognise this knowledge, and were aware of the rightful teachers and interpreters of the Qur'an, saved themselves from this distortion. They regarded their free-activity as being due to the power that God had granted them and accepted the responsibility, which was derived from it. From another standpoint they accepted the Divine independent effectuality on a higher level and realised the outcomes of this great wisdom.

In the enlightening traditions of the household of the Prophet (a) under the section of freewill, capability (istitā'ah), Divine decree and destiny, we find the denial and negation of determinism and predestination. Also there are many narrations, which have ordered disqualified individuals to avoid delving too deeply into these issues, to prevent deviation and misunderstanding.

The issue of Divine decree and destiny comes in different dimensions, which requires an independent research and investigation that cannot be compounded to this writing.

However by focusing upon the importance of this subject we will be outwardly discussing this issue. Those who are interested in the precise details of this subject, and its intellectual principles must refer to the detailed discussions in philosophy.

The explanation of human volition

The power to decide and choose is one of the most obvious factors for man, because every man by presence is aware of these qualities, which are undoubtedly identical to other psychological qualities. In addition to this, even if he doubts, then the existence of the doubt itself is understood by the (knowledge of) presence. Hence in this case it becomes impossible for him to doubt with regards to these dispositions.

Likewise every individual who is the slightest bit observant can realise whether he is willing to speak or not, or whether he wants to wave his hand or not and if he wants to eat or does not want to eat etc.

The decision-making in order for carrying out an act is seldom dependent upon the animalistic instincts such as hunger that intends food or thirst that desires one to drink water. Occasionally this may be prompted from the intellect and ambitions, such as an ill person taking a bitter pill in order to

gain health or avoiding a certain type of tempting food to remain healthy, or a student on the path of knowledge who for unveiling the truths shuts himself away from the materialistic pleasures and faces numerous difficulties, or a sincere soldier who even sacrifices his life for reaching high levels of objectiveness in offering.

In reality the humanistic value is only known when a prohibition occurs and an individual in order to reach moralistic excellence, eternal spiritual perfections, and proximity towards the Divine acceptance, shuns the animalistic and low desires.

Every action provided that, if it is determined with greater awareness and freewill has more effect upon the ascent and the descent of a soul depending on the realisation of the action.

It is unquestionably correct to say that the capacity of resisting the low desires of the soul in every individual is not at the same level, though more or less man benefits from this Divine gift of volition and will. However through a sufficient amount of effort and extra practice, one can improve the capacity for opposing the lowly desires through this Divine bestowal.

Therefore there is no reason for being skeptical with regards to the existence of human volition (freewill) and will, and one must not become confused with distinctive arguments and doubts that are posited upon this self-evident subject.

Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, human volition is considered as a self-evident principle in the educational, ethical, and religious systems. Hence if this were not the case then there would be no meaning to recompense and chastisement.

The cause for the deviation from this self-evident truth and inclination towards the concept of determinism (fatalism) is due to some spurious doubts, which must be answered so that there is no place left for confusions and suspicions. For this reason we will be attending briefly to these spurious doubts below.

a. The resolution of spurious doubts concerning determinism

The most substantial arguments of fatalism are as follows:

1. The will of man takes its form due to the stimulation of intrinsic and internal tendencies. The existence of these tendencies is neither in control of man nor the stimulation of it through external means. Thus there is no room for human volition and determination.

The answer to this is that the agitation of internal tendencies creates the grounds for the will and decision-making, but does not make the decision to carry out the action. The only way that it will be considered as a compulsion is when there is deprivational steadfastness. The proof for this is that when we are in the process of decision-making, we calculate the pros and cons of the decision or we hesitate in making a decision.

2. On the basis of the various sciences, it has been proven that tendencies are hereditary and also that the environmental and social surroundings determine their configuration. The difference in the mannerisms and behaviour of man is due to the very fact that there is diversity in the human social and environmental surroundings.

This very reality more or less is also accepted in the religious documents, thus on these bases one cannot accept that the actions of man emanates from freewill.

The answer to this argument raised is that the acceptance of freewill and will does not mean the denial of these aspects of tendencies, but it means that humans even after being effected by these environmental, social, and hereditary conditions can still resist and decide at the time of the arousal of inclinations. It is certain that the requirement of the struggle against these tendencies requires much pain and hardship, due to the fact that these are more effective towards achieving perfection, and the rewards after passing these troubles are always bigger. Also these psychological complexes and difficulties may affect the level of punishment, diminishing it.

3 Another one of the spurious doubts of the determinist is that God the Supreme has knowledge of the entire phenomena and actions of man before they act upon it, and that the knowledge of God is impeccable. Therefore all of the actions have to take place according to the eternal knowledge of God, and departure from them is impossible. On this basis there is no room for freewill and choice for man. The answer to this doubt would be that the knowledge of God is implicated with every action that takes place and the attribute of man being free in his decision-making or having the freewill is also known by God. Hence if determinism is established then it will be against divine knowledge. For example, God the Supreme is aware of an action that an individual is going to take in a certain situation, not only that but God is also aware of the relationship of this action with the will and freewill of that agent (individual). Therefore the knowledge of God does not contradict the freewill and will of man. Another doubt of the fatalist is with regards to the divine decree and destination, which according to them is not compatible with human freewill, and hence we will be discussing this subject in the following lesson.

Questions:

1. Explain the cause for the inclination towards fatalism.
2. What are the distorted effects of this thought?
3. Explain briefly the freewill and will of man.
4. Do the internal tendencies contradict with freewill? Why?
5. What are the differences between those who are influenced by the difficult circumstances and complicated psychological conditions, and those who are not?
6. Do the genetically, social and environmental surroundings effect freewill? Why?
7. Does the knowledge of God contradict the thought of freewill? Why?

LESSON NINETEEN: DIVINE DECREE AND DESTINY

The concepts of destiny and decree

The term destiny (qadar) means dimension and pre-determination (taqdīr) means measurement, and measuring and building something to determine a size. The term decree (qadā') is used in the meaning of bringing to an end, finishing, and judgement (which, figuratively, is a kind of finishing of finishing). Occasionally decree and destiny are used as synonyms in the sense of destiny (masīr).

By destiny it is implied that God has decided the limits and dimensions, time and space, quantity and quality of the phenomena, which are established through the influence of gradual causes and agents. Likewise decree is known as the final and inevitable termination of a phenomenon after creating their grounds and conditions.

According to these definitions the classification of divine destiny is prior to the classification of divine decree and they are comprised of hierarchical degrees, which include conditions that are immediate, intermediary, and remote and by the innovation of some means and conditions they are transformed. For example the gradual development of a foetus from a sperm to an embryo goes through different stages, which includes distinctive time and space, and finally its deliverance, which is considered from the realm of its destiny. However the classification of instant decree is related to the generation of all factors and conditions and at the same time it is inevitable as the Noble Qur'an has referred:

“And when He decides on a matter, He just says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is”(al-Baqarah :117).

As has already been indicated, occasionally decree and destiny are used as synonyms, and due to this it is divided into certain and uncertain, and from this aspect we find in our traditions and supplications that the decree can be averted through giving charity, supplication and strengthening the blood-kinship.

Objective determination and epistemic-determination

Occasionally the divine pre-determination (taqdīr) and decree are known as the knowledge of God, with regards to the conditions and grounds for the birth and actualisation of a phenomenon. This is named as epistemic-decree, and destiny (qada' wa qadar 'ilmi). Similarly the objective decree and destiny (qada' wa qadar 'ayni) are known to be related to the gradual evolution of a phenomenon and its realisation in the realm of the external world (its materialisation).

On the accounts of the traditions and the noble verses of the Qur'an, all knowledge with regards to the past and present realisation and future actualisation of the phenomenon in the external world is epitomised upon 'the safe tablet' (lawh mahfūz). Those by the permission of the Divine have access to the 'tablet' and are aware of the past and future of things. Furthermore there are other tablets of lesser degree in which the incomplete and conditional futuristic knowledge is present.

Those who are aware of this have limited information, which is susceptible to substitution. Apparently the following noble verse asserts upon these two forms of destinies sarnevest}:

“Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother of the Book” (al-Ra’d:39).

Alteration in the conditional destinies is known as change (badā) in an earlier ruling in the religious text.

At any instance believing in the epistemic-decree and destiny will not influx any enigmas other than that of Divine eternal knowledge (‘ilm azali). In our previous lessons we have refuted those fatalistic arguments with relation to Divine knowledge.

However believing in the objective decree and destiny, and particularly believing in determined destiny will influx several doubts and enigmas, which must be resolved.

Nevertheless a brief answer was provided in the discussions on independent effectuality.

The relation of destiny and decree to human volition

We know that the requirement for believing in the Divine objective decree and destiny is that all phenomena from beginning to end, and even the conditions of actualisation are subservient to the wise design of God the Supreme. Furthermore the reaching of this phenomenon to its final stage is also in consonance with the Divine will.

In other words the existence of every phenomenon is related to Divine will, without which no existent can come into being. Likewise the beginning of everything is based upon the Divine decree, without which no existent would take the limited forms or reach its (end) final stage. The explanation of these relationships and constituents in reality is the gradual teachings of the oneness of God. This in the meaning of it being independent in effectuality, which is of the foremost level and plays an important role in the being and becoming of man, as indicated in our previous lessons.

However the proving of the origination of a phenomenon by the authorisation of God and even by the will of God is perhaps easier than the final stages of a phenomenon entangled with the Divine decree, which requires more complex proofs. Besides, it is difficult to combine the belief in Divine decree with human volition (free-will) in the building of one’s own future. For this reason the school of the theological scholars (ash’arites) who acknowledge the Divine decree, have inclined towards determinist thought, and those who could not maintain this thought, have completely denied it and accepted absolute human volition. Moreover, they have interpreted all of those verses and the traditions opposing their thought, which can be seen in their detailed books relating to this topic.

The genuine doubt mentioned, is that if human acts in reality are based upon the will of man, then how can one establish the relationship between it and Divine decree?

And if it is grounded upon Divine decree, then how can it be known to be the choice of man or be complied with human volition?

Hence on this basis, for the refutation of doubt and for the combination of human volition and Divine will, one must demonstrate the different

proofs for proving that an effect can have several causes in a way that the different voluntary actions (f 'al) of man are related to human volition and also to Divine decree.

a. Different types of influences from distinctive causes

The effect of several causes in the appearance of a phenomenon can be imagined in the following ways:

1. Certain cause next to each other or together make an influence such as the mixing of water, grain and temperature etc. that influences the seed to sprout and grow into a plant.

2. Each and every one of the causes influence a phenomenon periodically during the stretch of its (a phenomenon's) life such as the flight of an aircraft is dependent or influenced periodically by several machines.

3. The effect, which results from certain causes due to the sequential inducement, such as the effect of the intention of man to write upon the hand and the effect of the hand upon the pen.

4. The effect, resulting from certain vertical causes in such a fashion that each and every one of them depends on other causes (existence). This is contrary to the assumption above were the pen was not dependent upon the hand and the hand was not contingent upon the intention.

In all of these forms certain causes were required for the formation of an effect, hence the effect of Divine will and human will upon the voluntary action of man pertains to these realities.

However, the combination of two separate causes upon an effect (or for the origination of an effect) is not possible, taking into consideration that the causes are those which bestow existence ('illah muwjidah), or if there is a combination of two causes, the combination of which, is impossible.

b. Resolution of a doubt

With the explanation which has been provided, it has become clear that relating the voluntary actions of man to God the Supreme is not contradictory, however Divine will and human will are considered as being parallel to each other.

In other words, the contingency of the action and the agent is on one level, however their existence is compared to God the Supreme on a higher level, in such a way that the existence of man and the existence of the matter is dependent upon Him.

The influence of human-will as being a part of a complete cause in the accomplishment of a work does not contradict the thought that all parts of the complete cause are acknowledged to God. It is God who has the power in his hand by which He gives the existence to man, the universe and to all affairs, there is nothing that can be considered as being independent from Him. The voluntary actions of man are also dependent and not beyond the radius of the Divine will. Therefore these two wills are not horizontal to each other and it is not impossible for them to co-exist.

Human will in its very existence is dependent upon Divine will and the Divine will is necessary for the realisation (actualisation) of any action:

“But you do not wish unless it is wished by Allah, the Lord of all the worlds” (al-Takwīr:29).

c. The influence of belief upon destiny and decree

To believe in Divine destiny and decree other than it being a reason for the perfection of man in the dimension of the intellect, also has a tremendous effect upon the actions of man. Some of these actions have already been discussed, however we will mention a few more below:

One, who believes in the return of all occurrences to the wise will of God, which is related to the Divine decree and destiny, will never be afraid or confused with regards to these occurrences. Furthermore such a person will not despair at fear and suffering, but will see such incidents as the Divine plan of God, and will gladly receive them and master the great art of patience, trust, consent, and submission. Moreover the joys and the status of the world, which leads towards arrogance and intoxication, will not carry him away. These are those very effects, which the Noble Qur'an has mentioned:

“No affliction visits the earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it about -that is indeed easy for Allah- so that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way, and Allah does not like any swaggering braggart” (al-Hadīd:22- 23).

In every instance one must remember that the false understanding of the issue of destiny and decree or independent effectuality will result in the acceptance of oppression, irresponsibility and indolence. However one must know that the felicity and success and also the eternal misfortune of man are the outcomes of his actions. As the Noble Qur'an has mentioned:

“Whatever [good] it earns is to its benefit, and whatever [evil] it incurs is to its harm” (al-Baqarah:286).

“And that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for” (al-Najm:39).

Questions:

1. Give the lexical meaning of decree and destiny.
2. What is meant by Divine decree?
3. Why is Divine decree and destiny separated into certain and uncertain?
4. What is appearance (badā)?
5. Explain objective and epistemic decree and destiny?
6. What is the ‘guarded tablet’ and what is its relationship to the certain and uncertain destiny?
7. Explain the difficulties of combining human volition with Divine decree and destiny. Briefly explain the deviation of the school of the Asharite theologians.
8. What are the different types of influences upon an effect?
9. How can the doubt of the fatalist be refuted with regards to divine destiny and decree?
10. What is the influence of belief upon Divine decree and destiny?

LESSON TWENTY: DIVINE JUSTICE

Introduction

In the previous lessons we have dealt with the contradictions of the two schools of thought, the Asharites and Mutazilites with reference to the issues of theology, Divine will, determinism and human volition, and also upon Divine decree and destiny.

However these two schools frequently held the two extremist positions, and have either exaggerated or underestimated these realities.

Another one of the most fundamental differences between these two groups is the issue of Divine justice and the Shi'ite understanding of this issue is in agreement with that of Mutazilites. They have been known as the 'adliyyah vis-a-vis ashā'irah. This topic is of great importance in the field of theology, and is known to be the crux of the matter in theological issues and is even acknowledged as one of the principles of belief for the schools of Mutazilite and Shi'ite.

One must focus on the point, that the Asharites do not deny Divine justice and do not consider God as being unjust or tyrannical (God forbid), due to clear and apparent verses that establish Divine justice and deny any form of oppression from the Holy Divine realm. However the discussion centres around this issue, that the sole intellect without any explanation from Divine law (the Book and the traditions) can standardise Divine actions. Upon this basis it can demand the forbearance and accomplishment of Divine actions. For example:

Is it necessary for God the Supreme to take a believer to heaven and a polytheist to hell, or are these decisions based on revelation and cannot be applied by the sole-intellect?

The point of dispute is that very issue, which has been named as good and evil from the point of the intellect (husn wa qubh 'aqli). The Asharites have denied this and instead came up with the idea that whatever God carries out in the transcendental realm (takwīn), it is considered as good, and on the corporal realm, whatever God orders it is considered as good, but not because it is good by itself.

However the belief of the Mutazilites and the Shi'ites, is that action without any subsistence from the corporal and transcendental world, can be distinguish by God as good and evil (husn wa qubh), and the intellect has the capacity to understand good and evil to a certain extent. This understanding results in the belief that the Holy Divine realm is remote from evil actions. However this is not in the sense that God is commanded or ordered, but means that the emanation of evil from God the Supreme is incompatible, and the emergence of any evil from God is impossible.

It is self-evidential that the investigation has provided the answers for the doubts raised by the Asharites with regards to the good and evil, from the intellectual point of view. However the current work does not have the capacity to display them. Likewise it is possible that the Mutazilites have some inadequate patterns in their belief with respect to the good and evil, which shall be investigated in its place. However the overall belief of good and evil from the intellectual point of view, is acknowledged by the Shi'ites

and has been confirmed in the Book and the traditions, and emphasised by the Infallible Imams (a).

From here on we will be explaining the perimeters of the concept of justice and then demonstrate intellectual arguments in order to prove this attribute as an attribute of action for God the Supreme. Finally we will resolve some of the most important issues dealing with this topic.

The concept of justice

The lexical meaning of justice is:

to equalise, uniformity and is commonly known as the consideration of the rights of others. Hence the definition would be ‘granting rights to one who deserves.’ Therefore, initially one must conceive an existence, which enjoys right, and then the consideration of its right will be known as justice, and the violation of it will be regarded as tyranny. However, occasionally the concept of justice can be extended and regarded in the meaning of ‘the performance of work befittingly or as to place all things in its proper place.’ According to the latter definition, justice is tantamount to wisdom and just work is wise work. Nevertheless the determination of the ‘right of the deserved-one’ and what a ‘proper place’ is, involves a vast domain of words, which is usually discussed in the philosophy of ethics and in the philosophy of rights. Naturally this work does not allow us to cover all these peripheries.

However, every mindful person understands that if a person snatches a piece of bread from an orphan’s hand without any reason or kills an innocent person for no reason, they have persecuted and oppressed, and therefore committed an evil act. Furthermore in contrast to this, if the snatched bread is taken from the tyrant and given back to the orphan, or the killer is punished, the action carried out would be considered to be wise and just. This is true even for someone who does not believe in the existence of God.

The secret behind this discernment and the force that determines the good and evil, and similar issues must be investigated within the different branches of philosophy.

It may be concluded that justice can be conceived from two concepts, which are considered as general and particular:

Consideration for the rights of others, the wise performance of work and heeding to the rights of others is an extension to this.

Therefore, the factor that is not necessary for justice is uniformity or equalisation. For example, a just teacher is not the one who encourages or reprimands students equally, whether they are hard working or lazy. A true teacher is the one who nourishes the one who deserve the nourishment. Another example could be with regards to a righteous judge who distributes the property in a feud according to the one who is entitled to that property, but not equally.

Likewise the requirement of Divine justice and wisdom is not that the Creator creates His creation uniformly or equally, for example He does not create humans with horns, wings, wool etc. However the necessity of Divine justice and wisdom is that the Creator creates the existence in such a way that it receives the utmost good and perfection and also in a way that it

fulfills the ultimate goal. Furthermore the essence of Divine justice and wisdom is that all human beings are responsible according to their capacity and are judged and rewarded with consideration of their free-will.

a. The proofs for Divine justice

As indicated earlier Divine justice is considered to be a branch of Divine wisdom.

From another point of view it is considered wisdom itself and the proof for it is also that of the Divine wisdom, which has already been established in lesson eleven.

However, we will here provide a more detailed explanation.

We know that God the Supreme possesses the ultimate level of power and volition, and can perform any work, which is possible without being under the influence of any existent. However, He will not perform everything, which is possible for Him to perform, but will act only upon that which He has desired and willed.

We also know that God's Will cannot be absurd or uncalculated, but He desires only that which His impeccable attributes necessitate of Him. He will not create any existent without what is demanded from His ontological attributes. God the Supreme is absolute (pure) perfection and His Will is quintessentially related towards the perfection and benevolence of the creation. If the necessity of existence is the origination of evil and the imperfections in the universe, then it is considered to be one of the consequences of quintessentiality.

However this consequential evil and imperfection is predominated by perfection and good, because it is coherent with the abundant good and perfection (or because abundant good and perfection is quintessential). The abundant good will overwhelms the evil, because God the Supreme is absolute perfection.

Hence the requirement for the Divine attributes of perfection is that the universe is created in such a way, that it overall receives the utmost perfection and good, and from here the attribute of wisdom for God the Supreme is proven.

On this very basis, Divine Will is related to man's creation when the right conditions are possible and are the source of abundant good. One of the fundamental privileges of man is volition and freewill, which without doubt is an ontological attribute. An existent that possesses this quality is considered to be more perfect compared to one who is deprived of it. However the requirement for being independent is the movement towards eternal perfection through good actions, which can also descend in the direction of eternal loss and misery through bad conduct. The aim of Divine Will is the perfection of man, and this is not possible without free-will. However this provides the possibility of deterioration due to the effect of sensual desires (hawa al- nafs), which take form because of the influences of Satan. Subsequently this deterioration is also associated with Divine Will.

Selection with awareness requires the understanding of good and evil. Hence God the Supreme has ordained for man, that which is beneficial and prohibited for him that which will lead him towards deterioration and decline. Furthermore the requirement for Divine wisdom is that

responsibility must be harmonious with the capability of the performer, because responsibility, which is impossible to perform, is absurd.

Therefore, the initial element of justice (in this particular sense) means 'justice in the ordinance of responsibilities.' This is proven by the reason, that if God the Supreme ordains a responsibility beyond the capacity of his servants then the performance of it would be not possible.

However 'justice in judgement' for the servants will be proven by focusing upon the factor of reward or chastisement provided for the action performed according to their (deserving) creditability.

Finally 'justice in granting rewards and chastisement' will be established by focusing upon the final purpose of creation. Man has been created in order to reach perfection or imperfection, if God rewards regardless of their work then He has not carried out His purpose.

Thus the reason for the justice of God the Supreme in the true meaning and in all aspects, is that the essential attributes of Him cause actions that are wise and just.

None of the unjust, absurd, or fatuous attributes are present (exist) in Him.

b. The resolution of certain doubts

1. How can the diversity that exists in the creation, particularly in human beings be harmonious with Divine justice and wisdom?

The answer given is that the diversity in creation is existentially advantageous and necessary for the order of creation. It is consequential to the principle of 'cause and effect.' The assumption that creation is alike is an immature idea and if we look further we will understand that this type of idea is equal to the idea of not creating.

For example if all human beings were only men or women, there would be no birth or reproduction, resulting in the end of the human race. If all creatures were human beings then there would be nothing to consume or sustain our needs. If animals and plants were all of a single colour, we would lose the benefits and spectacular beauties that we find in creation. Appearances of different phenomena in distinctive forms are the results of conditions and these conditions are because of the movement of matter.

No-one has the right to make an objection regarding them, before his/her birth in order that He should have given it another form, or different place, or time, implying that there could be space for questioning the Divine justice.

2. If divine wisdom is the cause of life for the human being, why does God destroy them?

The answer to this question is that initially the life and death of existents in this world are the outcome of the relationships of cause and effect, the principle of creation (takwīn) and also a necessary element of the order of creation. Secondly, if the living creatures do not die then the grounds for newer creation will not be there and the future generation will be deprived of God's bounties. Thirdly, if it is assumed that all human beings were to remain alive, the earth would rapidly become a small place to live upon, and the inhabitants due to despair and hunger would wish for death.

Fourthly, the true purpose for the creation of man is that he attains eternal felicity. If they do not transfer from this world through the medium of death they will not reach this final goal.

3. How can the existence of suffering and natural disasters (such as earthquakes, storms, etc) and other sociological hardships (such as war, oppression, etc) be harmonious with Divine justice?

The answer to this doubt is that natural disasters are the requirement of action and reactions of matter. As good overwhelms evil, Divine wisdom will not be contradicted. The eruption of sociological hardships and corruption in the world is due to the fact that humans are free in their action. Having a free will is the requirement of Divine wisdom and the welfare for the society is more than that of corruption. If it were not the case then there would not exist a single man on the face of the planet. Secondly, the existence of all suffering and difficulty leads man to explore and search for the hidden natural sources and results in the appearance of sciences and different discoveries. Furthermore dealing with these difficulties will improve man's potential for advancement towards perfection. Nevertheless if suffering is acknowledged in the proper sense then there will be a greater reward in the eternal world, and compensation will be given appropriately.

4. If eternal chastisement is intended for limited sins committed in this world, then how is it compatible with Divine justice?

The reply for this question is, that between the good deeds and bad deeds there is a relation of 'causation,' which has been disclosed to people through Divine revelation.

Likewise some of the persecutions in this world have extended circumstances such as to blind oneself or others, which can take place in an instant but the result of this remains till the end of one's life. Similarly, great sins also have eternal effects and if a person does not arrange the means of atonement in this world (through seeking forgiveness) then the evil will remain with him forever. As with the case of blindness, which will remain permanently due to an instant abuse, it does not contradict Divine justice, in the same way eternal punishment for a great sin does not contradict Divine justice, because it is an action performed with full awareness.

Questions:

1. Explain the fundamental difference between the issues of Divine justice.
2. Explain the concept of justice.
3. Is it the necessity of justice for everything to be the same? Why?
4. Explain the necessity of Divine wisdom and justice.
5. What is the purpose of creation?
6. How can the diversity in creation correspond with Divine justice and wisdom?
7. Give the reasons for justice.
8. Why does God the Supreme cause His creatures to die?
9. How are natural disasters and social corruptions harmonious with Divine justice?
10. Why do limited sins become the reason for unlimited (eternal) punishment?

LESSON TWENTY-ONE: THE ISSUES CONCERNING PROPHETHOOD

Introduction

We know that the most fundamental issues to be solved by every intellectual individual in order for him to live an intelligent life are:

1. Where did the existence of man and the universe originate? Who manages this creation?
2. What is the end and where lie's the purpose of man?
3. By focusing upon the required needs for the realisation of a true path of felicity, what are the means to accomplish such perfection and with whom does it lie?

The proper answer for these questions would be the three principles: oneness of God, resurrection, (ma'ād), and prophethood (nubuwwah). These are considered as the fundamental beliefs in all the monotheistic religions.

In the beginning of this book we have provided investigations concerning the issues of theology and arrived upon the result that all creation is created by One being, and all are under the decree of His wisdom and none can in any dimension be ever independent from Him.

This subject has been proven by intellectual arguments and we have explained that these types of issue can only be resolved by the intellect. The arguments and proofs from religious texts can only be accepted when one has proven the existence of God and their authenticity. The establishment of the sayings of the Prophet (s) and Imams (a) is dependent upon the establishment of prophethood and leadership, which necessitates the traditions being reliable and authentic. Hence intellectual reasoning must first prove the principle of prophethood, and then later the legitimacy of the Noble Qur'an can be used and applied for proving specific issues. The details and the specifics of resurrection must be proven from revelation; nevertheless intellectual reasoning can also be used to prove this principle.

Therefore for the explanation of the issues of prophethood and resurrection one must first establish the principle of prophethood and resurrection through the intellect.

Once the reliability of the Noble Qur'an and the legitimacy of the Prophet of Islam (s) are confirmed then the specifics of these two sections can be proven in the peripheries of the Book and traditions.

By focusing upon the pattern of learning, it is preferable and likeable that we distinguish between these two issues. We will initially discuss the issues concerning prophethood and then explain the topic of resurrection.

1. The purpose of discussing this section

The initial purpose of this discussion is to prove for this subject, that for the realisation of the realities of being, and a true path for living life, there are means other than that of sense perception and intellect, which are accurate (or cannot make any mistake). These are known as revelation, and are types of Divine teaching, which are specified for the special servants of God. The majority of people are unaware of this reality because they do not

see an example of it within themselves. However through the effects and signs they can arrive upon and confirm the proclamations of the Divine prophets and messengers (a). Accordingly, once the confirmation of the revelation upon a person is established then others are obliged to accept and act upon it with out any confrontation. None will be excused except those who have a message especially for them as a group or an individual in a particular time.

Therefore, the fundamental elements of this section are as follows: the necessity of prophethood and the requirement of revelation being immune from any form of domination or personal initiation, until the crux of the matter reaches the people. In other words the necessity of the infallibility of the prophets and the above requirement is needed in order to prove the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s).

After the issues concerning prophethood and revelation through the intellect are established, other issues arise such as the number of prophets, Books, Divine laws and the determination of the last Book, its Prophet and his successors. However the establishment of all these topics with intellectual reasoning is not possible, therefore the religious text must be given as a proof for these topics.

a. The method of investigation in theology

By focusing upon what has been said, the essential difference between philosophy and theology becomes clear. Philosophy discusses only those issues that are established by intellectual reasoning and theology includes those topics that are only proved through devotion and narration (or religious texts).

In other words:

The relationship between philosophy and theology is of generality and peculiarity in some respect. This means that philosophy and theology share common issues, which are established by the intellect, and uncommon (specific) issues.

However for philosophy the basis of establishment is the intellect. In theology it is narration and devotion for the uncommon issues. In other words the method of investigation in theology is through the combination of the intellect and that of devotion.

It is to be concluded that there are two basic differences between philosophy and theology:

The first one is that even after sharing common topics (such as the issues of knowing God), they have specific issues that are not discussed outside the specific radius of their own.

Secondly, the method of investigation in all of the philosophical issues is the method of intellectual reasoning, which is opposite to that of theology. In some of the issues of theology, which are in common with that of philosophy, intellectual reasoning is used, but in certain issues narrations are utilised (such as the discussions concerning Imamah). In some issues both (intellectual reasoning and narration) are used (such as in the topic of resurrection).

It is necessary to indicate that specific issues in theology, which are established through narration and devotion, are not on one level. However a

group of them can be considered so with regards to reliability and the authenticity of the actions and traditions of the Noble Prophet (s), which are directly established by the means of the noble verses of the Qur'an. Then other issues such as the determination of the successor of the Prophet of Islam and the reliability of the words of the infallible imams are established upon the basis of the exegesis of the Noble Prophet (s).

It is self-evident that the results received from the narration establishments will only be accepted when the chain of transmission of narration is certain.

Questions

1. Why are theological issues, which deal with the understanding of God, determined through intellectual reasoning?
2. What are the fundamental issues of prophethood?
3. Is it possible to establish prophethood and resurrection through narration and devotion? Why?
4. Which issues amongst the theological issues can be established through narration?
5. What is the reason for discussing prophethood prior to resurrection?
6. What are the differences between philosophy and theology?
7. Explain the distribution of the issues of theology.

LESSON TWENTY-TWO: THE NEED FOR REVELATION AND PROPHETHOOD

The necessity for the nomination of prophets

This topic is the most fundamental topic of this section and can be established by arguments comprising of three premises:

1. The purpose of creation is that by carrying out voluntary actions one should move in the direction of ultimate perfection, which is only possible through the execution of free-will and human volition. In other words man has been created in order to earn and receive mercies from God through his worship and devotion and striving towards perfection. The Divine Will essentially constitutes felicity and perfection for human beings and this is not possible without voluntary action. Therefore mankind's life is regulated upon two directions -where one leads towards suffering and chastisement, and the other to eternal felicity- these two options are subsequently related (not directly) to the Divine will (irādah) in order to create the conditions of volition.

This premise became clear under the discussion of Divine justice:

2. In addition to physical and psychological abilities and essential conditions, the ability to make a conscious decision requires the realisation of the differences between a true and false path. To intentionally choose a path towards perfection also requires one to decide between right and wrong. Thus Divine wisdom necessitates that mankind is provided with the appropriate tool in order to distinguish between right and wrong to reach perfection. If this is not the case the likeness can be compared to a host who invites a guest without giving him the address of his house! It is self-evidential that this type of action is unwise and a reflection of defect and imperfection.

3. The usual and common understandings of people, which are established because of the intellect and sense perception, are insufficient in determining a path of perfection and true felicity in all dimensions (worldly, spiritual, celestial, and social). If there is no way to compensate for this limitation, then the ultimate aim of man cannot be realised.

By focusing upon these three premises we conclude that the requirement of Divine wisdom is the classification of another path for man aside from that of intellect and sense perception. The bestowal of such a path is for the realisation of perfection in all dimensions. It is the path of revelation, and through the revelation, which has been delivered to mankind by the prophets; humanity can benefit and become aware of the true path of perfection.

The third of these premises could be seen to create doubt; therefore we will provide further explanation in order to illustrate the limitations of man's knowledge in determining the true path towards perfection. This will consequently prove man's need for revelation.

a. The limitations of human sciences

In order for the realisation of the true path of felicity and perfection in all dimensions of life, it is necessary that the beginning and end of man, the

connection he has with existence, his relationships with kin, as well as the influences that any other form of relationship have upon him, must all be understood. It is also necessary to recognise and assess whether the effect is positive or negative. Following that the responsibilities that millions of men have with the determination of their physiological and psychological conditions in a particular time, space and social circumstances must be known. However the establishment of these complex guidelines - with the understanding and formulating of all the dimensions and needs of man in order that there be no contradiction among them - cannot be particularised to one or several men, or even to numerous specialised groups within the field of humanities.

The trend of the alteration of rights and rules in the course of history manifests, that even after many experts throughout time have managed to constitute a sound and perfect system for rights encompassing all domains, the lawmakers of the world realise the limitations of their laws and continuously amend such rules and rights in order to perfect them.

It must not be forgotten that these laws and rules have utilised religious texts and Divine doctrines in their law making. It must not be overlooked that the attempts of the lawmakers and jurists are only to contribute towards the security for the social and worldly states, and they pay no heed towards the importance of the assurance for the Hereafter.

However, if attention had been paid to this important aspect (of the next world), then certainty within this field would never have been reached. It is possible that the issues dealing with the world and matter to a certain extent may be solved by experimental sciences, however the issues dealing with the Divine or next world could never be resolved with such sciences.

If we take a closer look at contemporary man made rules, we can see that compared to the knowledge held by man further back in history, contemporary man has somewhat developed in his sense of living a proper life. However if this is with the assumption that contemporary man with the utilisation of thousands of years of experience was able to arrive upon a perfect and sound system of rights, and with the assumption that they encompass the realm of eternal and Divine felicity, the question remains as to how could the ignorance of so many men throughout the course of history be harmonious with Divine wisdom and the purpose of creation?

We can conclude that the purpose of creating man from start to finish can only be established if there exists the possibility to transcend sense (perception) and mind (intellect) in order to realise the realities of life and cognition of individual and group responsibilities. This very path, which transcends the intellect and sense perception, is no other than the way of revelation.

Through this argument it has also become clear, that the initial man would have to be a Prophet of God, so that he could guide man to the true and correct way of living, and establish the purpose of creation through the means of revelation.

The benefits of the nomination of prophets

The prophets of God in addition to the establishment of the true path of perfection for man (through Divine revelation) have also greatly influenced man regarding their perfection.

The most important ways they have had such an influence are mentioned below:

1. There are many subjects that can be understood by the intellect, however this requires much past experience. Man due to the effects of false publicity or due to the influences of matter or animalistic tendencies tends to overlook or even forget the remarkableness of the intellect. This matter was brought to man's attention by the prophets, who continually reminded man in order that he did not forget. It is because of this that the prophets (a) were named as reminders (mudhakkir) and warners (nadhīr) and that the Qur'an has been referred to as theremembrance(dhikr),andreminder(tadhkirah).

Imam Ali (a) mentioned with regards to the wisdom of the nomination of a Prophet (a) that:

“God the Supreme has sent prophets continuously in order that men remain faithful to their intrinsic nature, and are reminded of the forgotten bounties provided by God.

This reminder is a propagation and declaration of the truth in order that the proof is completed upon them.” 2. One of the most important and necessary elements of the development and perfection of man is the presence of a prototype (behavioural paradigm); this has already been proven in the field of psychology. The prophets of God are the best trained and most perfect among men, and in addition to enlightening and educating people they also train and purify people. We are aware that purification and education have concurrently been mentioned throughout the Noble Qur'an and that sometimes purification should be regarded prior to education.

3. Another great benefit of having the presence of prophets was that of political and sociological leadership. It is self-evident that an infallible leader is a great bounty from God for a society, and due to this a society will be protected from sociological corruption and deterioration and be able to move forward towards the perfection recognised by the leader.

Questions

1. What is the purpose of the creation of man?
2. Is Divine will related to the chastisement of man in the same way that it is related to his felicity?
3. What are the elements required for human voluntary action and conscious choice?
4. Why is the intellect incapable of realising and understanding all subjects?
5. Provide the argument for the necessity of the nomination of prophets.
6. If man is capable of realising worldly and sociological happiness, why then is Divine revelation essential?
7. Is there an intellectual proof for the necessity of the first man being a Prophet?
How?
8. What are the benefits of having the presence of a prophet?

LESSON TWENTY-THREE: RESOLVING CERTAIN SOURIOUS DOUBTS

Resolving certain spurious doubts

In relation to the arguments discussed on proving the necessity for the nomination of prophets, certain questions and doubts were raised. Following are the answers to those spurious doubts:

1. The requirement of Divine Wisdom is the nomination of prophets in order for the guidance of man. Why then were they all nominated within the limited geographical location, i.e. the Middle East? Further to this why were all the other parts of the world subsequently deprived from this guidance, considering that at that time the system of correspondence and communication was extremely limited? It is thus possible that nations and people remained without any information regarding the message of the prophets.

The response to these questions is that the appearance of the prophets (a) was not confined to a certain location and the noble verses of the Qur'an state that God has sent prophets to every nation:

“Indeed We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it”(Fātir:24).

“Certainly We raised an apostle in every nation [to preach:] ‘Worship Allah, and keep away from the Rebel.’” (al-Nahl:36) The Qur'an has mentioned the names of only a few of the prophets (a) and does in no way indicate that they are the only prophets. Rather the Qur'an itself has mentioned that there were several prophets whose names are not mentioned in it:

“And apostles We have recounted to you earlier and apostles We have not recounted to you,” (al-Nisā':164).

The second answer that can be given to the above question is that there must be a way beyond sense perception and intellect that can be utilised for guiding mankind.

However, the issue of someone becoming guided depends on two conditions, the first is that the person must desire to be blessed and utilise the bounty provided by God, and the second condition is there must be no obstacles in the way from others for their guidance. Hence, some individuals were deprived from the prophets (a) guidance due to the first reason, and others due to the second reason, whereby many individuals have created obstacles in the way of the universal guidance of the prophets (a).

Of course we all acknowledge that the prophets (a) continuously battled against and tried to remove any obstacles put in their way from the oppressors and tyrants. It is for this reason that many have risen against the oppression and subsequently lost their lives in their cause.

The main point to be understood is that the perfection of man is by choice and freewill and this clearly indicates that the grounds have been created for man to choose between truth and falsehood. However, if the extension and increment of the falsehood have reached to a stage whereby they create obstacles on the path of guidance in every way, God the

Supreme in this situation, then utilises His secret and supernatural ways in assisting the rightful ones.

In conclusion, if there were no barriers created by the tyrants on the path of the prophets (a), the word of the prophets (a) would have spread all over the globe and all men would have benefited from the guidance of Revelation and apostleship. Hence the sin of depriving people from God's guidance is upon the neck of those who build barriers on this infallible path of guidance.

2. If the prophets (a) have been nominated for the perfection of humans, then why did corruption and bloody wars and rebellion occur within these Divine religions. Is it not the requirement of Divine Wisdom to stop such corruption and utilise other means than that instigated by the followers of the Divine religions in their disputes with each other?

The answer to this query lies in the principle of perfection itself. As mentioned earlier the necessity of Divine Wisdom is that human perfection occurs through choice. The ground for perfection is created and it is by choice and desire that man reaches felicity and perfection, as opposed to predetermination. Concurrently, the Qur'ān speaks of this as being the reason behind creation whereby God the Supreme can test man in order to see who is righteous (refer to al-An'ām:165, al-Māi'dah:48, Hūd:7, Ibrāhīm:7, al-Mulk:2). Likewise it has been emphasised in the Qur'an that if God the Supreme desired, He could stop the corruption and distorted developments (refer to al-An'ām:

35, 107, 112, 27, 37). However if this was the case, man would be valueless in terms of humanity and Divine creation would be purposeless.

In conclusion, the tendencies of man towards corruption, sin and infidelity are due to the choice or freewill that man has. To control and train this behaviour is part and parcel of man's being and arriving at either a good or bad end. Nevertheless, Divine Will is related to the perfection of man, but the condition for this is the choice or freewill, and corruption through choice is not obstructed or negated by God. The requirement of Divine Will is not to force humans on the path of perfection.

3. If we consider Divine Will, which requires most men to reach perfection and felicity, would it not have been better to disclose all the natural secrets through Revelation, in order that man reach perfection and felicity readily, by the means of several (worldly) bounties? Likewise the unveiling of several natural energies or the inventions of several new appliances, as well as many discoveries in the field of medicine in the recent years have productively influenced the progress and development of human civilisation. Hence if the prophets were provided with the industrial and empirical knowledge (or with the natural secrets) would they not have had a greater influence on human society, whilst at the same time increased their political domination, and further reached their goals?

The answer to this question is that the true requirement or need for Revelation and Prophethood is in the domain, which cannot be understood or perceived by man with his ordinary way of thinking. In other words the actual responsibility of the prophets (a) is to assist man in supervising his life and perfecting himself in any state or condition that he is in. They must recognise their responsibility and utilise all the legal means to arrive at

perfection, whether they are nomads or city-dwellers. Human beings have to recognise their responsibility towards God and towards the creation, and through executing these responsibilities they will reach true felicity and perfection. However, different abilities, natural and industrial possibilities, whether in earlier periods or in this period, are an affair that is influenced by certain reasons, and it does not play any specific role in the perfection of man and his eternal destiny.

Moreover the worldly and material progress of this era has no effect upon the spiritual perfection of man; rather one can say that it had a reversed relationship with each other.

In conclusion, the mandate of Divine Will is that man while utilising the material good, continues his worldly life and while utilising the intellect and Revelation directs his life towards eternal felicity and true perfection. However, the differences in the physical and spiritual abilities, in social and natural conditions as well as in the utilisation of industrial or empirical sciences -that follow certain meta-physical conditions, which have emerged due to the correlation of a certain cause and effect - have no influence or role to play in the eternal destiny of man. Whereas, a group or an individual, while accepting a simple way of life and utilising limited material and worldly means can have reached high levels of perfection. And, on the other hand, some of those who lived and are living in the locus of the worldly and empirical sciences- whilst utilising the best material appliances- have deviated with arrogance and fallen into the pit of darkness.

Certainly, the prophets (a) apart from their main responsibility, which is to guide man towards perfection, have assisted them (man) in refining their worldly life as well.

Whenever it was required, the Divine Wisdom of God unveiled the natural secrets of this world and assisted in the progress of human civilisation. This can be seen in the case of Prophet David (a), Solomon (a) and Dhul Qarnayn (a) (refer to al-Anbiyā:78- 81, al-Kahf:83-97, Saba:10-13). It should be noted that according to certain traditions Dhul Qarnayn was not a prophet but a saint.

“He said, ‘Put me in charge of the country’s granaries. I am indeed fastidious [and] well-informed.” (Yūsuf:55).

All such services carried out by the prophets such as that quoted above regarding the Prophet Joseph (a), were all in addition to the prime responsibility of prophethood.

However with regards to why the prophets did not utilise industrial and empirical knowledge, one must say:

The goal of the prophets as mentioned earlier, was to create the grounds for human beings to select and choose freely the path of perfection. If humans were forced through unnatural power, they would then have acknowledged the path of perfection due to force but not due to freewill and Divine aspirations.

Imam Ali (a) says in this regard:

“When Allah deputed the prophets, if He wished to open for them treasures and mines of gold and to collect around them birds of the skies and beasts of the earth He could have done so. If He had done so then there

would have been no trial, no recompense falling due after trial and the believers could not deserve the reward for good acts, and all these words would not have retained their meanings. If prophets possessed authority that could not be assaulted, or honour that could not be damaged or domain towards which necks of people would turn and saddles of carriers could be set, it would have been very easy for the people to seek lessons and quite difficult to feel vain. They would have then accepted belief out of fear felt by them or inclination attracting them and the intention of them all would be the same although their actions would have been different. Therefore Allah decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble before His face, obey His commands and accept His obedience with sincerity in which there should not be an iota of anything else; and as the trial and tribulation would be stiffer the reward and recompense too should be larger” (Nahj al- Balaghah sermon 190. See also al- Furqān:7-10, al-Zukhruf:31-5).

Certainly, the aim and God’s objective, is to form a Divine society, and to utilise all the worldly means in serving this Divine purpose, especially in protecting the rights of the believers and crushing transgressors. However this has to be achieved through free will and the choice of the people, as has been witnessed in history during the era of the Prophet Solomon (a).

Questions

- 1- Were all the prophets sent to a specific geographical location?
- 2- Why did the message of the prophets not spread all across the world?
- 3- Why did God the Supreme not stop all the corruption and bloodshed?
- 4- Why did the prophets not unveil the secrets of nature, in order for their followers to utilise the materialistic and worldly provisions?
- 5- Why did the prophets not utilise industrial and empirical knowledge when introducing their message?

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR: INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHETS

The necessity of the immunity of Revelation

After proving that there is a need for revelation as an alternative way to acquiring knowledge, and compensating for the deficiency of man's senses and wisdom, another question arises:

If we recognise that ordinary people do not have any direct access to revelation, nor possess the capability of receiving it, and instead rely on specific people (prophets) as bearers of such news, what then guarantees the accuracy of such a message?

How can one be assured that the Prophet has received and transmitted the message to the people in a perfect manner?

And if there has been a mediator between the Prophet and the people, how can one be sure that that person has performed his duty accurately?

These questions have to be asked because revelation is only effective in dispelling man's ignorance if it is immune from all intentional and/or unintentional alterations from the time of being issued to the time of being delivered to the people. If such a revelation contained intentional or unintentional alterations, the doubt about such a message would spread and people would lose confidence in it. We therefore need to establish the means whereby one can conclude that the message received by the people is as it was re-laid to the messenger.

When a people have no knowledge about revelation and its content is unknown to them, there is no way to control or observe the mediator's accuracy in performing his duty. Any deficiency in the revelation would thus lie undetected, unless of course it stood against wisdom or reason. For example, if an individual claims that he has received a revelation from God stating the necessity or acceptability of two contradictory phenomena co-existing together, or if he claims that there is (may I seek God's protection) plurality, combination, or decline in God's nature, it is possible to use wisdom's commandments (common sense) to falsify such statements. However, the fundamental need for revelation comes in situations where the role of wisdom plays no part in their verification or falsification, and it is impossible to use the content of the message for its evaluation. In such cases, how can one verify the accuracy of the content of revelation and its immunity against the mediator's intentional or unintentional alterations?

The answer to this is that man's wisdom through heavenly wisdom (the theorem discussed in lesson 22) recognises that there must be other ways of understanding truths and practical duties. However, even if wisdom is not aware of how to realise such ways, it understands that the requisite for God's wisdom is, that His messages reach the people intact otherwise, it will contradict His aim.

In other words, after recognising that God's messages should reach people through one or more mediator/s and guide them towards their developmental freedom and fulfil God's objectives for man's creation, it will on the basis of God's perfect qualities, be proved that such messages

are in fact immune from intentional and unintentional alterations. Therefore, if He doesn't intend His message to be delivered to His servants in the most accurate form, it will be against His wisdom and His wise will denies it. It will also contradict His endless knowledge if God does not know how and through whom to send His message to His servants to keep it intact.

Furthermore, it will be against His infinite power if He cannot choose the deserving mediators and protect them against the attacks of Satan.

Therefore, since Almighty God is aware of everything, it is improbable to think that he has chosen a mediator while He has not been aware of his wrong doings (refer to al-An'ām:124). Moreover, according to His endless power it is improbable to suppose that God has not been able to protect His revelation against Satan or any kind of unintentional alterations or forgetfulness (refer to al-Jinn:26-28). Similarly, with reference to His wisdom, it is unacceptable to suggest that He has not intended to immunise His message against wrong doings (refer to al-Anfāl:42). Thus, it is the requisite for God's knowledge, power, and wisdom to deliver His message to His servants in the most accurate and perfect form. In this way the immunity of revelation is verified through the 'Wisdom Theorem'.

Through this discussion, the immunity of the Angel or angels of revelation and also the immunity of the prophets in receiving revelation and their infallibility against intentional or unintentional alteration and forgetfulness in advertising God's message is proved.

It also becomes clear as to why the Holy Qur'an emphasises the honesty of the Angel of revelation and in his power in protecting God's message and repelling Satan's attempts. The Qur'an also lays stress on the honesty of the prophets, and the protection of the message until its deliverance to the people (refer to al-Shūra:107, 125, 143, 162, 178, 193, al-Takwīr:20-21, al-A'rāf:68, al-Jinn:26-28, al-Dukhān:18, al-Najm:5, al-Hijah:44-47)

Other Cases of Infallibility

The infallibility proved by the above theorem for the angels and prophets is limited to understanding and advertising revelation; however, there are other cases of infallibility, which cannot be approved by this theorem. They can be divided into three types, infallibility in:

a) Angels, b) Prophets (a) c) Other people such as the Holy Imams (a), the virgin Mary, and Fatima (a) By considering the infallibility of angels in cases other than that of understanding and advertising revelation, two points can be discussed:

The first is the infallibility for the angels of revelation with relation to their duties other than revelation, and the other is related to the angels who are not in charge of revelation at all, for example the angels who are responsible for man's sustenance (rizq), recording deeds (kitābat al- a'māl), ...etc.

Moreover, with reference to the infallibility of the prophets in cases not related to their prophecy, two points can be mentioned:

The first is the prophets infallibility against sin and rebellion ('usyān), and the second is their infallibility against unintentional deeds or forgetfulness. The latter can be discussed in relation to infallibility in non-prophets as well.

The problem of the infallibility of angels in relation to cases other than that of understanding and advertising revelation cannot be looked at through the 'wisdom theorem', unless the nature of the angels is first recognised. However, to discuss their nature is neither easy nor relevant to our discussion here; therefore, I refer the reader to the following two verses of the Holy Qur'an which express the infallibility of angels:

"Rather they are [His] honoured servants. They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command" (al-Anbiyā':26-27).

"Who do not disobey whatever Allah has commanded them, and carry out what they are commanded" (al-Tahrīm:6).

These two verses clearly state that the angels are gentle servants who carry out their duties under the supervision of their Lord and never disobey Him. However, the generality of the verses with respect to all the angels is debatable.

Nevertheless, to discuss infallibility found in people other than the prophets is more related to (the topic of) Imamah; therefore, in this part of my discussion I will focus on the infallibility of the prophets (a). Some of the points in this relation can only be treated by employing traditions and devotional reasons and should accordingly be discussed after proving the validity of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. I nonetheless, discussed the infallibility of the prophets here to follow the pattern of argumentation in this part of the book, (taking the validity of the Book and Sunnah for granted) until it is proved in its due place.

Infallibility of the prophets (a)

Disagreement concerning the extent of the prophets' infallibility arises between the different Islamic sects. The Twelvers (those who believe in twelve Imams) Shi'ites believe that the prophets (a) have innate infallibility and are immune from all types of mortal and venial sin. They also hold the belief that it is impossible for the prophets to sin even unintentionally or due to forgetfulness. However some of the other Islamic sects believe that the prophets are immune only from mortal sin, and some believe this immunity from sin is attributed with the prophets only from maturity to the end of their life, whereas the Shi'ites believe it is attributed to them at birth. Others also believe that the prophets acquire this infallibility from the time of their appointment.

It has also been said, that some branches of the Sunnites (Hashviah and some literal followers of the Traditions) have totally denied the prophets infallibility and believe that it is possible for the prophets to commit sins, even intentionally, and even during their prophecy.

Before proving the infallibility of the prophets, it is necessary to discuss some points:

First, 'the infallibility of the prophets' does not merely mean the absence of committal of sin, because it is possible for an ordinary person not to commit sins during his life particularly if s/he has a short life. It rather means that the person should have an innate power, which protects him against committing sins even in the hardest situations. Such a power is the result of perfect and permanent awareness of the disgracefulness of sin and having a strong will to control his own manly desires. Since such ability is

only formed by God's help, its functioning depends on Him. However, it is not correct to think that God forcefully protects a person against committing sin and as a result deprives his/her freedom. The infallibility of those who perform their heavenly responsibilities like the prophets, and Imams has been said to be related to God in one more way, that is:

God has guaranteed their immunity.

Secondly, the requisite for any person's infallibility is that s/he should not commit any unlawful deeds like those, which are unlawful in all religions, or those which have been unlawful at the time of being committed in his own religion. Committing an action, which is lawful for him in his own religion, cannot damage a Prophet's infallibility. It cannot be damaged either by carrying out an action which has been unlawful in religions preceding his own or that will be claimed unlawful in succeeding religions.

Thirdly, the word 'sin' against which an innocent person is immune, means an unlawful action according to religious jurisprudence; it also includes the refusal of doing an 'obligation' (wājib) action. However, the term 'sin' and its equivalent words like 'wrong doing' (dhanb) and 'rebellion' ('usyan) have a wider application including 'failure to do the best thing' (tark al-awla). Nevertheless, committing the latter is not in contradiction with infallibility.

Questions

- 1- How is it possible to prove the immunity of revelation against any kind of alteration?
- 2- What types of infallibility exist other than immunity in receiving and proclaiming revelation?
- 3- How is the infallibility of angels proved?
- 4- What ideas exist concerning the infallibility of the prophets? What is the view held by the Shi'ite school of thought?
- 5- Define infallibility and explain its requisites.

LESSON TWENTY-FIVE: THE REASONS FOR THE INFALLIBILITY OF PROPHETS

Introduction

The belief in the immunity of the prophets (a) against sin, whether intentional or unintentional is one of the important and categorical beliefs in Shi'ism. The great Imams (a) have verified this fact to their followers and used different discourses to deal with the relevant challenges raised by its opponents. One of the most popular arguments in this relation is that of Imam Rida (a), and has been recorded in the books of tradition and history.

However, to deny the forgetfulness of the prophet with reference to the lawful and everyday aspects of their lives has been more or less a matter of debate, and the sayings from the Prophet's Household are not free from discrepancy. Nevertheless, research on such sayings needs further explanation, although such a belief is by no means fundamental.

Moreover, there are other reasons for the infallibility of the prophets, which can be divided into two groups: Intellectual and traditional (Qur'anic). Although traditional reasons are more trustworthy, two intellectual and some traditional reasons for the infallibility of the prophets will be discussed in this chapter.

Intellectual reasons for the infallibility of prophets (a)

The first intellectual reason for the necessity of the prophets' immunity against committing sin, is that the main objective for their mission is to guide man towards the truth and teach him how to perform the duties God has assigned to him. Moreover, the prophets are in fact the representatives of God among men and must guide them towards the right path (al-sirāt al-mustaqīm). However, if such representatives and missionaries do not obey the Divine instructions themselves and their behaviour contradicts their mission, people will find the contrast between their words and behaviour contradictory and, therefore, the objective of their mission will not be thoroughly fulfilled. Thus, God's wisdom and kindness necessitates that the prophets be pure and innocent, and for them to refrain from committing any undeserving action even if unintentional or due to forgetfulness. The people will thus never accept unwillingness or forgetfulness as an excuse for the prophets to commit a sin.

The second intellectual reason for such infallibility is that, rather than advertising the content of revelation and their mission to the people, the prophets are responsible for educating and purifying and helping the most talented of people reach the highest level of man's perfection. In other words, rather than teaching (ta'līm) and showing the people the right way, the prophets are responsible for educating (tarbiyah) and leading them. Such an education is valuable and solely applies to the most talented and outstanding members of the society. To educate such people needs the most deserving educators who are themselves at the topmost level of man's perfection and have the most perfect form of faculty (malakah) - the faculty of Infallibility (malakat al-'ismah).

In addition, the educator's behaviour in educating others is generally more important than his words; therefore, if a person has deficiencies in his behaviour, his words will not affect the people in a desirable way. Hence, God's objective for sending prophets as the educators of people will not be thoroughly fulfilled unless they are immune against any kind of deviations in their words and behaviour.

Traditional reasons for the infallibility of prophets (a)

The Holy Qur'an has described a group of people as being, "purified for the sake of God" (mukhlas), (the word mukhlas is different from mukhlis. The former refers to a person who has been purified by God, and the latter is a person who is pure in performing his worship). Satan does not intend to mislead this group of people, who are exempted from his oath to mislead the children of Adam (a):

"He (Iblīs) said, 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except Your exclusive servants among them'" (Sād:82-83). There is no doubt that Satan's refusal to mislead them is due to their immunity against being misled or corrupted; otherwise his enmity would include them and he would do whatever was in his power to seduce them.

Thus, the term used to describe being purified for the sake of God is synonymous with being infallible (ma'sūm). Although there is no evidence for the allocation of infallibility being given to the prophets (as), it is certainly one of their qualities. The Holy Qur'an refers to some of the prophets as being purified for the sake of God (mukhlasīn). For instance:

"And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of strength and insight. Indeed We purified them with the exclusiveness of the remembrance of the abode [of the Hereafter]" (Sād:45-46) And also:

"And mention in the Book Moses. Indeed he was exclusively dedicated [to Allah], and an apostle and a prophet" (Maryam:51).

The Holy Qur'an also asserts that the reason behind the immunity of Prophet Joseph (as), who was severely tempted with the committal of sin, was that he was a purified person. "So it was, that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants" (Yūsuf:24).

2. The Holy Qur'an claims that unconditional obedience to the prophets (as) is obligatory.

"We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed by Allah's leave" (al-Nisā':64).

However, unconditional obedience to the prophets is acceptable provided that it is in line with the obedience of God and has no contradiction in obeying Him. Otherwise, the commands from God with relation to unconditional obedience to Him and unconditional obedience to those who are subject to sin and deviation would be in opposition.

3. The Holy Qur'an has allocated Divine responsibilities to those who are not involved in 'cruelty'. In response to Prophet Abraham (a), who asked for the position of 'Imam' for his children, the Holy Qur'an asserts:

"My pledge does not extend to the unjust" (al-Baqarah:124). We know that the committal of sin is oppression towards oneself (nafs), and that the Qur'an terms a guilty person as an oppressor, therefore the prophets who

hold the position of the Divine responsibilities of prophecy and prophetic mission must be free from any kind of sin or cruelty.

Numerous Qur'anic verses and traditions can be employed to discuss the infallibility of the prophets; however we will conclude the discussion at this point.

The philosophy behind the infallibility of prophets (a)

At the end of this lesson, it is worth discussing the mystery behind the infallibility of the prophets. The mystery of their infallibility in receiving revelation is that their understanding of revelation is basically free from any mistakes, and one who has the merit of receiving it will find revelation a scientific reality, which he thoroughly comprehends. He will also recognise the relationship between the revelation and its issuer-whether or not there is an Angel in between, in this relation the Holy Qur'an states:

"The heart did not deny what it saw". (al-Najm:11) Furthermore, it is impossible for the receiver of revelation to hesitate as to whether or not he has received it, over who has sent the revelation to him, or as to what its content is. Therefore, if in some man-made stories there are cases where a Prophet is doubtful about his prophecy, fails in understanding the content of the revelation or does not recognise its issuer, they should not be given any credence. Such cases are like saying that one is doubtful over one's existence, presence, or conscience.

To discuss the mystery behind the infallibility of the prophets in performing their Divine responsibilities, such as proclaiming God's message needs an introduction, which comes below:

Man performs his favourite actions through a feeling of desire, which forms within him towards a subject; the desire is then activated by various factors. Moreover, by having access to various sciences and a variety of senses, he recognises the way to his objective and practices whatever he thinks will help him reach it. At the same time, when there are contradictory and intervening desires, he attempts to recognise and choose the best and most deserving one. Nevertheless, due to man's lack of knowledge, he may commit a mistake in his evaluation and/or recognition, or due to ignorance and/or his association with an inferior desire, he might miscalculate the better choice. In such a case there may be no further opportunity to re-think and recognise the best choice.

Therefore, the better a person is at recognising the truth, the higher and more everlasting the attention he pays to his choices will be; and the higher the intention for harnessing his innate desires and excitements, the more remarkable the success he experiences in choosing the best will be. This will in turn secure him from deviation and wrong-doing.

This is the way the talented people, by acquiring the necessary knowledge and insight and by utilising their proper education, goes through the different stages of perfection, so that they can touch the borders of infallibility. When they reach such an exalted position, then such people do not even think of committing sin or wrong doing; this is in the same way that a wise person would never think of taking a poisonous or fatal drug or consumes unclean or rotten substances.

If we assume that a person's ability for recognising the truth and the purity of his soul is at the highest level, as described in the Holy Qur'an like the pure, clean and flammable olive oil, which is ready to blaze even without a spark.

"Whose oil almost lights up, though fire should not touch it" (al-Nūr: 35).

And if we further assume that such a person due to the same characteristics receives Divine education, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, he will (surely) go through the stages of perfection at the utmost speed and fulfil the long distance towards perfection in a short duration of time. To such a person the disgracefulness of sin is as recognisable as the dangers of poisonous and rotten substances are to an ordinary man. Just as ordinary people are not forced to avoid drinking and eating poison, an infallible person is also not forced to avoid sin.

Questions

1. Verify the infallibility of the prophets through intellectual and traditional evidence.
2. Which verses of the Holy Qur'an determine the infallibility of the prophets?
3. What is the mystery behind the immunity of the prophets against mistakes in understanding revelation?
4. How is the prophets' infallibility against sin in agreement with their freedom?

LESSON TWENTY-SIX: RESPONSE TO CERTAIN DOUBTS

Introduction

Some doubts have been put forward with relation to the infallibility of the prophets; the following introduces those doubts and presents their relevant responses:

Why does an infallible person deserve reward?

If Almighty God has immunised the prophets (a) against committing sins and if the performance of their duties is guaranteed, they would therefore have no freedom in their choice, and as a result they would not deserve any reward for performing their duties properly or for avoiding sins. In other words, any other person who was provided by God with infallibility would behave similarly.

The response to the above doubt has been given in my previous discussions; however to summarise; having infallibility does not mean being obliged to perform duties or avoid sins. Just because the prophets know that God has provided them with infallibility and that He is their protector, does not mean that they have no choice over the optional aspects of their lives. As discussed in previous lessons, although God's will dominates the occurrence of all events, it does not intervene or repel man's will, but rather parallels it. However, when God's attention towards man accommodates a specific achievement, connecting it to God (saying that 'God did it'), it is nothing more than man's double concern about Him.

Nevertheless, God's attention towards the innocent, like providing particular people with specific means, conditions, and facilities, makes their responsibilities heavier.

Therefore, as they might receive more reward for their obedience, they may also receive more punishment for their disobedience. Thus, their reward and punishment will balance although the innocent person, by his proper choice, will not be entitled to punishment. The same analogy can be used for all others who enjoy a particular merit, for example, scholars and members of the Prophet's family (refer to al-Ahzāb:30-33) regarding the Prophet's wives. Those who have higher or more essential responsibilities will similarly receive higher reward for their good deeds, just as they will receive more severe punishments for their sins (provided that they commit sins).

This is why those in charge of higher spiritual positions face a greater danger of decline and are more afraid of becoming deviated.

Why did the infallible Prophets and Imams (a) confess to committing sins?

According to the prayers from the prophets and other innocent people, they consider themselves guilty and ask God to forgive them for their sins. In such circumstances and with these confessions how can they be considered as infallible?

The answer is that the innocent were at the highest level of perfection and were in a close relationship with God; therefore, they considered their

duties much more beyond those of other (ordinary) people. For them, paying attention to anything except God was considered to be a great sin; this is why they apologised, and asked for God's forgiveness. However, as I previously mentioned, infallibility in the prophets does not only mean immunity against anything, which can be called sin; rather it is also against opposing the essential duties and committing what is religiously forbidden.

How is Satan's influence on the prophets (a) in agreement with their infallibility?

One of the arguments, with relation to the prophets' infallibility, asserts that the prophets are completely pure and that Satan cannot affect them. However, the Holy Qur'an itself mentions some instances in which Satan has affected the prophets, for example, one of Qur'anic verses claims:

"O Children of Adam! Do not let Satan tempt you, like he expelled your parents from Paradise" (al-A'rāf:27).

In this verse, Adam and Eve's deception and expulsion from Paradise have been attributed to Satan. Moreover the Qur'an asserts, in another verse when quoting Job (a):

"And remember Our servant Job [in the Qur'an]. When he called out to his Lord, 'The devil has visited on me hardship and torment'" (Sād:41).

Similarly, in the following verse a kind of satanic inspiration to all prophets has been approved:

"We did not send before you any apostle or prophet but that when he recited [the scripture] satan interjected [something] in his recitation" (al-Hajj:52) The response is that in none of these verses, does the penetration attributed to Satan cause the prophets (a) to oppose their essential duties. However the first quoted verse -i.e. al-A'rāf:27- points to the satanic temptation (concerning Adam and Eve) for eating from the forbidden tree, which was not lawful. In fact God had just reminded Adam and Eve not to eat from that tree; otherwise, they would be expelled from that garden and cast down to the Earth. Nevertheless, the satanic temptation caused them to oppose that 'guiding prohibition'. Moreover, the previous world (in which Adam and Eve lived) was not a world of responsibilities, because there were no religions sent by God. In addition, the second quoted verse -i.e. Sād:42- points to the sufferings and problems made by Satan with relation to the Prophet Job (a), and does not indicate any opposition on behalf of that great man towards God's orders and prohibitions.

Furthermore, the third quoted verse -i.e. al-Hajj:52- refers to the disturbances Satan made for all the prophets, and the problems he made in the way of the fulfilment of their duties with relation to guiding people. However, Almighty God will eventually destroy Satan's tricks and strengthen His True religion.

Attributing forgetfulness and rebelliousness to Adam (a)

In chapter 'TāHa' verses 112 and 115 of the Holy Qur'an, rebellion and forgetfulness have both been attributed to the Prophet Adam (a). How are these characteristics in agreement with infallibility?

The answer to this question can be understood from our previous discussions, which explain that ‘rebellion’ and ‘forgetfulness’ have not been in relation to Adam’s essential responsibilities.

Attributing lies to some of the prophets (a)

In the holy Qur’an, some prophets have been introduced as telling lies, for example Abraham (a) is quoted as saying the following, whilst he was not sick: “and he said, ‘Indeed I am sick!’” (al-Ssāffāt:89)

Abraham (a) was also quoted as saying the following, when he himself had destroyed the idols: “He said, ‘Rather it was this biggest of them who did it!’” (al-Anbiyā’:63). Also in Chapter Yūsuf it states: “Then a herald shouted: ‘O [men of the] caravan! You are indeed thieves!’” (Yūsuf:70), while Joseph’s brothers had not stolen anything.

The response to this is, that such sentences, according to some narrations (riwāyāt) are saying one thing and meaning something else (Touriyaḥ), and have been expressed for the sake of something more important. It can be concluded from some verses that they were preceded by an inspiration from God. For instance, in Joseph’s (a) story, the Holy Qur’an states: “Thus did We plan for the sake of Yusuf”.

Therefore, such lies are not in contrast with infallibility.

Moses’ (a) murdering of a Qobti

In the story of Moses (a), we are told that he killed a Qobti person, who was quarrelling with a member of the Banī-Israel, and then he fled from Egypt. When Moses was ordered to invite Pharaoh and his followers towards God, he (Moses) said:

“Also they have a charge against me, and I fear they will kill me” (al-Shu’arā’:14) When Pharaoh reminded him of the murder he had committed, Moses said:

“He said, ‘I Did that when I was astray’” (al-Shu’arā’:20) How can this story agree with the immunity of the prophets (a) from error even before their mission?

The answer is that first of all the murder of that Qobti person was not on purpose; Moses struck him once and he was killed. Secondly, the sentence “And they have a charge against me” is in fact from the point of view from Pharaoh and his followers, meaning that Moses thought that they would call him guilty; he was therefore afraid of being executed because of that murder. Thirdly, the sentence “I was astray” is either to pretend to be in agreement with Pharaoh and his followers, meaning ‘assuming that I was misled at that time, God has guided me and sent me to you with absolute miracles’, or to go astray (zalāl) might mean that he (Moses) was unaware of the result of that strike. However it by no means indicates any opposition from Moses against his essential Heavenly duties.

Prohibiting the Prophet (s) from casting doubt on his mission

In many verses God prohibits the Prophet (s) from being in doubt:

“So if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book [revealed] before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so do not be among the skeptics” (Yūnus:94) Other examples can be found in al-Baqarah:142, āl-‘Imrān:60, Hūd:17 and al

Sajdah:23. al-An'ām:114, How is it possible to say that understanding revelation is free from doubts and hesitations?

The answer is that these verses do not indicate the Prophet's (s) hesitation at all, rather they are claiming that the Prophet's mission, the Holy Qur'an and the legitimacy of its content leave no space for doubt and hesitation. Such an addressing is in fact the same as "making a hint towards someone indirectly".

The Prophet (s) is described in the Qur'an as committing some sins

In the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet (s) has been said to have committed some sins, which have been forgiven by God. The Holy Qur'an states that:

"That Allah may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come" (al-Fath:1) The response is that the word sin (dhanb) in the above verse refers to the accusations the dualists made against the Prophet (s) in response to his insulting their idols.

Forgiving them means repelling the possible resulting effects of such accusations. The reason for this interpretation is that the conquest of Mecca has been considered to be the cause of forgiving them:

"Indeed We have inaugurated for you a clear victory, that Allah may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come" (al-Fath:1) Clearly, if they were the type of usual sins, then their forgiveness, because of conquering Mecca, could not be justified.

Reports concerning the marriage of the Prophet (s) with the divorced wife of Zayd

The Holy Qur'an, in the story of the Prophet's marriage with the divorced wife of Zayd (his adopted son), asserts that:

"And you feared the people though Allah is worthier that you should fear Him" (al-Ahzāb:37).

How is this in agreement with his infallibility?

The answer is that the Prophet (s) was afraid that the people would think of him as someone who acts according to his personal desires and of being labelled as an apostate. What he did was on the basis of God's commandment, with relation to violating one of the wrong customs of the ignorant era before Islam. In this verse, God the Almighty tells His Prophet (s) that this violation is more important (than what people would think about him), and that being afraid of opposing God's will and the practical struggle against that wrong custom, was more deserving. Therefore, the above verse is by no means blaming the Prophet (s).

The rapprochement of the Prophet (s) in the Holy Qur'an The Holy Qur'an in some cases has reproached the Prophet (s). For instance, with relation to permitting those who did not want to participate in war, the Holy Qur'an claims: "May Allah excuse you! Why did you grant them leave" (al-Tawbah:43) With reference to the Prophet (s) prohibiting himself from doing some lawful things for the satisfaction of some of his wives, the Holy Qur'an asserts: "O Prophet! Why do you prohibit [yourself] what Allah has made lawful for you, seeking to please your wives?" (al-Tahrīm:1).

How are such reproaches in agreement with his infallibility?

The answer is, that such sentences are in fact “praises in the form of reproaches,” indicating the Prophet’s (s) kindness and sympathy, which never disappointed even the hypocrites and never disclosed their secrets. He considered his wives’ satisfaction prior to his own wishes, so he swore to forbid himself from some thing lawful. The verse therefore, by no means refers to changing God’s order or making a lawful thing unlawful for the people.

Such verses are in fact from one angle, similar to those in which the Prophet’s attempts and sympathy in guiding the unbelievers have been reported, such as: “You might kill yourself [out of distress] that they will not have faith”(al-Shu’arā’: 3).

Or they are like the verses which indicate the huge amount of suffering he tolerated for worshipping God: “Ta Ha. We did not send down to you the Qur’an that you should be miserable” (Tāha:1-2).

Such verses are therefore by no means in contradiction with the Prophet’s (s) infallibility.

Questions

1- What makes the freedom of an infallible person prior to the freedom of others? And why does an action due to infallibility deserve reward?

2- Why did the prophets (a) and Imams (a) call themselves guilty and entreated God to forgive them?

3- How is Satan’s affect on the prophets in agreement with their infallibility?

4- How are ‘rebellion’ and ‘forgetfulness’, which are attributed to Adam (a) in the Holy Qur’an in agreement with his infallibility?

5- If all the prophets are infallible, why did Abraham and Joseph tell lies?

6- Explain the doubt concerning Moses’ (a) infallibility and provide a response to it.

7- If understanding revelation is free from mistakes, why does Almighty God frequently prohibit the Prophet (s) from casting doubt on his mission?

8- How is the attribution of sin to the Prophet of Islam (s) in chapter ‘Fath’ in line with his infallibility?

9- Explain the doubt about Zayd’s story, and provide its response.

10- What is the doubt concerning God’s blaming the Prophet (s)? And what is its response?

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: MIRACLES

Ways of proving prophecy

The third fundamental point in the section about prophecy is to establish how the honesty of the true prophets (a) and the dishonesty of the false prophets are verified.

If a person is a wrong doer, or commits sins whose disgracefulness can be distinguished by wisdom, he cannot then be trusted, and his honesty can be falsified by referring to the requisites of the prophets' chastity. Such false claims can also be rejected if they are against wisdom or man's intrinsic nature, or if there are contradictions in them.

Nevertheless, it is possible that a person's clean record of life maybe so, that impartial people trust his claim, especially if his claims are in agreement with wisdom.

Moreover, it is also possible that a person's prophecy maybe approved through the predictions made by previous prophets. In such cases those who search for the truth will have no doubt in accepting him as a Prophet.

However, if the people are left with no trustworthy indications, and there have been no predictions or approvals by previous prophets, there would be a need for additional proof before first accepting a person as a legitimate Prophet. Almighty God on the basis of His absolute wisdom, has provided the evidence by giving His prophets the miracles, which are signs to their true claims. God refers to these as 'evidences' (āyāt). The term 'evidence,' has other implications as well; for instance it may refer to God's Knowledge, Power, and Wisdom presented in all the usual and unusual aspects of creation.

To summarise, the veracity of the claims of the prophets can be verified in three ways:

1. Through reliable signs, such as honesty and truth, and by having no deviation from the path of God and justice during their life. However, this way of distinguishing the prophets is applicable to those who have lived among people for several years and their way of life is known to the society. Whereas if for example, a Prophet is appointed by God in his early youth or the people know very little about his personality or way of life, such clues cannot be helpful in recognising the person's honesty in his claim.

2. Through introduction by the previous or contemporary prophets. This is relevant to the people who have distinguished the previous Prophet and are aware of his prediction. This however is obviously not applicable to the first Prophet.

3. Through miracles, this can have a wider and more popular application. I will explain this third way in the following sections:

The definition of a miracle

A miracle is an extraordinary act, which is performed by a person who claims to be a Prophet. It is rooted in God's will and used as a clue to the Prophet's true claim.

The above definition comprises of three points:

A) There are some extraordinary events, which do not emerge from usual, or common causes.

B) Some of these extraordinary acts are performed by the prophets and are rooted in God's will.

C) Such extraordinary acts can be the evidence for the honesty of the prophets' claims, and can therefore be termed as miracles.

The following provides an explanation for each of the three points in the definition:

Extraordinary events

The events of this world emerge from causes, which can be recognised through various experiments: for example all the events, which take place in physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology. However, there occur some rare situations where such events happen in a different way, so that their causes cannot be distinguished experimentally. For instance the amazing acts of the Yogis have been recognised by the specialists of various sciences, as not following the rules of empirical or material sciences. Such acts are called 'extraordinary'!

Divine extraordinary acts

Extraordinary acts can be divided into two general groups:

One group includes acts, which have no usual cause, but are at the same time accessible to man through education, or rehearsal similar to the practice of the Yogis.

Another group of extraordinary acts happen specifically by God's permission. Those who have a special relationship with God can only perform such acts. Therefore, such acts have two fundamental characteristics:

First, they cannot be taught or learnt, and secondly, they cannot be affected by another stronger power, nor can they be defeated by it. Such extraordinary acts are dedicated to the selected servants of God, and will never be exposed to the misled. At the same time, they are not specific to the prophets, as occasionally other great saints (awliyā) have had access to them. But it should be noted however, that not all such extraordinary acts are termed as miracles.

The extraordinary acts committed by the non-prophets are called saint-miracles (karāmāt). This is just as unusual heavenly knowledge is not merely transferred to man by the revelation presented to the prophets, but can also be provided to others (non-prophets) by inspiration (ilhām, tahdīth, etc.).

In the above discussion, the ways of distinguishing between the two types of extraordinary acts (Divine and Non-divine) were explained. It was also discussed that if the performance of an extraordinary act can be taught or learnt, or if another factor can avoid or provide a barrier to it or eliminate its effect, it will not then be classified as a 'divine' extraordinary act.

A person's corruption of belief or personal behaviour could also point to the lack of relationship he has with Almighty God, and indicate that his actions are rooted in satanic temptations and manly desires. It seems reasonable at this point to state that the only performer of extraordinary acts

is Almighty God, insofar that such acts need His permission to happen (refer to al-Ra'd:37, Ghāfir:78, this is in addition to the necessity of His permission for all creation including usual events). Such extraordinary acts can also be attributed to those who function as mediators like the angels or prophets. As it is stated in the Holy Qur'an; giving life to the dead, curing diseases, and creating birds have been attributed to Jesus (a) (refer to Āl-Imrān:49, al-Māi'dah:110).

There is, therefore, no contradiction between the two attributions-God's or His servants-as God's performance of the actions parallels that of His servants.

Characteristics of the miracles of the prophets' (a)

The third point discussed in the aforementioned definition, is that 'miracles' are the clues to the honesty of the prophets (a). Therefore, rather than being permitted by God, such extraordinary acts should be employed as clues to the prophecy of the Prophet. At the same time, and with a little generalisation, they should also include acts, which are performed to provide evidence for the honesty of Imams (a).

The term 'Generosity' refers to all of the divine extraordinary acts performed by non- prophets, and is against the extraordinary acts, which are rooted in manly or satanic desires, such as magic, divination, or what the Yogis practice, which can be taught and learnt or defeated by other stronger powers. It is also possible to determine the unholy nature of such acts by referring to the corruption of beliefs or behaviour of those who perform them.

It seems necessary to maintain here that the miracles of the prophets directly prove their honesty in their claim of prophecy. However, the accuracy of the content of their message and the necessity of obeying their commands is proven indirectly. In other words, the approval of the prophecy of the prophets is through intellectual reasoning, whilst the validity of the content of their messages is through devotional ones (Refer to lessons 4 and 21 of this book).

Questions

1. How can one recognise a true Prophet? What are the differences between the different ways of such recognition?
2. What clues can distinguish a false Prophet?
3. Define 'Miracle'.
4. What are extraordinary acts?
5. What is the difference between Divine and non-divine extraordinary acts?
6. How are the divine extraordinary acts recognised?
7. What are the characteristics of the miracles of prophets?
8. Explain the difference between 'miracle' and 'generosity'!
9. Who actually performs the miracles- God or the prophets? Are miracles the evidence for the honesty of the prophets or the evidence for the accuracy of their message?

LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT: RESPONSES TO CERTAIN DOUBTS

Responses to certain doubts

With respect to 'Miracles', some doubts have been raised. The following presents the doubts and their relevant explanations:

Do miracles contradict causality?

Every physical phenomenon has a specific cause, which can be recognised through experimentation. However, if due to the deficiencies of laboratory equipment the cause of a phenomenon is not recognised, it cannot be considered as evidence for rejecting causality. Therefore, extraordinary acts can be justified, by saying that their causes have not yet been recognised and that the only extraordinary thing about them is that while being unknown to ordinary people, their causes have been discovered by their performers. Thus, denying experimentally recognisable causes is contradictory to the principle of causality and is unacceptable.

The response to this doubt is that the principle of causality is nothing more than the proof, that any dependent or resulting phenomenon has a cause; however, the realisation of that cause through scientific experiments is by no means a requisite for such a principle and there is no reason why it should be so. The reason is that the scope of scientific experimentation is limited to natural phenomena, and it is impossible to prove the existence or non-existence of metaphysical phenomena or their effects through laboratory tests.

Moreover, it is incorrect to interpret miracles in terms of being aware of the unknown causes, because if this awareness is gained through the usual factors, there would be no difference between an extraordinary phenomenon and other usual phenomena, and it could not be considered extraordinary. However, if such awareness is reached unusually, the act will be extraordinary, and should it be in accordance with God's specific permission and the evidence of true prophecy, it would be considered as a miracle (scientific miracle). In this way Jesus's (a) knowledge about people's food and property is known as one of his miracles (Āl-'Imrān:

49). Miracles are not only limited to the scientific; there are other types as well, which cannot be denied. Finally, the question remains as to what the difference is between miracles and other types of extraordinary acts with reference to the principle of causality?

Do extraordinary acts indicate changes in Divine customs?

Divine custom has dictated that every phenomenon follows a specific cause and according to the verses of the Holy Qur'an, there will be no change in this way (refer to al-Isrā':77, al-Ahzāb:62, Fātir:43, Fateh:23). Therefore, extraordinary acts, which are the proof for such changes in these customs, are rejected by these verses.

This doubt is like the previous one; the difference is that in the former, the intellect was used for reasoning and in the latter the verses of the Holy Qur'an. The response is that it is not reasonable to limit unchangeable

Divine customs to merely include usual causes for all phenomena. It is like saying that there is an unchangeable Divine law and that fire is the only cause for heat! Such claims can be challenged by saying that different causes for various phenomena, and the replacement of the usual causes by unusual ones, have always existed in the world and should consequently be described as a Divine custom. Therefore, restricting the causes of events to usual ones is considered a change in Divine customs and those verses of the Holy Qur'an are (in fact) denying it.

Thus, interpreting the verses, which deny changes in Divine customs in a way that they show the replacement of usual causes by unusual ones, is impossible and it is unreasonable to describe that interpretation as a Divine custom. Moreover, the great number of verses, which indicate the occurrence of miracles and extraordinary acts, can be strong reasons for falsifying such an interpretation. The correct interpretation for such verses should be searched for in the books of commentary; however, I will briefly explain that such Holy verses deny the independence of the events from their causes, rather than the plurality of causes or the replacement of a usual cause by an unusual one. It is nonetheless; probably right to claim that the majority of such verses are related to the effect of unusual causes.

Why did the Prophet of Islam (s) refuse to present miracles to the public?

It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that people frequently asked the Prophet (s) to present to them some miracles, but he refused (refer to al-An'am:37,109, Yūnus:20, al-Ra'd:7, al-Anbiyā':5). If providing miracles is a way of proving prophecy, why did the Prophet (s) not use this means?

The response is that such verses are related to the requests after the Prophet (s) had proved his prophecy in three ways: clues to his honesty, predictions made by the previous prophets, and miracles. Such requests were rooted in obstinacy and enmity and were due to reasons other than finding the truth (refer to al-An'am:35,124, Tāha:33, al-Saffāt:14, al-Qamar:2, al-Shu'arā':3-4,197, al-Isrā':59, al-Rūm:58).

Therefore, God's Wisdom didn't necessitate responding to them.

To provide further explanation, it should be stated that the reason for presenting miracles, which have been exceptional to the rules governing the universe, have sometimes provided responses to the people's requests (e.g. Sāleh's (a) camel), and were at other times incidental (e.g. Jesus' (a) miracles), were to introduce God's prophets and provide the people with the means for such an introduction. However, miracles were not employed to force the people to accept the prophets' invitations, neither were they used for people to compulsorily submit to them. Furthermore, miracles were not a means to entertain the people by violating the rules of causality for usual events. Such an objective does not necessitate responding to all the requests.

In some cases responding to certain requests would be unwise and contradict the ultimate aim of the miracle. For example, there were requests, which would restrict the people's choices and enforce them to accept the prophets' invitations, or cases where the requests were due to enmity and obstinacy. Moreover, if all the requests received a positive response,

triteness would occur and people would see miracles as entertainment, and they would gather around the Prophet (s) for their personal benefit.

In addition, testing people for their faith and providing them with the freedom in decision making would be impossible and they would accept the obedience of the Prophets aversely or forcefully. In both cases such an acceptance would be against both wisdom and the real aims of the miracle. However, in other cases where Divine wisdom necessitated, the Prophet (s) would accept such requests. There are many miracles, which have been attributed to the Prophet of Islam (s); and most have been verified through successive traditions, however his ultimate miracle is the eternal miracle of the Holy Qur'an. More explanation will be provided about the Holy Qur'an in its due place.

Can miracles be accepted as intellectual or convincing evidence?

Since miracles are performed according to God's specific permission, they can indicate a particular relationship between Almighty God and the performer of the miracle, who has been provided with such permission. In other words, God has fulfilled His own Will through the performer of the miracle. However, the intellectual requisite for such a relationship is not the existence of another relationship - the type of sending and receiving of revelation-between Almighty God and the performer of the miracle. Therefore, miracles cannot be considered as intellectual evidence for the honesty of the prophets in their claims. However, they can in the best condition, be considered as speculative or convincing evidence.

The response is, that extraordinary acts - even Divine ones - are not by themselves the evidence for a relationship to revelation and, due to the same reason, the generosity of God's saints cannot be considered as the proof for their prophecy.

However, the subject of our discussion is a person who has claimed to be the Prophet of God, by using miracles as the proof for his honesty. If such a person had falsely claimed to be a Prophet, and thereby committed one of the greatest and most disgraceful sins causing the most evil corruption of this world and the Hereafter, - he would never deserve such a relationship with Almighty God, and Divine wisdom would never provide him with the miracles to deceive His servants.

In conclusion, our intellect clearly realises that having a specific relationship with Almighty God and being equipped with the ability to perform miracles, is only deserved by those who do not betray their Lord and do not mislead His servants to eternal misfortune.

Therefore, miracles can be considered intellectual evidence for the true claim of prophecy.

Questions

1. What is the content of the principle of causality?
2. Why does the acceptance of causality not contradict the acceptance of miracles?
3. Why is it incorrect to interpret miracles in terms of the awareness of unknown causes?

4. Is the acceptance of miracles in contrast to the unchangeable divine customs?

Why?

5. Did the prophets (a) provide miracles incidentally or in response to the people's requests?

6. Why didn't the Prophet of Islam (s) respond positively to all the requests to present miracles?

7. Explain how miracles are not merely the speculative or convincing evidence for the true claim of prophecy, but how they are considered as the intellectual proof for such a claim.

LESSON TWENTY-NINE: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHET

The plurality of the prophets

So far, three fundamental issues related to prophecy and the recognition of leaders have been discussed. Moreover, it was realised that due to the deficiencies of human wisdom in acquiring the information necessary for the welfare of this world and the hereafter, it is necessary for Divine wisdom to select a Prophet or prophets to teach them the necessary facts. These prophets will in turn, present those facts to others in the most perfect and intact form. Furthermore, it is necessary (for Divine wisdom) to introduce the prophets to the public so that no excuse remains (for the unbelievers).

The most general way to accomplish this is the presentation of miracles.

I used intellectual evidence to prove the above point; however, such pieces of evidence do not deal with the necessity of the plurality of the prophets, their Books or Divine religions. Therefore, if for instance the conditions of man's life were so, that one Prophet could cater for all of humanity's needs up until the end of time, and every individual or group of people throughout history could find his/their responsibilities, by referring to what the same Prophet had proposed, no contradiction would then evolve with the requisites of those pieces of (intellectual) evidence.

However, first we know that every human being, including the prophets, have a limited life and Divine wisdom has not found it necessary to keep the first Prophet alive for all time.

Secondly, the conditions of people's lives in different places and at different times are not the same; such differences and specifically the gradual complications of social relationships can influence the quality as well as the quantity of social rules and regulations. Furthermore, in some cases new regulations should be issued and if such regulations are advertised by a Prophet who had been appointed thousands of years ago, it would make no sense; similarly, the protection of those regulations and handling of them with specific cases would be very difficult.

Thirdly, in ancient times, it was not possible to advertise the invitations of the prophets and for the entire world to be informed of their message would be impossible.

Fourthly, with the process of time, and due to various factors, the instructions given by a Prophet to the people of his time would face alterations (to familiarise with such alterations refer to:

Al-Huda ila Dīn al- Mustafa, by 'Allamah Shaykh Muhammad Javād Balāghī) and incorrect interpretations, so that after some time the original religion would change into a deviated one. The same thing has happened to the monotheistic religion presented by Jesus (a), which later changed into the concept of the trinity.

The above discussion makes the reason for the plurality of prophets and the differences in some devotional and social instructions of the Divine religions clear (refer to al-Māi'da:48, al-Hajj:67). This is in line with the fact that all Divine religions are not only the same in their principles of

belief and ethical foundations, but they have also been in agreement with reference to their personal and social instructions (refer to al-Baqarah:131-137,285, Āl-‘Imrān:19-20). For example, Prayers (salāt) have existed in all religions, although the way to perform them and the direction towards which they were performed (qiblah) have been different. There has also been poor-rate (zakāt) in all religions; however, its amount and the cases for which it would be necessary have not been the same.

Therefore, it is a necessity to believe in all of the prophets and to admit their prophecy without any discrimination, as well as accepting their messages and information provided by them, and recognising them as being unique individuals (refer to al- Shūra:13, al-Nisā’:136,152, Āl-‘Imrān:84-85). Moreover, it is not permissible to deny any of the prophets (a) or any of their instructions, because denying one Prophet is tantamount to the denial of all the instructions issued by God (refer to al-Nisā’:150, al-Baqara:85). However, the practical duties of every Prophet’s nation at any time are to obey the instructions provided by the same Prophet and at the same time.

It is worth mentioning that although human intellect due to the aforementioned points realises the rational behind the plurality of the prophets and the differences between Divine religions, it cannot discover the exact formula for the number of prophets and Divine religions, and cannot decide when and where a new Prophet would be appointed and a new religion introduced. It is however, understood from the above points that while the conditions of man’s life are so, that the Prophet’s invitation can reach all the people of the world and his message can be protected and secured for future generations, as long as the social regulations do not need fundamental changes, no new Prophet would be necessary.

The number of prophets

As I discussed above, our intellect cannot decide about the number of prophets and Divine Books; such points can only be proved through traditions. Even in the case of the Holy Qur’an, although it emphasises that Almighty God has sent a Prophet for every nation (refer to Fātir:24, al-Nahl:36), it does not clarify the number of the nations or their prophets.

However, more than twenty prophets have been mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and the stories of some others have been narrated without referring to their names (refer to al- Baqarah:246, 256). On the other hand, in some traditions from the Prophet’s family members (a), it has been stated (refer to Risālat I’tiqādāt al-Sadūq, Bihār al-Anwār, vol.11, p. 28,30,32,41) that Almighty God has appointed one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets (a), and that the chain of prophets began with Adam (a) and ended with Muhammad (s) the son of Abdullah.

God’s prophets (a) have had various characteristics:

They have been guides (nabi), which is the main responsibility for this Divine position, ‘warners’ (nadhīr or mundhir), and ‘providers of glad tidings’ (bashīr or mubashshir) (refer to al- Baqarah:213, al-Nisā’:165). They have also been known as the best (salihīn) and the most pious (mukhlasīn) people some of whom have held the position of ‘Messengers of God’ (rasūl) as well. In some sayings, the number of Divine messengers is said to be three hundred and thirteen (refer to Bihār al-Anwār Vol.11, p, 32).

Therefore, in this part, I will explain the definition of prophet and messenger as well as the differences between them.

Prophets and God's Messengers

The word 'Messenger' (Rasūl) means the one who brings a message, and the word Prophet (Nabi), if derived from the root (Naba') means important news, and if derived from (Nabu) means holding an outstanding position.

Some have thought that the word 'Prophet' includes the meaning of the word 'Messenger'; therefore, they claim that a Prophet is a person who receives revelation from Almighty God, whether or not he has the responsibility of advertising it to other people, whereas a 'Messenger' is a person who holds the responsibility of advertising God's message to the public.

However, it is not right, because in some verses of the Holy Qur'an, the word 'Prophet' is used after the word 'Messenger' (refer to Maryam:51,54). Whereas, according to the above interpretations, the more general word 'Messenger' should have preceded the specific one 'Prophet'. Furthermore, there is no reason for allocating the responsibility of advertising revelation to messengers.

In some traditions, it has been stated that the requisite for the position of Prophet, is that the person should visit the Angel of revelation only in his dreams and when he is awake he would just hear the Angel's voice; while, the Messenger visits the Angel in his wakefulness (refer to Usūl al-Kāfī, vol 1, p.176).

However, this can not be due to the interpretation of the word, as the acceptable point is that the word 'Prophet' with reference to those to whom it refers -rather than the way it is interpreted - is a more general term than the word 'Messenger'. In other words, all prophets have held the position of prophecy; nevertheless, the position of a Messenger of God applies to only a group of them. As mentioned before, the number of God's messengers is three hundred and thirteen. Their position has certainly been higher than that of prophets; however, there has been some degree of hierarchy with reference to the 'position' and 'excellence' amongst the messengers' as well (refer to al-Baqarah:253, al-Isrā':55). Some of them, for example, had the honour of holding the position of Imamah (refer to al-Baqarah:124, al-Anbiyā':73, al-Sajdah:24).

The prominent prophets

The Holy Qur'an introduces some of God's prophets as 'Those messengers with a strong will' (ūlu al-'azm) (refer to al-Ahqāf:35); however, their particularities have not been clarified. Moreover, according to the sayings of the Prophet's family members (a), there have been five prominent prophets:

Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (refer to Bihār al-Anwār vol. 11, p. 33-4, Ma'ālim al-Nubuwwah, p.113). They not only had a distinctive level of patience and tolerance, which has been referred to in the Qur'an, but each of them had a specific religion and a particular Book, and their contemporary or succeeding prophets obeyed their religions until

another prominent Prophet was appointed, and a new Book and a new religion were introduced.

It was also clarified that the co-existence of two prophets at the same time has been possible as Lot (a) was contemporary to Abraham and Aaron was appointed at the same time when Moses (a) was appointed a Prophet. Also John (a) lived with Jesus (a) simultaneously.

Some Points

At the end of this lesson, some points are briefly discussed:

A) God's prophets have confirmed each other and each one predicted his successor (refer to Āl-'Imrān:81). Therefore, if a person claimed to be a Prophet and denied his preceding or succeeding prophets, he would be a liar.

B) God's prophets did not request any payment or reward for performing their duties (refer to al-An'ām:90, Yāsīn:21, al-Tūr:40, al-Qalam:46, Yūnus:72, Hūd:29,51, al-Furqān:57, al-Shūra:109,127,145,164,180); only the Prophet of Islam (s) has recommended his nation to be friends with the knowledgeable people (refer to al-Shūra:23) and has considered it as the reward for his endeavour. In this way, he urged his nation to obey the (instructions given by the Islamic) scholars. The benefits of such obedience will in fact return to the nation themselves (refer to Saba':47).

C) Some prophets have had other exalted positions such as 'Judge' and 'Governor' (David and Solomon). In addition, verse al-Nisā':64 have necessitated the unconditional obedience of every Prophet. Therefore, it can be inferred that all the prophets (a) have had the same Divine positions.

D) The Jinn, who have the freedom of decision-making and are responsible for their deeds, and in normal conditions are invisible, were aware of the invitations made by some of God's prophets. The pious Jinn believed in them, Moses (a) and Muhammad (s) each having some followers from among them.

However, there also existed a group of Jinn who obeyed Satan and disbelieved in God's prophets (refer to al-Jinn:1-14).

Questions

1. Discuss the reasons for the plurality of the prophets (a).
2. What is the Prophet's duty with respect to the invitations and instructions made by all other prophets?
3. When is it not necessary for a new Prophet to be appointed?
4. Discuss the plurality of the prophets and messengers.
5. What is the difference between a Prophet and a messenger? What is their relationship with respect to the meaning and application of these terms?
6. With reference to their Divine positions, what are the priorities of the prophets (a) to each other?
7. Who are the prominent prophets? What are their characteristics?
8. Is it possible to have more than one Prophet at the same time? If yes, can you provide some examples?
9. What other characteristics of God's prophets (a) do you know?

10. How did the Jinn react regarding the acceptance or rejection of the prophets' invitations?

LESSON THIRTY: PROPHETS AND PEOPLE

Introduction

When referring to the prophets (a) and their illustrious lives, the Holy Qur'an discloses the reactions of the people against them. On one side we are informed about the stance the people took towards the prophets and the reasons for their opposition. On the other side the methods employed by the prophets to guide and educate the people are explained and the way in which they struggled against the roots of disbelief, polytheism, and deviation. The Holy Qur'an upholds Divine regulations for governing societies, particularly with reference to the mutual relationships between people and prophets. Such discussions include the most instructive and insightful issues.

These points are not in direct relation with ideological or discursal points. This is due to the fact that they shed light on prophecy and its related aspects, and destroy a number of relevant doubts, and due to their importance in teaching and educating people and functioning as examples for the people to learn from, they are considered to be vital. Therefore, in this lesson, I will discuss some of the most important points of this nature.

The people's reaction against the prophets (a)

When God's prophets (a) began to invite people to worship the unique God (refer to al-Nahl:36, al-Anbiyā':25], Fussilat:14, al-Ahqāf:21), obey His orders, stay away from idols and false gods, avoid Satan and other misleaders, and refuse committing oppression, corruption and wrong doing, they generally faced opposition from the people (refer to Ibrāhīm:9, al-Mu'minūn:44). Such opposers were the rulers of societies, the rich who were drowning in their own worldly pleasures (refer to Saba':34) and proud of their wealth, social positions, or knowledge (refer to Ghāfir:83, al-Qasas:78, al-Zumar:49). They held great influence and managed to mislead many away from the true path of life (refer to al-Ahzāb:67, Saba':31-33).

Nevertheless, little by little, a group of people who were mainly among the deprived accepted the prophets' invitation (refer to Hūd:40).

However it has rarely occurred that a society has been formed on the principles of correct beliefs, norms of justice and with obedience to God and His prophets. For instance, this happened at the time of Solomon. Nevertheless, some of the Divine teachings gradually affected the culture of some societies and were later transferred to others.

In some cases, the prophets' teachings and instructions were introduced as the innovations of the leaders of the unbelievers. Many of today's law systems in the world have taken the rules and regulations from Divine religions; however, without referring to their sources they introduce such regulations as original.

Reasons and motivations behind the opposition of the prophets (a)

In addition to the desire for corruption and worldly pleasure (refer to al-Māi'dah:70), there were other reasons and motivations behind the

opposition against the prophets (a). More generally traits such as selfishness, pride and self-praise appeared amongst the rich, noble and more knowledgeable of societies (refer to Ghāfir:56, al-A'rāf:76).

Another reason was the bias that such people held concerning the wrong customs and beliefs of their ancestors, which were erroneously respected by various societies (refer to al-Baqarah:170, al-Māi'dah:104, al-A'rāf:28, Yūnus:78, al-Anbiyā':53, al-Shu'arā':74, Luqmān:21, al-Zukhruf:22-23). The protection of economical benefits and social positions were strong motivations for the rich people, the rulers, and the scientists (refer to Hūd:84-86, al-Qasas:76-79, al-Tawbah:34); and the ignorance and lack of knowledge among the public were the main reasons behind their deception from the unbelieving leaders and their obedience towards the societal authorities. It was in turn, the cause for their feeling of satisfaction with their false beliefs and their refusal of the religion, which had already been accepted by a few people who mainly held no important social positions and had been rejected by the authorities and the majority of the societies. However, the pressure imposed by the rulers and the oppressors on the deprived should not be ignored (refer to Ibrāhīm:21, Fātir:47, Hūd:27, al-Shu'arā':111).

Behaviour towards the prophets (a)

The opponents of the prophets (a) employed various methods to prevent the progress of their invitation:

Contempt

A group of people would try to suppress the status of the prophets by despising, mocking, and insulting them (refer to al-Hijr:11, Yāsīn:30, al-Zukhruf:7, al-Mutaffifīn:29-32) so that the public would pay no attention to them.

Slander and unjust accusations

Then they would spread slander and lies, and attribute unjust accusations to the prophets, such as claiming they were mad etc (refer to al-A'rāf:66, al-Baqarah:13, al-Mu'minūn:25). When the prophets performed miracles, they slandered them by calling them magicians and tricksters (refer to al-Dhāriyāt:39,52-53, al-Anbiyā':3, al-Qamar:2); they also described the Divine messages as being myths and imaginary tales (refer to al-An'ām:25, al-Anfāl:31, al-Nahl:24, al-Mu'minūn:83, al-Furqān:5, al-Naml:68, al-Ahqāf:17, al-Qalam:15, al-Mutaffifīn:14).

Dispute and chicanery

The leaders of the unbelievers would prohibit people from listening to the prophets when they warned them of the results of disbelief and rebellion against God, and the benefits and rewards of following the true way, even though they used reason and wisdom in their speeches. Such infidels would then employ weak and ridiculous arguments, covered in beautiful words in an attempt to deceive the public and prevent them from obeying the prophets (refer to Nūh:7, Fussilat:26, al-An'ām:112,121, Ghāfir:5,35, al-A'rāf:70-71, al-Kahf:56). In so doing, they frequently mentioned their ancestors' way of life (refer to al-Baqarah:170, al-Māi'dah:104, al

A'rāf:28, al-Anbiyā':53, Yūnus:78, Luqmān:21) and always proudly referred to their wealth and worldly progress. They also referred to the worldly weaknesses and backwardness of the prophets' followers, as an indicator of their false beliefs and behaviour (refer to Yūnus:88, Saba':35, al-Qalam:14, Maryam:77, al-Muddaththir:12, al-Muzzammil:11, al-Ahqāf:11). In some cases they argued as to why God had not chosen his messengers from amongst the angels, and as to why had the prophets not been accompanied by angels. They also argued as to why had God not provided the prophets with enough economical and financial support (refer to al-An'ām:7-9, al-Isrā':90-95, al-Furqān:4-8). On some occasions, they went to the extent that they said:

"We will believe (in God) provided that the revelation is exposed to us, or we see God and listen to His words directly" (refer to al-Baqarah:118, al-An'ām:124, al-Nisā':153).

Threats and allurement

Another method of opposition that is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is that the various nations would threaten the prophets and their followers with torture, and drive them out of their town or country by trying to stone them to death or by other means of execution (refer to Ibrāhīm:13, Maryam:46, Hūd:91, Yāsīn:18, Ghāfir:26). The infidels to the contrary, allured the people by spending vast quantities of money, in order to make them disobey the prophets (refer to al-Anfāl:36).

Violence and murder

Finally, when the unbelievers faced the patience, tolerance, firmness, and coolness of the prophets, (refer to Ibrāhīm:12) and realized the seriousness and dedication of the prophets' true followers, they lost hope with their propaganda and other discouraging tricks and instead made threats through violent means, which subsequently resulted in the murder of many of the prophets (refer to al-Baqarah:61,87,91, al-Māi'dah: 70, Āl-Imrān:21,112,181, al-Nisā':155). This left the society deprived of the greatest heavenly gifts and the most deserving social leaders.

Some heavenly approached in ruling societies

The main reason behind the mission of the prophets was to enlighten the people concerning matters pertaining to this world and the Hereafter, and through revelation to provide them with all the necessary proof of His existence (refer to al-Nisā':65, Tāha:134). However Almighty God due to His endless mercy and most perfect wisdom provided the people with a specific psychological background from which to accept the prophets' invitation, at the time of their mission. Such a background also assisted the development of the prophets' movement. Moreover, since the greatest reason for one's infidelity and refusal of God, is the feeling of being free from want (refer to al-Alaq:6) and ignorance concerning the dominant and multi-sided needs of mankind, the most perfect Lord prepared the situation so that the people were aware of their needs and put their ignorance, pride, and selfishness aside. In so doing, the Almighty God allowed the people to face certain problems and preoccupations in order to make them discover their deficiencies and turn towards Him (refer to al-An'ām:42, al-A'rāf:95).

However, those whose hearts were as hard as stone, as mentioned in the Qur'an, were not affected by such problems due to their luxurious lives and amassed wealth, and subsequently they did not accept the message brought to them by the prophets (refer to al-An'ām:43, al-Mu'minūn:76) thus continuing their ignorant and false way of life.

Such people were unaffected by the prophets' warnings and advice and accounted for any change in life of hardship into ease as the requisites of life itself, and their ancestors had also experienced such occurrences (refer to al-A'rāf:95). In this way, they continued their oppression, accumulation of wealth, and developing of power.

They ignored the fact that increased wealth and other social merits might in fact be a Divine trap and cause their misfortune in this world and the Hereafter (refer to al-A'rāf:182-183, Āl-'Imrān:178, al-Tawbah:55,85, al-Mu'minūn:54-56).

Nevertheless, when the prophets reached the stage whereby they had numerous followers, they were able to establish an independent society, defend themselves and fight against the enemies of God under the mission of Holy war (Jihād), (refer to Āl-'Imrān:146, al-Tawbah:14). If the situation arose whereby it was impossible to fight against the unbelievers, the people obeyed the prophets and left their society.

When all hope had faded of the unbelievers repenting, the punishment of God plagued their societies in various ways (refer to al-'Ankabūt:40). This indeed is the ever- lasting approach of God in governing human society (refer to Fātir:43, Ghāfir:85, Isrā':77).

Questions

1. What was the reaction of the people against the movement of prophets?
2. Explain the reasons and motivations behind the opposition against the prophets.
3. What antagonistic methods did the opponents of the prophets employ against them?
4. Describe the divine approaches with respect to the prophets' mission and people's reaction against them.

LESSON THIRY-ONE: THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Introduction

God had sent mankind numerous prophets in different eras and different places. They have played an important role in guiding and training people, by which they have left illuminating effects upon human society. Every one of them, on the basis of true beliefs and exalted values, trained special groups and also indirectly influenced those outside these groups. Some of them were even successful in establishing a monotheistic and just society and became their leaders.

Among them were Noah (a), Abraham (a), Moses (a), and Jesus (a), who all conveyed Divine scriptures. These scriptures included a system of rules for the individual and society, as well as ethical responsibilities and laws in accordance with the requirements and conditions of time and space. However, these scriptures either deteriorated completely or they were literally and conceptually altered. Ultimately the Divine religions and laws became distorted.

Likewise the Torah of Moses has been outrageously altered and nothing remains of the Gospel (evangel) of Jesus, except the collective hand written testaments by the associates of Christ, now known as the Holy Bible.

Any individual with an open mind who looks into the testaments would surely realise that none of them are the books that were revealed to Moses or Jesus.

Moreover the Torah apart from characterising God as a man has also regarded Him as regretting many of His actions. God is described as wrestling with one of his servants (Jacob) and could not defeat him, eventually imploring him to spare Him in order that the people would not see their God in such a predicament! Other than these deviant tales, the Torah also relates inconsiderate actions to the Divine prophets, such as the fornication of David (a) with a chaste woman and as for Lot (a) it says that he drank alcohol and fornicated with his daughter (far be this act). Besides these accusations the illustrations of the demise of the Prophet Moses - who brought the Torah itself - is mentioned within it. These points are sufficient enough to understand that the Torah we have now is not from Moses.

Nevertheless the state of the Bible is direr than that of the Torah, as the Christians themselves agree that nothing of what was revealed to Jesus remains, rather they have the synopsis of it, which are from the companions of Jesus. Apart from legitimising alcohol, the Bible regards it as a miracle of Christ!

It is thus clear and obvious that such distorted texts could in no way be suitable for guiding mankind. However, to understand how and why these deteriorations and alterations took place, one must look into the detailed accounts mentioned, which cannot be discussed here.

In the sixth century after the birth of Christ, when the entire world was filled with the darkness of ignorance and oppression and the torches of guidance were dimmed, God sent the best of the prophets to the worse of societies, in order to perpetuate the light of Revelation for mankind. The Revelation was protected from any alteration and was to remain with man. It

contained true knowledge, laws and order for the society, as well as Divine Wisdom. Such information was to lead man towards the felicity of this world and the next.

Imam Ali (a) in one of his sermons (Nahj al- Balagha, sermon 87) describes the state of the world at the advent of Islam:

“Allah sent the Prophet (s) when the mission of other prophets had stopped and the people were in slumber for along time. Evil was raising its head; all matters were in disruption and in the flames of war, while the world was devoid of brightness, and full of open deceitfulness. Its leaves had turned yellow and there was absence of hope about its fruit, while the water had gone underground. The minarets of guidance had disappeared and signs of destruction had appeared. It was stern to its people and frowned in the face of its seeker. Its fruit was vice and its food was a carcass. Its inner dress was fear and its outer cover was the sword.” From the time of the Prophet of Islam (s) the most important subject for human beings has been the investigation of the reality of the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam and the truth of the immaculateness of the religion of Islam. The establishment of the authenticity of Islam and the Prophet will consequently prove the reality of the Qur’an as being the only Divine book present in its pure and unaltered form that has remained in hands of man. This will also establish the recognition of the true belief, value system and practical responsibilities in Islam as being perpetual and as being the only solution for resolving the problems of ideology and worldview.

The establishment of the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s)

In lesson twenty-seven we mentioned that the proof of prophethood is established in three ways; firstly by studying the way of life of the apostle through dependable sources, secondly through the prophecies of the previous prophets and thirdly through the performance of miracles.

In the case of the Prophet of Islam, all three ways were accomplished, as the people of Mecca had closely observed the life of the Prophet of Islam for forty years and certified that he was perfect in every way. They knew him for his unsurpassable character and righteousness and due to this they called him the trustworthy (al-Amīn).

The probability of such a character being dishonest and fabricating a false proclamation is not conceivable.

From another angle the previous prophets have informed of the nomination of such a prophet and certain individuals from the People of the Book (ahl al-kitāb) were anticipating his arrival. Even the Arabs from the Ignorant era proclaimed that someone from the lineage of Ishmael (a) would be nominated as a prophet and would correct the unitary religions of the previous prophets.

On the basis of the clear signs and traditions some of the Jewish and Christian scholars accepted Islam and believed in the apostleship of the Prophet of Islam but others due to the lowly and satanic desires rejected him as prophet. The Noble Qur’an in this regard has mentioned: *“Is it not a sign for them that the learned Children of Israel recognize it?”* (al-Shu’arā’:197).

Understanding about the Prophet of Islam through the scholars of Banī Israel, on the basis of the prophecies of their prophets, provides clear evidence for his apostleship.

This was an absolute and definitive proof for the People of the Book to accept the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam. They had clearly recognised the signs with their own eyes and could analyse the truth of the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam through their own intellects.

Despite the distorted Bible and Torah, and the attempts to eradicate any indication or prophecy regarding the Prophet of Islam, traces of evidence can still be found, confirming the matter for those who seek the truth. There are many Jewish and Christian scholars who while looking for the truth, were guided through these remaining proofs and accepted the pure religion of Islam.¹

The Prophet of Islam further performed many miracles that have been recorded in the books of history and the traditions and narrations relating them have reached the level of certainty (mutawātir).²

Questions

- 1- Describe the conditions of the books of the previous prophets?
- 2- Indicate a few points that illustrate the alteration of the Torah.
- 3- Describe the in-authenticity of the Bible?
- 4- Explain the importance of the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam.
- 5- What are the ways of establishing the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam?

LESSON THIRY-TWO: THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an as a Miracle

The Noble Qur'an is the only Divine Book that openly and confidently claims that none can bring a book of the same calibre. It asserts that if all mankind and jinn work together to produce a book like it, they will certainly fail. Furthermore not only would they fail in producing a book like it, but they would not even have the ability to produce the like of a single verse.

The challenge in the Qur'an to produce something similar to it, and the inability of the people to do so, is considered as one of the proofs for the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (s) and also the Divine nature of this Holy Book.

Therefore there should be no doubt over whether this Book is a miracle; the Messenger himself introduces it as an eternal miracle and everlasting proof of his prophecy.

From the initial outset of his mission the Prophet faced numerous problems from those near and far from him, who tried their best to destroy the message of Islam. In their failed attempts they ultimately decided to kill the Prophet. Their plot however was divinely exposed, and the Prophet and his companions migrated to the city of Medina.

After his migration, the Prophet spent his life engaged in battles against the disbelievers. Indeed from that time until today the hypocrites and enemies of Islam are trying to erase the message of Islam.

The contemporary world regards Islam as the greatest threat and are doing what they can financially, technologically and politically to combat the spread of Islam.

However these great nations with all their resources have failed to compose a verse of the like contained within the Holy Qur'an. Had they been able to, they could have utilised their paramount technology of propaganda and broadcasting to the world and been successful in their mission. This method would also have been the most simple, effective and inexpensive. On this basis every intellectual who is in search of the truth can, by focusing upon the above-mentioned points reach the certainty that the Qur'an is an exceptional and inimitable Book. As no-one has managed to produce even the like of the smallest verse; the Qur'an unquestionably has the substantiality of being a miracle. From this angle it can be determined as the best argument for claiming the truth of the Prophet's message, and the authenticity of the pure religion of Islam.

This Book is the greatest of all bounties for human society, as it has been revealed with its eternal miraculous nature. The realisation of this proof does not require any intellectual activity or specialisation in knowledge, as it is understandable and acceptable by all individuals.

The miraculous aspects of the Qur'an

By now we have an overall understanding of the Noble Qur'an; that it is the speech of God and is miraculous in its nature. We will now expand on some of its miraculous aspects.

a. Its eloquence and rhetoric

The foremost miracle of the Qur'an is its eloquence and rhetoric (expressiveness).

God the Supreme has utilised the best method, most beautiful words, and rhythmical composition for explaining his objective on every level. The selection of these words and their exquisite combination, which is harmonious with the exalted and deep meanings, is only viable to someone who has extended knowledge of all the particularities of the words and their precise meanings and relationships with their opposites. In addition they must have the ability to understand all the dimensions of the word, and with the consideration of the indispensability of time and space select the best words and style for expressing themselves. This art of knowledge is not possible unless it comes through Divine intuition and revelation.

The rhythmical beauty and the angelic nature are evident for all individuals, and the artistic eloquence and rhetoric for those with knowledge of the Arabic language is clear. However to discern that the Qur'an is a miracle regarding its eloquence and rhetoric, requires a philologist - an expert who is specialised in the distinctive arts of speech and is therefore able to compare the Qur'an with different eloquent and rhetorical speeches in order to realise its proficiency. Such was the work of those proficient Arabic poets, who were highly skilled in this art at the time of the descent of the Qur'an.

Divine wisdom and generosity requires that the miracle of every Prophet should be according to the art and science of that period, in order that the sublimity of the miracle is understood. The tenth Imam (a) was asked by Ibn Sikkiyah, "Why has God the Supreme bestowed Prophet Moses (a) with the miracle of transforming a staff into a snake, and Prophet Jesus (a) with the miracle of curing the sick, and the Prophet of Islam (s) with the miracle of the Noble Qur'an?" The Imam (a) replied:

"The art in the era of Prophet Moses (a) was sorcery, therefore God bestowed him with a miracle that resembled sorcery and magic. At the time of Prophet Jesus (a) the artistry was medicinal and hence he was provided by the miracle of curing the sick, in order that its miraculous aspect was known. However during the time of the Prophet of Islam (s), the art was oratorical and centred around poetry, hence the Qur'an was revealed in the best and most beautiful style so that its miraculous nature would be recognised." Bari, one of the greatest philologists, as was Walid ibn Mughayrah, 'Utbah ibn Rab'ah and Tafil ibn Omar, has all borne witness upon the eloquence and rhetoric found in the Qur'an. After almost a century had passed, Ibn Abi al-'Awja', Ibn al-Muqaffa', Abu-Shaker al-Dysani, and 'Abdul Malik al-Basri decided to take up the challenge of the Qur'an. They worked for a year and a half, but failed to accomplish anything remotely resembling such eloquent beauty. Whilst they were engaged in a meeting discussing their work, in the Masjid al-Haram, Imam Sadiq (a) walked by and recited the following verse: "Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another'" (al-Isra':88)

b. The illiteracy of its Messenger

The Noble Qur'an is a Book, which within its small voluminous capacity encompasses the many different sciences, as well as rules pertaining to society and individuals. The investigation of each particular issue requires a group of experts in order to arrive at an understanding of its meaning and unveiling of its realities.

However a complete and perfect understanding of it is only possible through someone who has Divine knowledge and is appointed by God.

This great Book includes the finest and greatest of all sciences, the most significant and excellent prescription of morals, the ultimate equitable and determined canons on rights and judgement, the wisest practices for worship and sociological rules, the best and most beneficial counsels and lessons, precise historical educational points, and the most constructive ways of teaching and training. In short, the Qur'an simply contains all of the principles that are required by man to attain felicity in this world and the next.

To bring forth such knowledge and reality in such an arrangement is far beyond the possibility of a common man. Nevertheless, it is astonishing that this great Book has been revealed through an individual who was unlettered (never taught), and who had never placed a pen upon paper and was brought-up in an atmosphere, which was far removed from civilization and culture. It is also surprising that during the period of his forty years (before being nominated as a Prophet) no-one ever heard his speech in any way resembling the revelation, which he brought. During the period of his apostleship his speech differed as well to the revelation he proclaimed. The revelation had a strange harmony and eloquence compared to his speech, and this was noticeable by all men.

The Noble Qur'an mentions: "You did not use to recite any scripture before it, nor did you write it with your right hand, for then the impugnors would have been skeptical" (al-'Ankabūt:48) In another place it mentions:

"Say, 'Had Allah [so] wished, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you, for I have dwelled among you for a lifetime before it. Do you not apply reason?' " (Yūnus:16). And: "And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a sūrah like it" (al-Baqarah:23) This verse indicates the miraculous aspect of the Qur'an, as there seems a significant possibility that the pronoun of 'like-it' (mithl) returns to 'Our servant' ('abdinā).

One might form the conclusion that this Book is the work created by the collaboration of various groups of experts, but it could never be assumed that such a work would be uttered from the lips of an unlettered man.

Therefore, the coming of this book with all the proficiency mentioned from an individual who received no formal education is in itself self-evidently miraculous.

c. Its harmony and lack of contradiction

The Noble Qur'an is a Book that has been revealed over the duration of the twenty- three years of apostleship of the Holy Prophet. This was a tumultuous period, yet these inconceivable circumstances and transformations had no effect upon the method and miraculous nature of the Qur'an. The harmony and proportionality of the Qur'an from the point of

view of its form and meaning is also another aspect of its miraculous nature and has been indicated in the very Qur'an itself:

“Do they not contemplate the Qur'an? Had it been from [someone] other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it” (al-Nisā':82) In explanation of the above, it can be said that every human being goes through two different types of transformation. The first is that gradually his knowledge increases which reflects in his speech, and naturally this gives rise to distinction and contradiction in his thought and understanding (which can clearly be defined in his life span).

The second type of transformation is due to the different incidents that take place during one's life. They become the very reason for the initiation of psychological, emotional and sentimental conditions, which lead to hope, sadness, happiness, peacefulness, and absurdity. It is these factors, which bring about changes in his thought, understanding and speech. When these conditions mature they create contradictions, and in reality the difference of speech is due to the transformations in psychological conditions.

If it is assumed for a moment that the Noble Qur'an is the creation of the Holy Prophet (s), who has been regarded to have gone through transformations with the consideration of the different outward and inward conditions of his life, then these transformations, which the Prophet (s) has been through, must be reflected in the Book he has brought. However no such evidence can be found in the Qur'an.

Hence we will conclude that the harmony and lack of contradiction in the contents of the Qur'an represents its miraculous nature. It also indicates that this honourable Book is the source of the eternal knowledge of God the Supreme.

Questions

1. Explain how the Qur'an proclaims itself to be a miracle.
2. Provide an overall proof for the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.
3. Is it possible to imagine that someone who could have produced a Book like the Qur'an is unknown?
4. Explain the miraculous nature of the eloquent and rhetoric aspects of the Qur'an.
5. Explain the importance of the relationship between the Qur'an and its unlettered Messenger.
6. How does the lack of contradiction in the Qur'an reinforce it being a miracle?

LESSON THIRY-THREE: THE IMMUNITY OF THE QUR'AN FROM ALTERATION

Introduction

As it has been indicated earlier, the necessity of prophethood requires that the Divine message must reach mankind without any alteration, in order that they can apply it in their lives to arrive upon the felicity of this world and the next. Therefore, the immunity of the Noble Qur'an like any other Divine Book is not established until its deliverance.

However we know that the other Divine Books, once delivered into the hands of the people were distorted and lost. We do not have any sign of the books which were given to the Prophet Noah (a) and to the Prophet Abraham (a), and on the other hand the books given to the Prophet Moses (a) and Prophet Jesus (a) have been distorted.

By focusing upon these issues one might question that the Book which is known to be the last Divine Book, is indeed the very same as that brought by the Prophet of Islam (s) many centuries ago. How can we be sure that it too has not been altered and is free from addition and deletion?

It is for certain, that those who have a little understanding of the history of Islam and Muslims will recognise the importance paid by the Prophet (a) and his successors to the writing and recording of the Qur'anic verses. They will also be aware of the importance paid by the Muslims to the preservation of the Qur'an as a whole; in one battle alone seventy of those martyred had memorized the entire Qur'an by heart.

Throughout history great significance has been given to the counting of verses and words of the Qur'an in an extended effort towards its preservation.

However if we disregard the distinctive and credible historical indications of the Qur'anic preservation, one can also prove the immunity of the Qur'an through a combination of intellectual and traditional proofs. The lack of addition to the Qur'an can be proven intellectually, and after recognising that the present Qur'an is from God the Supreme then the traditional proofs - through its verses - upon the lack of deletion could be established.

From this standpoint one can investigate into the issue of the immunity of the Qur'an from alteration on two different levels.

Lack of addition in the Qur'an

Lack of addition in the Qur'an is a matter of consensus amongst the Muslims, aswell as being an issue that all the knowledgeable and well-informed people of the world agree upon. No incidents have been cited in the course of history, which indicate that any alteration has occurred in the Qur'an. There is no evidence that can originate a probability of considering that the Qur'an contains any form of addition or deletion.

The slightest supposition of alteration can be nullified through intellectual proofs.

If it were supposed that a comprehensive addition had been made to the Qur'an, it would mean that it is therefore possible to produce a book like it.

Such an assumption is incompatible with the Qur'an's miraculous nature. As indicated earlier, the miraculous nature of the Qur'an was that mankind could not produce a book or even a verse like it. Furthermore, if it is to be assumed that a word or a verse has been added to the Qur'an, the speech and resonating harmony of the Qur'an would become disrupted, and the miraculous nature of the Qur'an would hence not exist.

As the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is established so is the argument provided for proving the lack of any addition. Likewise the lack of deletion of words and phrases from the Qur'an is also nullified by the mentioned argument. However proving the lack of deletion of a chapter or a comprehensive issue from the Qur'an requires another argument.

Lack of deletion from the Qur'an

The great scholars of Islam from both the Shi'ite and Sunnite schools have emphasised upon the fact that there has been no addition or deletion to the Qur'an, in order to establish this they have provided several arguments. However it is quite unfortunate that due to some of the false and fabricated traditions and on account of the misconceptions of some of the authentic traditions, the possibility of deletion from the Qur'an has arisen according to some.

Nevertheless, apart from the definitive historical indications upon the Qur'an's immunity and the arguments used to prove its miraculous nature, one can also utilise the Noble Qur'an in establishing the immunity of the deletion of a verse or chapter.

As it has already been established, the Qur'an is the speech of God the Supreme, and it contains no addition. These verses then become the most solid transmitted reason for the proof. One of the key subjects that can be understood from the verses of the Qur'an is that this book has been guaranteed protection from God, unlike other Divine books, whose protection is in the hands of the people.

This is mentioned in the following Qur'anic verse: "Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it" (al-Hijr:9) This glorious verse contains two phrases, the first (Indeed We have sent down the Reminder) emphasizes that the Noble Qur'an has been revealed from God the Supreme, without any form of intervention. The second phrase (We will preserve it) also emphasizes upon the constant protection of the Noble Qur'an from any form of alteration.

While concluding, it is necessary to explain that the meaning of the immunity of the Qur'an from alteration does not mean that every copy of the Qur'an that is found in the market is protected and is perfect. What is meant by immunity is that those who are in search of the truth will be able to have access to all the revealed verses.

Therefore imperfections or differences in pronunciation or mistakes in some copies of the Qur'an and even in the arrangement of the verses do not contradict the reality of the immunity of the Qur'an from alteration.

Questions

1. Provide the grounds for explaining the issue of the immunity of the Qur'an from alteration.

2. What is the historical evidence for the immunity of the Qur'an?
3. How can the immunity of the Qur'an from alteration be proved?
4. Provide the proof that the Qur'an contains no addition.
5. How can the lack of deletion in the Qur'an be established?
6. Can the same abovementioned argument be used to reject any addition to the Qur'an? Why?
7. Explain whether the difference in pronunciation or the arrangement of the verses or chapters in the Qur'an contradicts the reality of immunity.

LESSON THIRTY-FOUR: ISLAM IS UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL

Introduction

So far it has been clearly understood that the belief in all prophets and acceptance of their message is a necessity and the rejection of a Prophet or of a message from a Prophet is paramount to rejecting the Divine legislative lordship.

On this basis, once the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam (s) has been proven, it is necessary to believe in him and in the revelation he brought, and to accept the messages and rules delivered by him, from God the Supreme.

However the belief in all prophets (a) and their books does not imply that one has to comply with all their sacred laws. Although we may believe in the previous prophets and their messages, this does not obligate the implementation of all their laws.

It is the responsibility of every nation to follow and apply the laws ordained to them by the Prophet of their time. Hence the application of the sacred law of Islam for all of men would only be established when the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam (s) was not particularised to the Arabs. In addition to this, it is necessary the no Prophet appears after the Prophet of Islam (s) who could bring abrogating laws. In other words Islam has to be universal and eternal.

It is here necessary to discuss as to whether the Prophet of Islam (s) was particularly assigned to the Arabs and for a limited time, or whether he is indeed a universal Prophet for all time.

It is quite clear that this issue cannot be investigated by pure intellect ('aql), however one has to consider the techniques used for the establishment of history and narration sciences (al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah), meaning that one must refer to documents, facts and evidence. Moreover one who has arrived with certainty upon the legitimacy of the Noble Qur'an and the infallibility of the Prophet of Islam (s) will without doubt find the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (s) the most reliable source.

1. The universality of Islam

The universality of the religion of Islam is the most essential element of this Divine religion. Even those who do not believe in Islam are aware that the faith is perpetual and not limited to any geographical location or race.

In addition to this we have numerous historical documents and proofs, that the Noble Prophet (s) had dispatched several letters to Persian, Byzantine, Roman, Egyptian, and Abyssinian rulers as well as to several other tribal leaders, in order to invite them towards the Divine religion. However if Islam was not universal and there were no universal invitations dispatched by the Prophet of Islam (s), then there would have been an excuse for other nations to reject Islam.

On this basis one cannot believe in the legitimacy of Islam without associating it with the application of its Divine sacred law. Therefore nobody is exempted from this belief.

a. Qura'nic proofs for the universality of Islam

As indicated earlier, the best proof and the most reliable argument for the establishment of such issues is through the Noble Qur'an, its righteousness and creditability has been proven in the previous lessons. Furthermore if someone reflects upon the verses of this Divine Book of God, he would certainly realise that the invitation to embrace Islam is universal and not specialised towards a specific race or language.

Throughout the Qur'an mankind has been addressed as: O people, or as: O children of Adam (refer to al-Baqarah:21, al-Nisā':1,174, Fātir:15), and has referred to the guidance of all human beings (nās and 'ālamīn). The Qur'an also indicates the universality of the Prophet of Islam (saws) for all men and invites all who are aware of him to follow his way. From another standpoint, the followers of other religions are regarded and addressed as the People of the Book, and the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam is also proven to them. Moreover the purpose of the dissension of the Noble Qur'an upon the Prophet is considered as the victory and mastery of Islam upon other religions (refer to al-Saff: 9, al-Fath:28, al-Tawbah:33).

By focusing upon these verses there should be no ground left to harbour spurious doubts concerning the universality of Islam.

The Eternity of Islam

The mentioned verses through the utilisation of common phrases establish the universality of Islam. Similarly through being unconditional regarding time it denies the limitation of Islam to a certain period, and in particular remarks:" "It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth that He may make it prevail over all religions" (al-Saff:9. see also al-Fath:28 and al- Tawbah:33).

In the following Qura'nic verse, one can establish the authenticity and reliability of the Qur'an:

"Indeed it is an august Book: falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it, a [gradually] sent down [revelation] from One all-wise, all- laudable" (Fussilat: 41-42).

Furthermore it proves the seal of prophecy upon the Prophet of Islam (which will be discussed independently in our future lessons), and nullifies any possibility of the abrogation of Islam through any other Prophet or sacred law. We find several traditions in agreement with this subject:

"Things made lawful by Mohammed are lawful until the Day of Judgement, and things prohibited by Mohammed are prohibited until the Day of Judgment." (Al-KāfīVol.1 p. 57) In addition to this, the eternity of Islam is similar to the universality of Islam.

Theologically both are considered axioms of faith teaching, and therefore we do not need an extra argument apart from the arguments which prove the authenticity of Islam.

The resolution of certain doubts

The enemies of Islam in order to create hurdles for the spread of this Divine religion have come up with the idea that Islam is particular to the Arabs, and that it is not universal, however such claims fail to have the slightest effect upon this universal and Divine religion.

They are under the pretext that the responsibility of the Noble Prophet of Islam was towards only his kin, clan and for those who live in Mecca and its neighborhood.

Furthermore verse 69 of chapter 5, al-Māi'dah, in the Holy Qur'an, after characterising the Jews, Christians and the people of the Sabbath, regards righteous acts as the criterion for felicity and not the acceptance of Islam. In addition to this, the practical laws (fiqh) of Islam recognise the People of the Book as compared to the idol worshippers (polytheists). The People of the Book whilst paying an exemption tax come under the protection of the Islamic state and may practice unhindered, their sacred laws; therefore this in itself is a sign of officially acknowledging their religion.

In response it must be stated that those verses, which mention the kin and clan of the Noble Prophet, or which mention the people of Mecca and its surrounds, are the verses, which were revealed at the advent of Islam. At that time the call towards the truth initiated with the family of the Prophet and then extended to the people of Mecca and around Mecca, eventually encompassed the entire world. Moreover these verses cannot be regarded as the determining factor for nullifying the universality of Islam. This is because the formulation and tone of these verses -proving the universality of Islam- are in a way that must remain unconditional, and if there would be exemptions from these verses, it would contradict the commonsensical methods of conversation used by rational human beings.

However the mentioned verse (al-Māi'dah:69) explains that the sole acceptance of any religion is not sufficient for attaining felicity, and that the engendering factor for reaching eternal bliss is the application of religious responsibility, which is the implementation of righteous acts. Moreover God the Supreme assigns these righteous acts, and as we have already proven the universality of Islam then the responsibility of all men after the advent of Islam would be the application of those responsibilities, which are prescribed by this universal faith.

The recognition and preference given by Islam to the People of the Book compared to other polytheistic religions does not mean that Islam has excused them from accepting Islam. However in reality the leniency provided is for the sake of the partial truth, which they believe in and this leniency is only temporary according to Shi'ite theology. By the time Imam Mahdi (a) appears (May Allah hasten his return) the final decree with regards to the People of the Book will have been declared and they will be treated just like the polytheists. This is concluded from verses such as:

"It is He who sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth that He may make it prevail over all religions" (al-Tawbah:33, see also al-Fath:28 and al-Saff:9).

Questions

- 1- Why should all men apply the sacred laws of Islam?
- 2- What are the Qura'nic proofs for the universality and eternity of Islam?
- 3- Provide other reasons for the universality and eternity of Islam.

4- Explain those verses, which indicate that the Noble Prophet was universally appointed, and not sent exclusively for the guidance of his kin, clan, inhabitants of Mecca and its neighbourhood.

5- Explain verse 69 of chapter 5, al-Māi'dah!

6- Explain the reason behind the leniency towards the People of the Book, but also how this does not excuse them from accepting the universal faith.

LESSON THIRY-FIVE: THE SEAL OF PROPHECY

Introduction

By focusing upon the universality of the religion of Islam, the contingency of the abrogation of Islamic law through the nomination of a new Prophet is denied.

However a dilemma still remains, that a Prophet might come for the application and propagation of Islam, since many of the prophets before had such responsibilities. As with the Prophet Lot (a) who was concurrent to the Prophet Abraham (a), and followed and implemented the same Divine law as he did, which was similar to that of the prophets of the children of Israel (banī Israel). It is for this reason that the topic of the seal of the prophecy of the Prophet of Islam (s) must be discussed separately.

1. a. The Qur'anic proofs for the seal of prophecy

One of the necessities of the religion of Islam is to believe in the Prophet of Islam being the seal of the prophets, and that after him no Prophet has appeared or will appear on the face of the earth. Those who are not of the Islamic creed also confirm this fact. This matter does not need any proof or argument for its establishment; however it can be verified through the Noble Qur'an and through the widely transmitted traditions (mutawātir).

The Qur'an has mentioned: "Mohammed is not the father of any of your men, but he is the apostle of Allah and the last prophet; and Allah is cognizant of all things." (al- Ahzāb) This use of this verse for proving that the Prophet of Islam is the seal of all prophets (as) has been criticised by some Islamic antagonists:

One such criticism is that the word seal (khātam) also carries the meaning of a 'ring', and that perhaps in the mentioned verse the latter meaning is implied.

The second criticism assumes the meaning of the word 'seal', but that the line of prophets alone is terminated and not that of apostles or messengers.

The answer to the first question raised is that the 'seal' is the instrument through which a thing is concluded, hence due to this, a 'ring' is also given this name because through a ring, letters and documents were stamped and concluded.

The answer to the second criticism raised is that every messenger that has the position of apostle has the station of prophethood aswell. Therefore the termination of the chain of prophets concurrently terminates the chain of messengers. This has been indicated earlier in lesson twenty-one, and that the concept of prophet is more universal than that of messenger.

b. The traditional proofs for the seal of prophecy

The subject concerning the Prophet of Islam being the seal of the prophets has been well established in the traditional texts. The most famous and widely accepted tradition narrated by the Prophet is known as the tradition of manzilat and leaves no doubt upon this issue. This famous and

widely accepted tradition by both the schools of Shi'ites and Sunnites is as follows:

When the Prophet of Islam began his journey from Medina for the battle of Tabūk, he left Imam Ali (a), the commander of the faithful, behind in his place in order to attend to the affairs concerning the Muslims. This saddened Imam Ali as it meant that he would be unable to accumulate the blessings of attending a holy war. Tears appeared in the eyes of the commander of faithful and the Prophet then addressed him:

“Don’t you want to be like Aaron, as he was for Moses as you are to me?” Without any delay the Prophet of Islam continued:

“But with this difference that there will be no Prophet after me.” In another tradition, it has been narrated that:

“O people! There is no Prophet after me and there is no nation after you.” Another tradition states in this regard:

“O people! There will be no Prophet after me and no Sunna after my Sunna.” Similarly in the sermons of the Nahj al- Balaghah (‘the peak of eloquence’), in several supplications of the infallible Imams, this matter has been clearly clarified.

2. The secret behind the seal of prophecy

As indicated earlier, the wisdom behind dispatching numerous prophets consecutively is that the propagation of the Divine word in the previous eras for all the various lands through one individual was not possible or influential. From another standpoint the complicated sociological issues and appearance of new sociological phenomena, as well as changes in the law or establishment of new rules, required several prophets.

Furthermore the alterations and corruption of the scriptures throughout the course of time, through the hands of tyrants and ignorant men necessitated rectification of the Divine word and hence prophets were sent consecutively.

Therefore, when the conditions are reached whereby the propagation of the Divine word is influential through one Prophet and his successors, and the rules and the laws are applicable for the present and future and safeguarded from alteration, there is no need for the nomination of a new Prophet.

However the regular sciences lack the ability to be able to discern such conditions, but God the Supreme with all His infinite knowledge, knows best the time for the realisation of these conditions and it is He who declares the seal of prophecy as He has in His final Word.

The sealing of the chain of prophecy does not mean that the bond between man and God or the door of guidance is terminated. Nevertheless whenever God the Supreme feels the need and it is proper, He can bestow knowledge and guidance upon his chosen people. However this bestowal is not in the form of prophetic revelation but this esoteric knowledge has been given to the infallible leaders, according to Shi’ite belief, and God willing in the coming lessons this will be investigated thoroughly.

3. The answer to a spurious doubt

From the above discussion it has become clear that the reason or the secret behind the seal of prophecy is that:

1. The Prophet of Islam with the help of his successors and helpers can spread his message all across the world.
2. The final word of God sent through the Prophet of Islam is preserved and is faultless from any form of alteration.
3. The law of Islam is applicable and answerable to men of all time until the cessation of this universe.

However it is possible that some might raise a spurious doubt with regards to the latter issue. In the previous era the complication of sociological issues required the disposition of a new law through a new Prophet, and after the demise of the Prophet of Islam new and more complicated sociological phenomena have appeared which surely require new laws.

In order to answer this question one must point out, as has been indicated earlier, that the disposition of a new law due to the sociological developments cannot be determined through the guidance of man's limited knowledge, because we are unaware of the wisdom and reasons behind the present perpetual law. However we conclude from the arguments established upon the universality of Islam and also from the chain of prophecy being sealed by the Prophet of Islam that there is no need or requirement for a new law.

We do not deny the appearance of new sociological issues, which require new rules and regulations, however in Islamic law these issues have been foresighted, and those who have the authority and are qualified have the right to extract new and applicable rules for the society within the required boundaries. The details of this science can be studied and discussed in detail in the science of jurisprudence and in the wil of Islamic leadership (The Infallible Imam or wali al- faqīh).

Questions

1. Is there a need for discussing the seal of prophecy after proving the universality and perpetuity of Islam?
2. How can the seal of prophecy be proven through the Qur'an and the traditions?
3. What is the criticism raised against the Qur'anic verse which proves the seal of prophecy?
4. Provide three traditions, which prove the seal of prophecy.
5. Why was the nomination of prophets terminated with the Prophet of Islam ?
6. Does the seal of prophecy necessitate the termination of guidance? Why?
7. Do the present sociological changes require new laws?
8. How can the present social issues be resolved if the Divine law is unchangeable?

LESSON THIRTY-SIX: IMĀMAH

Introduction

The Prophet of Islam (s) after his migration to Medina established an Islamic state.

The mosque of the Prophet apart from being a place of worship, teaching and training was a haven for the migrants and deprived. It was from this very Mosque that the Prophet contributed in helping towards solving the economical problems of the poor, and from where he managed the governmental and judicial affairs, and from where he determined the strategy of war. Collectively speaking the Prophet of Islam administered the earthly (worldly) and heavenly issues of the people, and the Muslims in return understood that they must remain loyal to the commands of the Noble Prophet.

God the Supreme has made it obligatory for men to be absolutely obedient towards the Prophet, and especially in the political, judicial, and military affairs, God has revealed and emphasized upon the commands for executing the Prophet's will.

The Prophet of Islam apart from being an apostle, Prophet, teacher of Islam and its rulings, was also nominated by God to rule over the Islamic society. This role subsequently involved him being the military commander, and the head of judiciary ...etc. In the same manner as Islam, which is comprised of issues relating to politics, economics and rights other than just encompassing moral and worship, the Prophet was also obliged to act as an executor for issues that encompassed all religious and governmental aspects.

As Islam is a path, which encompasses all spheres of life, apart from just the moral and religious aspect, the Prophet too was appointed to be an executor and guide concerning all these different spheres and issues related to them.

It is obvious that a religion that claims to be complete and to be sufficient for all time would provide clear instructions pertaining to leadership. It is not possible for a society that is based upon such a religion to be vacant of governmental and political privileges.

The question arises as to who shall be the one to fulfill such a position after the Prophet's demise? Is Divine appointment only for the case of the prophets or can it be extended to others who succeed them? Is the selection of the Imam left to the discretion of the people, or is it a matter ordained by God the Supreme, as with the case of the prophets. Do the people have that right to elect their own Imam?

These are the very points of departure between the school of the Shi'ites and Sunnites.

The Shi'ites believe that the Imam is nominated by the Divine, as with the case of Imam Ali (a), who was appointed by God through the Holy Prophet, and then the other eleven infallible Imams were chosen likewise in turn.

However the Sunnites believe that Divine appointment refers only to prophethood and apostleship, and hence it terminated with the death of the Prophet. This implies that the determination of the leader is in the hands of

the people. Furthermore they are of the opinion that even if an autocrat through his barbarity and atrocity becomes the leader, it is still incumbent on them to obey him. It is self-evident that this view will support and provide the grounds for the autocrats and tyrants to dispel and worsen the condition of the Muslims.

In reality the Sunnite school, by accepting the nomination of Imāmah through people and not through the Divine, have established the initial foundations of the segregation of religion with politics. This representation of segregation is the very reason of deviation from the true teaching and course of Islam, in all affairs and dimensions.

Furthermore it is the essential source of many diversions that took place - and will take place - after the demise of the Prophet.

Likewise, it is necessary that a Muslim must seriously investigate this issue independently without any bias and thereupon recognise the true faith and support it with all his being.

However, it is apparent that one must realise the overall benefit of Islam and must avoid creating grounds for the enemies of Islam to utilise and take advantage from these differences. One must not provide a reason that will cause a split between Muslims in front of the infidels, which will result in the disintegration of the Islamic nations and weaken the Muslims of the world. On the other hand, the maintenance of unity must not become a hurdle for research in order for the realisation of the true path, and it must also not deprive the conditions from investigating the issue of Imāmah, which will have an enormous effect upon the destiny of Muslims.

1. The Concept of Imāmah

Imāmah, lexically speaking means leadership and whoever becomes the leader of a group, is known as the Imam, whether he leads his group towards the truth or towards the falsehood, as the Noble Qur'an in al-Tawbah:12 has utilized the phrase 'Imams of the infidels' (ai'mmat al-kufr) for the leaders of the disbelievers. Furthermore the person who leads the congregational prayers is also known as the congregational Imam (Imam al-jamā'ah).

However in the terminology of theology, the Imam means the universal administrator over an Islamic state or society, and he administers all the issues relating to this world and the next world. The reason for mentioning the issues relating to this world is to emphasise upon the extension of Imāmah and its perimeters, as in an Islamic society, an issue relating to this world is part of religion.

The standpoint of a Shi'ites with regards to the legitimacy of this administration is due to the fact that it is by Divine appointment coupled with the fact that the person who occupies this station is free from sin and fault. In Islamic sciences such a person is termed as infallible. In reality an infallible Imam will have all the specifications that the Noble Prophet had, except the station of prophethood and messengership.

Therefore his words will be considered as an authority in the field of law and order, and his commands in the different governmental issues will be determined as obligatory.

Thus one can chart out three fundamental differences between the Shi'ites and Sunnites regarding the issue of Imāmah:

1. The Imam must be nominated by God the Supreme.
2. He must possess Divinely given knowledge and be free from faults.
3. He must be infallible.

However being infallible is not equivalent to being an Imam, as according to Shi'ite belief Fatima Zahra' (a) was also infallible, yet she did not hold the position of Imam.

Likewise Mary (a) and may be several other saints of God, held this station.

Questions

- 1- What other positions did the Prophet of Islam hold apart from Prophet and Messenger?
- 2- What is the essential point of departure between a Shi'ite and Sunnite?
- 3- What were the consequences of accepting leadership without Divine nomination?
- 4- Give the lexical meaning of the term Imāmah?
- 5- Explain the fundamental issues of Imāmah.

LESSON THIRY-SEVEN: THE NEED FOR AN IMAM

Introduction

Many of those who fail to contemplate or profoundly reflect upon the issues pertaining to belief, understand that the only difference in view between a Shi'ite and Sunni on the issue of Imāmah, is that the Shi'ite believe in the appointment of Ali ibn Abu Talib (a) as successor to the Prophet (s) in issues dealing with the Islamic state and society.

However the Sunnites deny this appointment and believe the decision of appointment was to be left up to the people. They thus selected the first successor who in turn nominated the second, and the latter then appointed a six-man counsel to establish the third successor. The people then again elected the fourth Caliph themselves.

Hence it can be seen that no specific procedure was followed for the nomination of successor. After the demise of the fourth Caliph, this coveted position was gained by whoever was in possession of the strongest military force.

The Shi'ites and Sunnites hold the same idea with regards to the selection of an Imam, the Sunnites also believe in the idea of nomination, as the first Caliph nominated the second. But the difference is that they disregarded the Prophet's order concerning the appointment of Ali (a), yet accepted the first Caliph's nomination of his successor.

They fail to contemplate the questions, which arise as to who gave the first Caliph the right to appoint his successor? And why would the Prophet overlook the appointment of a successor and guardian to his community, whilst we know that whenever he left Medina for Holy war, he would always leave someone in charge, as he was aware of the trouble and conspiracies that could arise.

We need to examine as to whether the issue of Imāmah needs to be by Divine appointment, whether it carries any religious status or whether it is just a form of monarchy, which has developed due to sociological factors.

The Shi'ites believe that in the case of Imāmah, the Prophet of Islam does not have an independent say, and the nomination of an Imam is directly from God through His Prophet. In reality there is wisdom behind the termination of the chain of prophethood with the nomination of an Infallible Imam, and there is a relationship between these two issues. It is because of the presence of an Imam -after the demise of the Prophet - that an Islamic nation is secured and safeguarded.

Therefore from here it becomes clear as to why Imāmah is considered as a 'principle of belief,' and not just as a branch of practical law (hukm fiqhi). Moreover for the Shi'ites the three conditions of Knowledge, Infallibility and Divine nomination are regarded as the essential elements for an Imam.

The necessity of the existence of an Imam

As previously discussed in lesson twenty-two, the accomplishment of the purpose of creation is based upon the guidance provided by God through revelation. The requirement of Divine wisdom was the nomination of

different prophets in order to enlighten man with the way of felicity for this world and the Hereafter. In addition to this the prophets trained man to reach the ultimate level of perfection, as well as administering the society if the sociological conditions permitted.

Similarly, in lesson thirty-four and thirty-five we have explained that the religion of Islam is universal, eternal and cannot be abrogated. Besides, the Prophet of Islam is considered as the last Prophet and this is harmonious with Divine wisdom, as the system of Islamic Law (sharī'ah) fulfils all the needs of man and society for all time.

God, the Supreme, establishes this guaranty in regards to the noble, Quran. The Quran has been referred as being protected from any type of alteration and distortions.

However, all of ahkam (the rules) and regulations cannot be understood by the appearance of the ayahs (verses) such as the number of rak'ahs and the manner of performance of a salah or the obligations and recommendation that it includes cannot be rationalized from the outward of the Quran. The Quran is in a position of epitomizing the hukm and it is the responsibility of the prophet to explain the hukm on the bases of the knowledge provided by God, which is other than the Quranic revelations. Hence by this approach the authenticity of the Sunna as a fundamental source for the cognition of Islam is established.

Nevertheless the difficult conditions during the life of the prophet - such as the confined years in the valley of Abi Talib or ten years of wars with the enemies of Islam - did not allow him for the explanation of all of rules for all men. That which remains with the companions even have lots of differences for instance the manner of performing the wudhu (minor ablution), which was an act carried out by the prophet every day and several times is also subjected with differences. When this act of performing wudhu which does not seem to have any reason for its alteration have been altered by the conspirators then for sure major alteration must have taken place in the ahkam (rules) that belongs to law and order in order to benefit desires of different groups.

By focusing upon these points it becomes clear that the religion of Islam will be known as a perfect religion - which attends to the all needs of man - if it provides the society with the essential benefits which are not consign and endangered after the demise of the prophet. However this is only possible with the nomination of an individual who deserve the position of being a successor to the prophet. This successor must possess the divine knowledge and have the ability to manifest the reality of deen in different dimensions and he must be unsinching (ma'sum) in order not to be under the influence of his nafs and shaitan so that there be no alteration in the deen. Furthermore he must play the role of the prophet in training individuals to arrive upon perfection and at the same time he should establish a government if the sociological conditions provides the grounds for it. Then by applying the sociological ahkam of Islam in the society he should expand the realm of 'adl (justice) in the world.

Hence the termination of the chain of nabuwah is only harmonious with the Divine hikmah when it is concurrent with the nomination of an Imam al

ma'sum who have all the particularities that the prophet of Islam had except the nabuwah and risalah.

In this manner (three things are established), the necessity for an existence of an Imam and the requirement of the divine knowledge and sinlessness ('ismah). In addition to this the nomination of an Imam through God, the Supreme is also established as it He who knows to whom He should give this status to. In actuality it is God who has the right of wilayah (authority) over His creation and hence He can decide whom to give this position on a lower level.

It is necessary that we mention that the ahl Sunna jammah does not have these conditions and particularities for any of the khilafah and they do not even claim that God and the prophet nominate the caliphs or they (caliphs) possess any divine knowledge. On the other hand the ahl Sunna jammah have recorded numerous precarious incidents in which their caliphs have made mistakes in answering to the religious questions such as they themselves quote their first khalifah saying:

"Certainly I have not defeated my shaitan." Then from their second caliph they have reported that he called the allegiance to the first caliph as an absurd and uncalculated act and several times he has declared that:

"If it was not for Ali, Omar would have been destroyed." It is clearer in the case of the khulafah al bany ummayyah and abbasy and it does not require that we indicate more, whosoever has a little information about the Islamic history they can understand in this regard.

Shi'ites are the exclusive ones who belief that the twelve Imams enjoy those three conditions of Imamah and by focusing upon the mentioned reasons the need and necessity of Imamah has been established. Hence there seem to be no need for any other elucidative arguments for this issue, however in the future lessons we have brought useful proofs from the kitab and the Sunna.

Questions

1. Mention the Shi'ite opinion regarding Imāmah, and explain the differences between the Sunnite and Shi'ite views?
2. Why does the Shi'ites consider Imāmah as one of the basic principles of Islamic belief?
3. Why is the existence of an Imam necessary?
4. What can man conclude from these arguments?

LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT: THE APPOINTMENT OF AN IMAM

The appointment of an Imam

In the previous lesson we have explained that the termination of the chain of prophecy without the nomination of an Imam is against Divine wisdom. In order for the religion of Islam to be perfect, universal and eternal it requires a successor - who possesses all the qualities and realities of the Prophet, (except the station of prophethood and messengership) - after his demise (the Prophet).

This can be extracted from the noble verses of the Qur'an and from the many traditions, which are applied and utilised by both Sunnites and Shi'ites:

“Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessings upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion”. (al-Māi'dah:

3) The understanding with regards to the above verse is common between the Sunnites and Shi'ites. This verse was revealed at the period when the Prophet was returning from his last pilgrimage (hajj - known as hajj al-wadā'). This happened to be just a few months before the demise of the Prophet. After indicating the hopelessness of the infidels (kuffār) in damaging Islam, it emphasizes on the fact that ‘today your religion has been perfected and all the bounties upon you have been completed’. In addition, by focusing upon many traditions with regards to the reason of this verse, it becomes very clear that the perfection and completion of bounties together with the hopelessness of the infidels in hurting Islam is due to the very nomination of the successor of the Prophet through God the Supreme and the Prophet. The infidels were waiting for the death of the Prophet, with the understanding that he was not leaving behind any son and thus assuming that Islam would be left without a custodian, causing it to weaken and deteriorate. However through the appointment of the successor the religion became perfect and God completed His favour upon the Muslims and hence, the assumption of the infidels was shattered.

When the Prophet of Islam returned from the last pilgrimage, he assembled all of the pilgrims at a place called Ghadīr Khumm, where he proceeded to deliver a detailed sermon. In his sermon he asks the people:

“Do I have an authority (wilāyah) over you from God?” The response from the people was positive, he raised the hand of Ali (a) and said:

“Whosoever I am the master of, then Ali is his master.” In this fashion the Prophet declared that the Divine authority belonged to Ali (a). Consequently each and every individual paid their allegiance to Imam Ali and the second caliph 'Umar paid allegiance in a congratulating manner:

“Congratulations, congratulations oh Ali you are the master of mine and of all the believers.” It was on this very day, that this noble verse, “This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my Favour upon you”, was revealed. Then the people present at Ghadīr shouted, ‘God is great’ (Allahu Akhbar) and said:

“The prophethood has been completed and the religion of Allah is perfected and Ali is the authority after you.” In some traditions of the famous Sunnite authorities - such as Humweyni - it has been mentioned that Abu Bakr and ‘Umar told Jaber to ask the Prophet (s) as to whether this authority applied only to Ali (a). The Prophet (s) replied that the authority was indeed only for Ali (a) and his successors until the Day of Judgement. When questioned as to whom the successors of the Prophet were, he (the Prophet) answered:

“Ali is my brother, minister, inheritor, successor, and the caliph of this nation and he is the master for all the believers after me, and then al Hassan and my son al Husayn, and then nine from the descendents of my son al Husayn, one after the other. The Qur’an is with them and they are with the Qur’an, there is no separation between them and they will be no separation till they meet me at the Pond.” On the bases of the traditions relating to this issue of nomination, we understand that the Prophet had been ordered to announce the Imāmah of Ali. However, the Prophet feared that the people might suspect that such a nomination was made on a personal whim, and that it would not be accepted. On the other hand he was waiting for an opportunity to present this idea, until the verse it-self arrived:

“O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people.” (al-Māi’dah:67) This revelation, which seems to be the most important of all and its concealment would nullify the entire message, revealed that the Prophet would be protected after its deliverance. After the arrival of this verse the Noble Prophet understood that he should hasten with this responsibility and deliver this message as soon as the opportunity arose, and hence the afore mentioned event took place at Ghadīr Khum.

The aim of this event was to officially announce the successor of the Prophet and gain public allegiance. However through the course of time the succession of Ali had been mentioned on various occasions:

At the beginning of the advent of Islam, when the Prophet was ordered to proclaim his message publicly, he was first told to warn those nearest to him. He invited his family members to a meeting and said that the first to accept his message would be his successor. All Muslims agree that Ali was the first to accept Islam.

Likewise, when the following verse was revealed, the obedience to those with authority (ūlī-l-amr) had been made absolutely obligatory and the obedience of those with the authority is regarded to be at the same level as obedience to the Prophet (s):

“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.” (al-Nisā’:59) Jaber ibn Abdullah al-Ansari asked the Prophet about those with authority, who replied:

“The First of them is Ali ibn Abi Talib, then al Hassan, then al Husayn ibn Ali, then Ali ibn al Husayn, then Mohammed ibn Ali, known as Baqir in the Torah -You will see him O Jaber, so give my Salams to him - then Jafer al Sadiq ibn Mohammed, then Musa ibn Jafer, then Ali ibn Musa, then Mohammed ibn Ali, then Ali ibn Mohammed, then Hassan ibn Ali, and then

the one whose title is Hujjat Allah (Evidence of God) upon this earth....” The prophesy of the Prophet came true, Jaber was alive till the period of Imam al Baqir (a) and he delivered the Prophet’s salutations to the fifth successor.

In another tradition Abu Basir narrates with reference to the verse of authority, from Imam al Sadiq (a), that this verse was revealed in the honour of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hasan and Husayn (a). Abu Basir asked the Imam how to answer people who argued as to why Ali (a) and the Prophet’s household were not mentioned in the Qur’an by name. Imam Sadiq (a) told him to:

“Tell them that, the verses revealed with reference to the prayers, did not mention any names for the three and four rak’ah prayers, this was indeed relayed to the people by the Prophet”. Likewise the Prophet explained the verses of alms (zakāh) and pilgrimage (hajj), and therefore he must also interpret the verse of authority. The Prophet declared, “Of whomever I am the master, Ali is his master after me”. He also advised the people to follow the Book of God and his Household and asked God not to separate them until they meet at the Pond. This is again mentioned in the famous Hadith Al-Thaqalayn, where the Prophet told the Muslims how he was leaving behind him two weighty things; the Book and his Household, who would never separate until they met him at the Pond. He is also reported to have said:

“Do not teach them as they are wiser than you all and they will never lead you astray”. In another famous tradition he mentioned that:

My Household is like Noah’s ark, whoever boards it has saved themselves, and whoever does not has gone astray.” There are numerous traditions, which support the aforementioned claims, but we do not have the space to mention them here.

Questions

1. Which verse refers to the appointment of Imāmah?
2. Explain the event, which took place for the nomination of Ali (a).
3. Why did the Prophet delay in announcing the appointment of Ali (a) and how did he finally deliver the message?
4. Which traditions provide proof for Imāmah?
5. Provide some traditions that prove the Imāmah of the Prophet’s Household.

LESSON THIRTY-NINE: THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE IMAM

Introduction

In lesson thirty-six we have discussed the differences between the Shi'ite and Sunnite schools of thought with regards to the subject of Imāmah. This difference seems to have three specific issues, the Imam for the Shi'ites, must be nominated by God the Supreme, be infallible and possess Divine knowledge. In lesson thirty-seven these three issues were intellectually proven and in lesson thirty-eight we have provided traditional proofs for the divine nomination of the Imams. However, now we will explain the infallibility of, and the Divine knowledge held by the Imams.

The infallibility of the Imam

Having established Imāmah as being a Divine institution, and the appointment for this position of Ali (a) and his progeny by God the Supreme, their infallible nature can be established by the following verse:

“He said, ‘My pledge does not extend to the unjust.’” (al-Baqarah:124)
The Divine nomination applies to those who are free from corruption and sin.

Furthermore the verse known as the verse of ‘those in authority’, charts-out the absolute obedience due to them and regards the level of obedience to them as being on the same level as obedience to the Prophet (s) and God the Supreme. Therefore the command of obedience towards those in authority must indicate their infallibility.

In the same manner, the infallibility of the Prophet’s Household can be proven through the verse known as the verse of ‘purification’ (āyat al-tathīr):

“Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O people of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.” (al-Ahzāb:33) It is necessary to mention that we have more than seventy traditions from the Sunnite school, confirming that this particular verse was revealed in honor of the ‘five immaculate ones’ (al-khamsa ashāb al-kisā’). Sheikh Saduq narrates from Imam Ali that the Prophet of God said:

“O Ali! This verse has been revealed for you, Hassan, Hussain, and the Imams who will come from your progeny.” I asked him:

“How many Imams will be there after you?” He said:

“You! O Ali and after you Hassan, and after him Hussain, and after him his son Ali, then his son Mohammed, then Ja’far, then Musa, then Ali, then Mohammed, then Ali, then Hassan, then his son the proof of God”.

After this he added:

“This is how their names have been written upon the Divine Throne and I asked God the Supreme whose are these names? He said “O Mohammed they are the Imams after you and they have been purified from sin and their enemies have been cursed by Me.” Likewise in the tradition of the two weighty things (thaqalayn), the Prophet had regarded his Household as carrying the same weight as that of the Holy Qur’an, and has emphasized on

the fact that they will never separate. This in itself is a proof for the infallibility of the Prophet's Household.

The Knowledge of the Imam

It is without doubt that the Household of the Prophet were more acquainted with the knowledge of the Prophet than other men were. The Prophet himself has said:

“Do not teach them as they are more knowledgeable than you.” Imam Ali was with the Prophet's from the very young age and was brought up in his house and he remained with the Prophet until the last minute of his (the Prophet's) life, thus culminating and absorbing knowledge directly from him. Hence the Prophet said:

“I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate,” and Imam Ali is quoted as saying “The Prophet of God taught me a thousand doors of knowledge, each one opening a thousand other doors (for every door he taught) and I learnt everything...” However the knowledge of the Imams was not limited to that taught by the Prophet.

They were also bestowed with Divine knowledge and taught the secret sciences in an intuitive manner. These particular methods of instruction have been mentioned in the Qur'an as with the cases of Khizr (a), Dhul Qarnayn, Mary (a) and the mother of the Prophet Moses (a). It has been defined as revelation but different to the kind of revelation received by the prophets. The infallible ones, even from a very young age were bestowed with knowledge of these sciences and were needless of any form of education from others, and were qualified to be Imams, even in their childhood.

This issue can be understood from many traditions of the Imams, and whilst focusing upon their infallibility the authenticity of those traditions can be established. However before mentioning any examples, we would first like to refer to a verse in the Noble Qur'an, which regards the importance of an individual or individuals who have 'knowledge of the book': "Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book'". (al-Ra'd:43) There is no doubt in the understanding of the greatness of the station of those who have the knowledge of the book, as it is a clear and certain fact that their testimony is parallel to that of God the Supreme. It has been referred to in another Qur'anic verse, and it is stated that Imam Ali is to be counted after the Prophet: "Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own [family] follows?" (Hud:17). The word "from him" indicates that this witness is actually one of the Prophet's relatives and a member of his household. There are dozens of narrations from both the Sunnite and Shi'ite sources stating that this witness is Ali bin Abi Talib. Some of these narrations are as follows: Ibn Al-Maghazeli Al-Shafi'i narrated from Abdullah ibn 'Ata, that: I was sitting with Abi Ja'afar (Imam Baqir) when Abdullah ibn Salam passed by us (Abdullah was one of the people of the book who converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet), I said: Is this man the son of he who was described as possessing the knowledge of the book?

He said: No, it is your friend Ali bin Abi Taleb, about whom many Qur'anic verses were revealed, such as: "and he who possesses the knowledge of the book"(al-Ra'd:43.) "Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own [family] follows?"(Hūd: 17). "Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful" (al-Māi'dah :55) There are also many narrations from both schools of thought (Shi'ite and Sunnite), which state that the use of the word "Shāhid" in the Qur'anic chapter Hūd, verse 17, actually refers to Imam Ali (as). When we reflect upon the word used "from him", we realise that it can only refer to him.

We can understand the importance of possessing the knowledge of the Book when we read the story of Solomon and the summoning of the throne of Bilquis. The Qur'an has mentioned: "The one who had knowledge of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye'" (al-Naml:40) From this Qur'anic verse one is able to recognise that if this miraculous effect can be achieved through possessing partial knowledge of the Book, then how great is the power of those whom possess complete knowledge. Imam Sadiq (a) has referred to this fact in another narration:

"I, Abu Basir, Yahya Al- Bazzaz and Dawud ibn Kathir were in the reception room - 'majlis', of Abu Abdullah (a), when he came out to us in a state of anger. He took his place and said: "How strange it is that some groups claim that we know the unseen.

No-one knows the unseen but Allah; to whom belong Might and Majesty. I had intended to bear my female slave, but she fled from me and I did not know in which room of the house she was." Sadir said: "But when he stood up from the 'majlis' and went into his private quarters, I, Abu Basir and Maysar went in and said to him: 'May we be made your ransom, we heard you say this and that about the matter of your female slave, and we know that you have a very broad and extensive knowledge, but we do not attribute knowledge of the unseen to you.'" He said: 'Have you found in what you have read of the Book of Allah, to Whom belong Might and Majesty: Said he who possessed knowledge from the Book: "I will bring it to thee, before ever thy glance returns to thee (al-Naml:40)?"' He said: "I said: 'May I be made your ransom, I have read it.' He said: 'Did you understand who the man was? Did you know how much of the knowledge of the Book he possessed?'" He said: "I said: 'Tell me about it.' He said: 'It was the amount of a drop from the deep blue sea of knowledge, but what portion of the knowledge of the Book was that?'" He said: "I said: 'May I be your ransom, how little that IS!' then he said: 'O Sadir, how much is it! (unless it be that) Allah, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, compares it to the knowledge which I shall tell you about, O Sadir, have you also found in what you have read of the Book of Allah, to Whom belong Might and Majesty:

Say: "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and whosoever possesses knowledge of the Book" (Ra'd:43)? He said: "I said: 'Yes, I have read it, may I be your ransom.' He said: 'Is he who possesses knowledge of the Book, (but only) some of it?' I said: 'No, rather he who possesses knowledge of the Book, all of it.'" He said: "Then he pointed with his hand to his chest and said: 'The knowledge of the Book, by Allah, all of it, is in our possession; the knowledge of the Book, by Allah, all of it, is in our

possession.” (p.252- 254 vol. 1 al-Kāfi al-Usūl - Part 2, the book of divine proof III) Now we will present some narrations with regards to the knowledge of the Prophet’s Household: In a long narration Imam Rida (as) said: “Verily, when Allah, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, selects a slave for the affairs of His slaves, He expands his breast for it; He entrusts to his heart the fountains of wisdom, and profoundly inspires him with knowledge. So after this, he does not stammer in answers, and he does not deviate from the truth in them. Thus he is infallible, supported by Allah; he is accommodated to the right path, his steps being firmly guided; he will be safe from errors, slips and stumbling. Allah distinguishes him by this, because he is His Proof over His slaves, and His witness over His creatures - ‘that is the bounty of Allah, He gives wisdom to whom He will, and Allah is of bounty abounding’ (al-Hadīd:21, Jum’ah:4) “ So, do they have the power to do the like of this, so that they can choose him? Or can the one that they choose have this attribution so that they may prefer him?” (p.103-104, vol. 1 al-Usūl - Part 2, book of divine proof II).

Also from Al-Hassan ibn Yahya Al-Mad’ini from Abi Abdullah (s), who said: I asked the Imam: Tell me how would an Imam be able to answer any question? He replied: Inspiration, revelation or perhaps both.” (Bihār al-Anwār vol.26 p.58) And in another narration, Imam Sadiq (a) said:” An Imam who does not know what will happen to him and how his life will pass, is not a person who can be the proof of Allah over His creation.” (al-Kāfi, p.261 vol. 1 al- Usūl - Part 2, book of divine proof III) ” It has also been mentioned in many narrations, that Imam Sadiq has said: “Verily when the Imam wishes to know (something), he knows it.” And in other narrations Imam Sadiq was asked about the Qur’anic revelation: ‘Even so, We have revealed to thee a spirit of Our bidding’. He said it is one of the created things of Allah, to whom belong Might and Majesty, it is greater than Jibraīl and Mikā’il. It was with the Messenger of Allah (s); it informed him and directed his steps, and it is with the Imams after him.” (al-Kāfi, p.307, vol. 1 al-Usūl - Part 2, book of divine proof IV).

Questions

1. Mention the Qur’anic verses by which one can prove the infallibility of the Imam.
2. Mention the narrations, which prove the infallibility of the Imam.
3. What are the special channels from which the Imam can receive knowledge?
4. Who are the people who possessed a similar type of knowledge in the past?
5. Which Qur’anic verse proves the Imam’s knowledge? How would you argue using it?
6. Clarify the importance of the knowledge of the book?
7. Mention an example of the narrations referring to the Imams’ knowledge.

LESSON FORTY: IMAM MAHDI

Introduction

In previous lessons, certain traditions have been cited which mention the number of the nominated Imams, some indicate each one by name, and a few also indicate that they were all from the tribe of the Quraysh. In addition to this there are traditions, which compare the number of Imams with the number of the chiefs of the Bani Isra'el, and others, which state they are all from the progeny of Imam Hussein (a).

There is not adequate space here to refer to all such traditions; instead this lesson will concentrate on Imam Mahdi (a) (May Allah hasten his reappearance). For the sake of brevity we will mention only the most important issues that deal with this subject.

A Divine World Government

It has already been established that the fundamental purpose for the nomination of prophets was to complete the path for the sake of the perfection of man, which is attainable through the accessibility of Divine revelation. Likewise, another purpose of the nomination was for the development of Man's intellect, and spirituality. The ultimate purpose was to establish a government based upon Divine values, worship and to install Divine justice throughout the world. Although a few individuals were somewhat successful in achieving the above, they were only so, for a limited time and in specific geographical locations. The conditions for a Divine world government however are yet to be created.

The fact that such conditions have not yet been attained is not a reflection on the inadequacy of the prophets (as) and in no way infers deficiencies in their leadership or administration skills. It is intended by Almighty God to achieve such conditions through the free-will of man and not through determinism. This can be understood from the following verse: "apostles, as bearers of good news and warners, so that mankind may not have any argument against Allah, after the [sending of the] apostles." (al-Nisā':165) On the other hand, God the Supreme has made a covenant for the establishment of the Divine world government in the revealed books. We can therefore predict that conditions for accepting the true religion for mankind will begin to ripen on a large scale. Equity and justice will then encompass the masses that have become tired of the injustice and oppression of the tyrannical rulers and their governments. This can be considered as the ultimate goal for the nomination of the Prophet of Islam and hence his religion will be considered as eternal and universal, as the Noble Qur'an has mentioned several times: "that He may make it prevail over all religions." (al-Saff:9) If we focus upon the issue of Imāmah, which is the continuation and completion of prophethood, the wisdom behind the sealing of the prophethood can be understood.

Furthermore its result can be realised through the accomplishment of the goal, which will be achieved through the hands of the last Imam. This is the very issue with regards to Imam Mahdi that has been mentioned and emphasised in several of the authentic Shi'ite and Sunnite traditions.

A few of the verses from the Noble Qur'an will now be highlighted which refer to such a world government, followed by some traditions which also touch upon this subject.

The Divine Covenant

God the Supreme mentions in the Noble Qur'an that He has written in the Torah and the Psalms, that the earth will be inherited by the best of men.

"Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth'" (al-Anbiyā':105) Also refer to al-A'rāf: 128, where a similar indication is mentioned by the Prophet Musa (as), and again after the story of Pharaoh and his oppression upon the people, we find indications of this subject in the following verse:

"And We desire to show favour to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs" (al-Qasas:5) However this verse refers to the Bani Israel but, "We desire" indicates a perpetual Divine will of God, which in many traditions is referred to as the appearance of the Mahdi.

Likewise in the following verse the Muslims have been addressed: "Allah has promised to those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me. And whoever is ungrateful after that -it is they who are the transgressors." (al-Nūr:55) The traditions interpret that the referent of this verse is at the time Imam Mahdi.

Similarly many traditions have interpreted many of the other verses as relating to the Mahdi.

a. Examples from the traditions

The prophetic traditions mentioning Imam Mahdi, from both the Shi'ite and Sunnite schools reach the highest level of authenticity. Indeed many from the Sunnite school believe that the traditions concerning the Mahdi are infact the most authentic ones they have. Some of their scholars also find belief in the Mahdi to be a common belief between all the differing Islamic sects. Several of the Sunnite scholars have written on the subject of Imam Mahdi and the signs of his coming, but here we will mention a only a few of their traditions:

The Prophet of Islam (saws) mentioned: "Even If be a day left for the collapse of the world then that day will be lengthened until a man from my ahl al-bayt (progeny) who will have my name will establish a government. He will fill the land with equity and justice as the world will be full of injustice and oppression." Another tradition narrated from Umm Salma states that the Prophet of Islam has said:

"Mahdi is from my family and is the son of Fatima." It has been mentioned by Ibn 'Abbas that the noble Prophet (saws) said:

"Certainly 'Ali is the Imam after me and from his lineage there will be the awaited one (al-Qāi'm al-Muntazar). When he appears, he will fill the land with equity and justice, as it will be full of injustice and persecution".

b. Occultation and its secret

The peculiarity regarding the twelfth Imam, in the traditions from the Prophet's Household, is his occultation. In a tradition 'Abdul al-'Adhim Hasani quotes from Imam Muhammad Taqi (a), who heard it from his fathers that Imam Ali said:

“Our Qāi'm will have a long occultation and I am seeing my Shi'ah during the time of occultation will be like cattle behind pasturage, (in search of al-Qāi'm) but they will not find him. Be aware that whoever protects himself from hard-heartedness and stands firm in his religion during the time of his (al-Qāi'm's) occultation will be with me and at my level.” Then he continued:

“When our Qāi'm arises (Qāi'ns) he will not pledge to anyone and no tyrants can overpower him, he will be secretly born and have his occultation from the people.” Imam Sajjad (a) narrates from his fathers before him that Imam Ali (as) mentioned:

“Our Qāi'm will have two occultation and the first one is longer than the second one and whose belief (īmān) is strong and have correct knowledge (ma'rifah) will be confident in our Imāmah.” In order to understand the secret of the occultation one must study the lives of the Imams. We are aware that after the demise of the Holy Prophet, the people pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakr, then 'Umar and then 'Uthman. During the caliphate of Uthman the corruption had reached its peak, this subsequently led to the murder of 'Uthman, after which Ali (as) was made to accept the Caliphate.

Imam Ali who had already been nominated by the Prophet of Islam as his successor, kept quiet during the three previous Caliphates, in order to protect the newly founded Islamic society. Thus he did not publicly declare anything except those things, which proved his right to lead the Muslim community. However he never hesitated from doing anything to serve Islam and the Muslims, despite the fact that the majority of his caliphate was engaged in fighting the people of the 'Camel' (Aisha's followers), Mua'wiyah and the Khawārij, until he was himself was assassinated by one of them.

Imam Hassan (a) was also poisoned as the result of an order from Mua'wiyah.

When the latter died, his son Yazīd became leader; he failed to pay any respect to Islamic norms even in his public life. It was likely that Islam would have been completely distorted due to these deeds; therefore Imam Hussain (a) found no other alternative than to rise up against this oppression and declare his eternal revolution.

He saved Islam from total destruction, because he initiated the power of resistance through spreading awareness, although he was unable to establish a just Islamic state.

After him the other Holy Imams strived to deepen the Islamic principles of belief, and to teach the people Islamic rulings, and purify their followers. Whenever they had the opportunity they secretly encouraged the people to stand against the oppressors, tyrants and unjust leaders. The Imams strived

to create optimism amongst people in awaiting the establishment of a Divine global state. Their contemporary oppressors subsequently killed them.

However the Holy Imams managed to succeed in two and a half decades of struggle, to teach the people the Islamic doctrines, despite the severe circumstances under which they lived. They taught the people about the general requisites of Islam and clarified some of the obscure Islamic points to their very close followers. Islam was thus spread throughout the community and saved from distortion. Many Muslim groups formulated throughout the Islamic lands and fought and to a limited extent stopped the oppressors from further oppression.

The largest threat to the oppressors was the Divine promise of the appearance of Imam Al-Mahdi. They were so fearful that they went to the extent of putting Imam Mahdi's father, Imam Hassan Al-Askari (a) under constant and severe control, so as to monitor the potential birth of any sons and if so have they killed. Imam Hassan was killed while he was still young, but the Divine Will was that his son must be born and saved in order to fulfil the Divine covenant. This is the reason that only a few from amongst the very close companions of the Imam managed to actually see Imam Mahdi, when he was less than five years old, during the time of his father's life.

However, the Imam kept contact with his followers through his four subsequent deputies, the last passing away when the major occultation started. This will continue until the time comes when humanity is prepared for the challenge of expecting the appearance of the Imam, which will be decreed by an order from God the Almighty, in order to establish the Divine global state.

Thus the philosophy behind Imam Mahdi's occultation is to protect him from death at the hands of the oppressors and tyrants. Various other reasons have been mentioned such as the strengthening of the believers' faith and testing of their loyalty. It has also been observed that the people have not been deprived of the Imam's Divine existence during his major occultation. It has been narrated in a metaphorical way that he is like the sun behind the clouds, by which the people can benefit from its light without having the pleasure of seeing it. Many people have had the opportunity of meeting him, and he has helped them to fulfil their need or spiritual wish without them actually recognising him. His life is one of the crucial factors in giving hope and optimism to men in order that they may purify and prepare themselves for his promised appearance.

Questions

- 1- What is the ultimate aim behind the mission of the Prophet of Islam?
- 2- How can this aim be achieved?
- 3- Which signs will indicate the establishment of a Divine global state?
- 4- Provide an example of a Sunnite narration related to Imam Mahdi.
- 5- Provide an example of a Shi'ite narration related to Imam Mahdi.
- 6- Define the minor and the major occultation. How can you distinguish between them?
- 7- What benefits can one achieve during the major occultation?

LESSON FORTY-ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Introduction

In the beginning of this book we have already discussed the importance of investigation into religion and have charted out the fundamentals of belief (tawhīd, nubuwwah, and ma'ād).

We have also explained that in order for a person's life to be truly human, it must correctly resolve these issues. Theology, Prophethood and Imāmah have all so far been discussed. Now the important issue of Resurrection will be covered under the title of 'Understanding the Day of Judgement'.

Firstly, we will discuss the importance and the effects of this fundamental belief upon the actions of individuals and upon human society. We will explain the correct understanding of Resurrection (ma'ād), which is dependent upon accepting the spirit as being immaterial and eternal in the same manner as ontology necessitates acceptance of the Oneness of Being. In the like manner knowing the nature of the human being is also incomplete without the belief of the spirit being eternal. Finally the issues of Resurrection will be appropriately investigated in this section of the book.

The significance of believing in the Resurrection

The incentive for activity in man's life is to fulfil his needs and necessities, accomplish different desires, and eventually arrive at pure felicity (sa'ādah) and ultimate perfection (kamāl). The limited work that he does is based upon that goal he is trying to achieve in life. Therefore knowing the ultimate goal has a major influence in giving direction to human activity and preferences. In reality it is the true factor that gives direction and vision to man to realize his own reality towards perfection and felicity. Those who believe that they are only a composite of matter and accept that life is limited to only the material plane, do not give importance to the acquisition of fruits of perfection and felicity in this life, and they consequently direct their life in a way, which will reap benefit in this world alone. However those who believe that their reality is more than just a material phenomenon and believe that death is not the end of life but rather a means of transformation for arriving at eternal felicity and perfection due their action, direct their lives in an entirely different direction. Their aim is to acquire the most out of this life, through their actions for their eternal life.

As well, they do not despair with the difficulties of this life, and they are thus not hindered from carrying out their responsibilities towards achieving felicity and perfection.

The effects of these two differing perspectives on life are not limited to only a few individuals, but to the whole society and the behaviour of humans with respect to each other. Believing in life after death has a major effect upon fulfilling the rights of the other. A society with this outlook is less likely to foster oppression and needs to exert less effort to execute justice. Furthermore if this belief becomes universal and extends to different societies, the enigmas of the world would eventually be solved.

While focusing upon these points the importance of investigating the principle of Resurrection will be clearly understood. Even the effect of the belief in the Unity of God, by itself, is not sufficient for attaining a prosperous life. It is for this reason that the Divine religions especially Islam, have centred upon this fundamental principle.

All the different prophets of God have struggled to imprint the accurate reflection of this principle on to the hearts of the people.

Belief in the Hereafter will only give benefit and direction to mans life, if there is a causational ('illiyyah) relationship between the actions of man and the felicities of the Hereafter. Furthermore the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter must be recognized as the result of the good and bad actions of this world. Consequently, if it were believed that such bounties could be achieved in this very world, then belief in the next and eternal life would not set out for us a path in this life. If this belief were maintained, it would result in one aiming for the bounties of this life in this world and the bounties of the next life in the next world!

Hence, it is thus imperative that while establishing the principle of Resurrection, we prove the causational relationship between this life and the next and that the actions of this life have a direct influence on the next life.

The importance given by the Qur'an to the issue of Resurrection

More than one fourth of Qur'anic verses mention the life of the Hereafter. They can be divided into groups as follows:

1. The first group emphasises the necessity of faith in the Hereafter.
2. The second group of verses are associated with the denial of faith and the Hereafter.
3. The third group classify the eternal bounties.
4. The fourth group refer to the everlasting chastisements.

Likewise in several verses, the relationship between the good and bad actions and their results as well as the necessity of Resurrection through different methods have been emphasised upon and explained. The doubts concerning the Hereafter are explained and answered and it is shown that denial of the Hereafter is the very reason for the corruption and deterioration of societies and civilisations.

When focusing on the Qur'anic verses it becomes clear that most of the debates and discussions of the prophets with the people were over the issue of Resurrection.

Moreover, their struggle for establishing the principle of Resurrection was greater than that for the establishment of the reality of the Unity of the Creator, because of the fact that the majority of people exhibited reluctance in accepting this principle. The reasons for this reluctance can be epitomised in two factors:

Firstly, denial of the Unseen and the unknown, and secondly denial of the Resurrection itself. This results in mankind inclining towards irresponsibility, perversion and immorality. As it has earlier been indicated, believing in Resurrection and giving account of the actions performed in this life is the absolute factor for the recognition of responsibilities,

acceptance of behavioural limitations and protection against corruption and oppression. By denying this principle, the way for lust, desire, and egotism will be open.

The Noble Qur'an while indicating this factor mentions:

"Does man suppose that We shall not put together his bones? Yes indeed, We are able to proportion [even] his fingertips! Rather man desires to go on living viciously." (al- Qiyāmah:3-5) This very characteristic of denial and refusal of Resurrection in the real sense can be found in the sayings and writings of those who interpret the Qur'anic terminology of Resurrection and the Hereafter, to be a phenomenon of this material world. The reason for this interpretation is to institutionalise a classless society and to construct a society that is heaven on earth, and to make the Hereafter and its concepts appear to be imaginary.

The Noble Qur'an has termed such individuals as evil human beings (shayātīn al- ins), and enemies of the prophets, who by their deceptive talks destroy the faith of the people, resulting in their irresponsible behaviour towards the Divine rules.

"That is how for every prophet We appointed as enemy the devils from among humans and jinn, who inspire each other with flashy words, deceptively. Had your Lord wished they would not have done it. So leave them with what they fabricate so that toward it may incline the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and so that they may be pleased with it and commit what they commit" (al-An'ām:112- 113).

Conclusion

In order to achieve and arrive at the eternal felicity and perfection, man must contemplate upon the following:

1. Does the life of man terminate with his death or is there a life after death?
2. Does the transformation of man from this life to the other life resemble travelling from one city to another in this life, whereby one can obtain the goods required in the city travelled to? Or does the other life depend on the groundwork set forth in this life?

Unless these issues are solved, the chance for organising and directing ones life towards a goal will not arrive, because if one does not know his destination one will never recognise the path for arriving at it.

While concluding we would like to make the point, that no matter how weak the possibility of the other life may be, it is sufficient enough for an intellectual and sensible individual to investigate the issue of Resurrection.

Questions

1. Explain the differences between the actions of man and his direction of life with the understanding of believing and not believing in Resurrection.
2. What important role does belief in the eternal life play in man's life?
3. Explain the importance given by the Noble Qur'an to the issue of Resurrection.
4. Explain the reasons for the denial of Resurrection.
5. Give the example used in the Noble Qur'an for those who deceive people over the concepts and realities of Resurrection.

6. What is the need for investigating the issue of Resurrection?

LESSON FORTY-TWO: THE DEPENDENCE OF THE ISSUES OF RESSURRECTION UPON THE ISSUES OF THE SPIRIT

The criteria of unity in a living existent

Man like other animals is made-up of numerous cells. Each cell is in a continual state of transformation and deterioration. The number of cells in a human being since his birth is constantly fluctuating and, one will never find an individual whose composing elements of the body have remained the same and have not transformed or fluctuated.

If we focus upon these transformations and mutations, which occur in animals and within man, the question arises as to why do we refer to this ‘transforming assemblage’ as one existent, is it not possible that through its course of life it has in fact changed several times?

The simple answer that can be given to this question is that the criteria of unity which is in every living existent, is the timely correlation between the cells and not an inappropriate replacement of them. Every cell gradually dies and a new cell takes its place. This happens throughout the course of time and this new ‘transformed assemblage’ is still known as one or the same existent. However, this answer is not satisfying because; if we take the example of a building which has gradually had all its old bricks replaced by new bricks, whilst still maintaining the same outward form, it would not be called the same building. In particular those who are aware of the replacement would not consider the building to be the same as the old previous structure.

Nevertheless, it is possible for the answer given, to be modified in this way; the gradual replacement in a living existent is due to the natural factors within an organism as compared to that of a building, which is due to unnatural and outward factors. Hence, the true and internal replacement of cells cannot be related to that of bricks. This answer is based upon the acceptance of a unity in the natural elements and factors that transforms the cells while maintaining the unity of an organism.

Therefore the question will be directed in regard to the criteria of unity in the natural element or factor itself and the reality of this natural element.

According to a famous philosophical view, the criteria of unity being in every natural or living existent is an abstract decree (which is the equivalent to it being not compound) and imperceptive by the name of ‘nature’ or (genus) ‘form’ and does not change due to the transformation or replacement of matter. The natural factor in these living existents, which is comprised of different actions such as growth, digestion, reproduction, etc is called the soul (nafs).

Previous philosophers have regarded the mineral and animal soul as materialistic and the human soul as immaterial. Many of the Islamic philosophers such as Sadruddin Shirazi regarded the animal soul as having different levels of immateriality and recognized perceptiveness, and will (irādah) as the signs of immaterial existents.

However the previous and present materialistic philosophers (positivist) have limited the existent to matter and denied the immateriality of the spirit and the latter have completely denied the basis of anything imperceptible. The positivists do not accept the 'form' (genus) or nature of any existent as it is immaterial and will not produce a correct answer for representing the criteria of unity in the living existent.

On the basis that it is the unity in minerals, which is the soul of the mineral, the mineral kingdom is categorized by a special form or soul, which is substantially susceptible and when this potentiality or susceptibility is destroyed, the soul and the form of it is also destroyed. But, if the same substance accepts life or a new form, then a new mineral soul is allotted to it and a new plant after the old one has been destroyed (even if perfect in resemblance) will not be considered as the same old plant.

However for the animal and human soul, the soul is immaterial and can remain even after the body has been completely destroyed. Likewise, the new replaced or transformed cells preserve the unity in a person, and s/he is known as that very previous and same individual. Even before death the unity of the spirit in a particular body is the criteria of the unity.

Those who regard the existence (wujūd) of humans and animals as being limited to this material realm and their spirit as being imperceptible and as a component of their physical body and thus destroyed along with the material destruction of the body, will not grasp the correct understanding of Resurrection.

While concluding one must say that the only way one will form the correct understanding of life after death, is when one understands that the spirit is other than but essential to the material body. Therefore, the existence of the spirit must be accepted and it must be regarded as an essential substance of the body and not an accidental occurrence of the body. Thirdly it must be understood that the spirit is independent and eternal even after the destruction of the body, unlike those transformed material matters which become destroyed after the outward and bodily destruction.

The role of the spirit in the existence of man

Another noteworthy point that needs to be remembered is that the composition of man i.e. of spirit and body, is not similar to that of the compositions found in chemistry. In chemistry two or more elements are proportioned to form a compound element, such as the composition of oxygen and hydrogen, which if separated from each other, the existent of water as an element is destroyed.

The spirit is an essential substance of the human being. It forms and preserves the humanity and personality of man, and it is due to this very reason that the transformation and replacement of cells cannot destroy the unity of man. Hence the true criterion of unity in man is the very spirit of man.

The Noble Qur'an while indicating the reality of the spirit answers those who deny the truth of Resurrection and says:

"Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord.'" (al-Sajdah:11) Hence the perpetuity of personality and humanness is due to that

entity which the angel of death seizes, and not due to the thing that becomes scattered or dispersed in the earth.

Questions

- 1- Is the timely transformation of cells in a unit considered as the criteria for unity? Why?
- 2- What is the criterion of unity in organisms?
- 3- Explain the famous philosophical viewpoint on the criteria of unity in living existents.
- 4- What are the differences between the natural 'form' and the soul?
- 5- What is the difference between the mineral soul and the animal soul? What is the effect of this difference upon the issue of Resurrection?
- 6- What does the correct understanding of Resurrection require?

LESSON FORTY-THREE: THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE SOUL

Introduction

We know by now that the issues relating to the Resurrection are dependent upon the issues relating to the soul (rūh). It is only possible to state that the resurrected person is the same being as before he died, if his soul remained after the annihilation of his body. In other words every man, besides his material body and form, contains an immaterial substance, which is independent from the body and his personality is dependent upon it. Therefore the presumption of life after death for that particular individual cannot be considered as logical.

Hence before we establish the principle of resurrection, we must first explain and intellectually prove the issues relating to it.

Intellectual reasoning upon the immateriality of the soul

For centuries, philosophers and intellectuals have discussed the subject of the soul (known in philosophical terminology the nafs). Islamic philosophers in particular have given this topic special attention, and as opposed to devoting just a chapter in their books to it, have in turn written independent books. They have rejected the concept of the soul being an outward form of the body, or a form of matter, on several intellectual reasons.

It is apparent that this is indeed a vast subject and beyond the scope of this book to cover, we will therefore suffice ourselves with a small discussion and give a clear explanation, which will satisfy the establishment of our thought. This explanation is based upon a few intellectual arguments and a premise, which begins as follows:

We observe the colour of our skin and the structure of our body with our own eyes; we feel its softness and firmness with our sense perception and understand the inner configuration indirectly. However, our fear, anger, will, thought, and emotions can also be sensed without the means of senses and we are also aware of different psychological states and realize the 'I' ness, which is enclosed with likes and dislikes.

Hence, universally man is bestowed with two types of perception, the first can be considered as those perceptions that can be perceived or sensed through the senses and the second type of perceptions are those that do not require the sensual organs.

Another point to be noted is that the first form of perception which is derived from the senses has the possibility of fault and this is contrary to the second type of perception where there is no intrusion of fault. For example it is possible that someone might doubt that the colour of the skin he has is the same as he perceives or it is different to what he perceives. On the other hand no-one would ever doubt whether he has decided or not, he has a thought or not, or he has a doubt or not.

This is the very subject that has been explained in philosophy in the following way:

Intuitive knowledge ('ilm hudūri) is directly related to the reality and due to this it is considered as faultless, but knowledge by perception ('ilm husūli) is formed from the conclusions of different outward forms, therefore the possibility of fault and suspicion exist.

The intuitive knowledge and awareness, which is the most certain of all, is the knowledge attained by presence and spiritual witnessing. Such knowledge contains the knowledge of the psyche, emotions, and other psychological states. Therefore the existence of 'I' or the 'self' can never be doubted and likewise the existence of fear, emotions and mercy, or thought and will are also certain.

The question arises as to whether this 'I' is the same as the material body, or whether it is a psychological state extended from the body, or whether its existence is other than that of matter, but has a strong relationship with the body, and several of its works are conducted through the body, which result in the two having effect upon each other.

While focusing upon the issues discussed in our premise the answer to the above question are as follows:

1. The 'I' (spirit) must be perceived through intuitive knowledge (by presence), but the body must be perceived through the senses, therefore the 'I' is other than the body.
2. The 'I' is a type of existence that throughout the course of the life of an individual remains the same. This can be understood through intuitive knowledge but the body changes its form and shape several times and does not have a true unifying criteria.
3. The 'I' is abstract and indivisible and it cannot be divided into two even by example, but the body can be divided into several parts.
4. The psychological elements such as emotions, will etc are indivisible and cannot be regarded to be the extensions of matter, therefore the substance of these elements has to be immaterial.
5. Likewise those reasons that satisfy the heart with regards to this subject are the 'true witnessing' of people who after death disclose the true information through dreams to specified individuals. Similarly calling spirits and certain acts of the saints or of yogis can also establish the immateriality of the soul. However this subject requires an independent book.

Proofs from the Qur'an

From the Qur'anic point of view, there is no doubt in the existence of the soul, and that it is pure and to be associated with God: "and breathed into him of His Spirit" (al-Sajdah:9).

In regards to the creation of Adam (as), the Qur'an says: "and breathed into him of My spirit" (al-Hijr:29, Sād:72) Likewise we understand from other noble verses of the Qur'an, that the soul is other than the body and has the capability of perpetuating after the body has died:

"They say, 'When we have been lost in the dust, shall we indeed be created anew?' Rather they disbelieve in the encounter with their Lord. Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord.'" (al-Sajdah:10,11).

Therefore the criteria for the reality of man is the soul, which by the means of the angel of death is taken away and protected, leaving the body which is scattered and left to decompose in the earth.

In another verse we find that:

“Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that have not died in their sleep. Then He retains those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others back until a specific time. There are indeed signs in that for people who reflect.” (al- Zumar:42) In regard to the death of a tyrant the Qur’an says:

“Were you to see when the wrongdoers are in the throes of death, and the angels extend their hands [saying]:

‘Give up your souls!’” (al-An’ām:93) From these verses and several other verses that we have not quoted, one can conclude that the personality and the reality of man is the soul, which through the means of death and decomposition of the body, is eternal.

Thus the result that we can arrive at is that first of all there exists an ‘existence’ in man, which is called the ‘soul’. Secondly this spirit is perpetual and independent from the body, and any form of decomposition of the body does not affect it. Thirdly the reality of each individual is dependent upon the soul and the body acts as an instrument for the soul.

Questions

1. Explain the differences between knowledge by presence and knowledge by acquaintance. What are these differences?
2. What are the intellectual reasons for the immateriality of the soul?
3. Is there any other way for proving the immateriality of the soul?
4. Quote the noble verses of the Qur’an relating to the immateriality of the soul.
5. What conclusions can be drawn from these verses?

LESSON FORTY-FOUR: PROVING RESSURRECTION

Introduction

It was indicated in the beginning of this book that belief in Resurrection for every individual on the Day of Judgment is the most fundamental belief of the Divine religions. The prophets (a) and saints have emphasized upon this fundamental principle, endeavouring at lengths to establish it. The Qur'an regards this belief as being as important as belief in Divine Unity. In various Qur'anic verses the words 'Allah' and 'Day of Judgement' have been used together.

In the beginning the importance of investigating the issue of resurrection was discussed. We have already explained how a true understanding of resurrection is dependent upon the acknowledgement of the spirit, which is the criterion for the reality of man. This reality is eternal in such a way that when he is raised on the Day of Judgment one would say that it is the same individual who had died and is raised back to life.

We then established the proofs for this kind of spirit from the Qur'an, and presented an intellectual view so that the grounds for understanding the eternity of life for man are understood. Now we have reached the point where it is time to establish the most important fundamental principle of belief, which will be proved in the similar manner utilized for proving the spirit. First we will discuss the intellectual reasons for resurrection and then we will convey the Qur'anic explanation in regard to it.

Proving Resurrection through Wisdom

In the section on theology we have explained that the creation of man is not meaningless or without aim. God is essentially perfect and good, and His creation receives such goodness. We then recognised that God has the quality of Wisdom and we understood that the purpose of this was to recognize the purpose of creation, which was that creation would reach its own ultimate perfection. Although the material world acts as an impediment and the goodness and perfection of the material existents conflict with each other, the requirement of Divine wisdom is that the achievement of perfection and goodness must surpass such imperfections. In other words:

The circle of nature has been created in such a way so as to promote life. The action and the reaction have been organized in such a manner that the earth encourages the growth of the plant, animal, and human (who are the most perfect of all) kingdoms. If this was not the case and the material world was created in such a way that it did not promote life, it would have been against such Wisdom.

Now we will intensify our argument. We know that man has an eternal spirit and the ability to acquire eternal perfection, but if it was assumed that man was here only to achieve material perfections which are limited only to the material world, then this is not then in resonance with Divine Wisdom. This is especially so, when we consider how the material world is full of pain and where in order to achieve limited pleasure one has to endure much suffering. Furthermore the suffering and pain that one goes through is not

usually worth the limited pleasure that one achieves. Due to this very limited calculation, many people became hedonistic, or certain individuals committed suicide despite the love that they had for life and eternity.

If life consisted only of going through social, financial, and physical difficulties with the result of momentary pleasure followed by the aftermath of exhaustion, which requires rest in order to regain strength for yet again the same repetition, a vicious circle is formed, which is unacceptable to the intellect. An example of this pattern would be like a driver who fills up the petrol tank of his car, only in order to arrive at another petrol station, this then continues until the car breaks down or another obstacle brings an end to it.

It is apparent from a logical analysis that such a life is absurd, also to reinforce the argument, is the fact that man has within him the intrinsic love to be eternal, which has been placed within him by the Creator. He has also been endowed with the energy to accomplish this eternal goal, which encourages and motivates him towards its accomplishment. If we suppose that this human being during his ultimate development towards his Creator is going to fail whatever the case, then there is no wisdom in motivating and encouraging him towards a doomed destination. Therefore the placement of such a tendency within man is not at all compatible with the Divine wisdom of God.

The result that can be discerned from these two premises - of Divine wisdom and the possibility of eternal life for man - is that there must exist another life for man, which must be different from this life where he experiences trouble and limited pleasure.

Furthermore the intrinsic tendency for the love of eternal life can also be considered as another premise, which can be combined with the principle of Divine wisdom and utilised as an argument for proving resurrection.

Hence, it becomes clear that eternal life must be very different when compared to this life, which is comprised of pain and sorrow. If this is not the case and even if this very life is eternal, it would not be harmonious with the Divine wisdom of God.

Proving Resurrection through Justice

In this world man is free to choose between the good and the bad. From one side one will find people who have served their life worshiping God and serving human beings and from another side one will see tyrants and oppressors who for achieving their desires, oppress people and commit crime. The purpose for the creation of man, whilst providing him with all the necessary mechanisms and productive grounds for developing, is that he independently chooses truth over falsehood. By doing so, he arrives at the fruit of his action for which he has wrought much pain. In reality man's life is solely for arriving at the reality of his nature, which he does through the means of different tests. Even until the last moment of his life he is accountable for even the smallest of his responsibilities.

However we see in this world that the tyrants, oppressors and corrupt do not arrive at the fruit of their action and on the other hand they possess a higher share of the bounties (luxuries) of this world. For example: a criminal who commits several murders and numerous acts of crime may only be

prosecuted once and executed. This is against the Justice of God. The reason for this is that the requirement of justice is that there should be a different punishment for every crime committed, whether that crime is minor or major. Therefore, as this world is filled with tests and responsibilities, there must be another world where the result of these tests and responsibilities is received, so that the Justice of God is manifested. Therefore it becomes clear that that the next world is not a place of choice or responsibility. We will discuss this in future lessons.

Questions

1. Explain the relationship between Divine Wisdom and creation.
2. Explain the proving of Resurrection through wisdom with two premises.
3. What other points can be understood from the premises used for the proof of the principle Resurrection?
4. What is the purpose of creation?
5. Explain the argument for Justice.
6. What key points can be derived from the argument for Justice?

LESSON FORTY-FIVE: RESSURECTION IN THE QUR'AN

Introduction

The noble verses of the Qur'an in regard to the argumentation with the infidels in order to establish Resurrection can be divided into five different groups:

1. The verses that emphasise that there is no evidence for the denial of the existence of Resurrection. These verses nullify the arguments of the infidels.
2. The verses that indicate the resembling phenomena of Resurrection in order to distinguish it as a principle.
3. The verses that eliminate the confusions of the infidels in regard to Resurrection, establishing its possibility.
4. The verses that prove Resurrection through the authentic traditions and consider it as a Divine inevitable covenant that will take place.
5. The verse, which indicates the intellectual arguments for the necessity of Resurrection.

The first three groups are in reality indicating the possibility of Resurrection and the last two points to the occurrence and necessitation of it.

Denial of Resurrection is baseless

One of the Qur'anic ways of rejecting the false beliefs of the infidels is by citing their assumptions in order to highlight them as being baseless, illogical and absurd. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

"Say, 'Produce your evidence, should you be truthful'" (al- Baqarah:111, al-Naml:64) In a similar manner the Qur'an says that those who have false belief have no intellectual basis, but rather only a hypothetical belief.

"They say, 'There is nothing but the life of this world: we live and we die, and nothing but time destroys us' But they do not have any knowledge of that, and they only make conjectures." (al-Jāthiyah: 24) Likewise in other verses this type of emphasis has been made, denying Resurrection is absurd but it is possible that it can be based upon hypothetical arguments due to low desires of the soul. This in the course of time might manifest itself as a belief and one could persist in believing it.

"They swear by Allah with solemn oaths that Allah will not resurrect those who die.

Yes indeed, it is a promise binding upon Him, but most people do not know" (Al- Nahl:38) The Noble Qur'an mentions the allegations of those who disregard the Resurrection and indicates certain weak arguments, which are based on doubt and perplexity.

"It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days -and His Throne was [then] upon the waters- that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct.

Yet if you say, 'You will indeed be raised up after death,' the faithless will surely say, 'This is nothing but plain magic'" (Hūd:7) Due to this very reason the Qur'an reminds the disbelievers of resembling phenomena, in

order that they do not distance themselves from the reality of Resurrection. On the other hand it also answers the arguments raised to eliminate any doubt. The Qur'an does not stop here, but also brings the intellectual arguments to prove this covenant of God and its necessity in the following lessons.

Phenomena resembling Resurrection

a. Plant life

The coming back to life of a human being after death is similar to the sprouting of plants from the earth after a dry winter. Contemplation on this phenomenon, which occurs in front of all human beings, is sufficient enough to believe in the possibility of life after death. In reality this phenomenon is no different from that of life after death but due to man's forgetfulness and in his being accustomed to or immune to this phenomenon, man has neglected to remember its uniqueness.

The Noble Qur'an in order to lift this veil repeatedly reminds man of this phenomenon and compares it with the coming back to life of humans. The Qur'an mentions in one of its noble verses: "So observe the effects of Allah's mercy: how He revives the earth after its death! Indeed He is the reviver of the dead, and He has power over all things" (al-Rūm:50)

b. The sleep of the people of cave

After mentioning the mysterious story of the people of the cave, which has many lessons, the Qur'an says:

"So it was that We let them come upon them, that they might know that Allah's promise is true, and that there is no doubt in the Hour." (al-Kahf:21) It is without doubt that the fact of this incident whereby a few men awaken after three hundred or so of sleep can have a significant import on dealing with the spurious arguments with regards to Resurrection. Nevertheless, every sleep of a man resembles death and every awakening is a coming back to life. However in our regular sleep the physiological mechanism continues to function and the return of the spirit when we wake-up does not astonish us. But for someone who slept for three hundred years without utilizing any (form of) food according to the biological make-up must die and deteriorate without allowing the spirit to return.

Therefore, the incident of the people of the cave is incredible and influences man to focus upon the metaphysical realm and realise that the return of the spirit to the body is not only dependent upon the outward and natural conditions but rather it's a metaphysical reality. Hence the life after death may be irrelevant for the outward natural system of life and death in this world but it is not impossible, as it is a Divine covenant that will take place.

c. The coming back to life of certain animals

The Noble Qur'an indicates the coming back to life of certain animals, such as that of four birds in the hands of the Prophet Abraham (a), and the donkey of a Prophet, whose story will follow. However the verse mentioned in the Qur'an is: "And when Abraham said, 'My Lord! Show me how You revived the dead,' He said, 'Do you not believe?' He said, 'Yes indeed, but

in order that my heart may be at rest.’ He said, ‘Take four of the birds. Then cut them into pieces, and place a part of them on every mountain then call them; they will come to you hastening. And know that Allah is all-mighty and all-wise.’” (al-Baqarah:260)

d. The coming back to life of certain humans

The most important issue of all is the coming back to life of human beings in this world. The Qur’an refers to the story of one of the prophets of the Israelites who was known as Uzair. The noble verse that narrates his story is as follows: “Or him who came upon a township as it lay fallen on its trellises. He said, ‘How will Allah revive this after its death?!’ So Allah made him die for a hundred years, then He resurrected him. He said, ‘How long have you remained?’ Said he, ‘I have remained a day or part of a day.’ He said, ‘Rather you have remained a hundred years. Now look at your food and drink which have not rotted! Then look at your ass!

[This was done] that We may make you a sign for mankind. And look at the bones, how We arrange them and then clothe them with flesh!’ When it became evident to him, he said, ‘I know that Allah has power over all things.’” (al-Baqarah:259)

Likewise, another incident is mentioned by the Qur’an whereby a man - who was killed during the time of the Prophet Moses (a) - comes back to life due to the striking of his dead body with the part of a sacrificed cow.

“We said, ‘Strike him with a piece of it:’ thus does Allah revive the dead, and He shows you His signs so that you may apply reason.” (al-Baqarah:73)

Furthermore, the Qur’an informs us of the miracles of Prophet Jesus (as) whereby humans were brought back to life, “And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah’s leave” (Āl-‘Imrān:49)

Questions

1. How does the Noble Qur’an answer those who deny the Resurrection?
2. What resemblance does plant life have with the raising-up of humans?
3. What lesson can be taken from the story of the people of the cave in regard to Resurrection?
4. What relationship does the story of the four birds that were brought back to life by the Prophet Abraham (a) have with Resurrection?
5. Who was brought back to life in the narrations of the Holy Qur’an?

LESSON FORTY-SIX: THE QUR'ANIC RESPONSE RESSURRECTION TO THE DOUBTHS CONCERNING

The argumentation that the Qur'an establishes for those who deny Resurrection can be outlined in the following manner.

The argument for the return from non-existence

As indicated earlier, the Qur'an has answered those who deny Resurrection in the following way:

"The say, 'When we have been lost in the dust, shall we indeed be created anew?' Rather they disbelieve in the encounter with their Lord. Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord.'" (al-Sajdah:10-11) From this verse we can learn that the reasoning of the infidels is of the argument, which is known in philosophy as 'the impossibility of the return from non-existence (muhāl). They believe that the human being with its material body which has died and deteriorated returns back to life with its same material body. This is considered as impossible because the return of something that has been destroyed and become non-existent returns to existence from non-existence, and this is essentially impossible.

The Qur'an's reply to this argument is that the reality of every individual is dependent upon his spirit and Resurrection means the return of the spirit.

The argument for the material body having the ability of new life

The previous argument was with respect to the essential possibility of Resurrection; this argument is in regard to its external existence. The return of the spirit to the body is not intellectually impossible, but does this material body to which the spirit is returning have the ability to come to life again? As we know that coming into existence requires certain conditions. Furthermore these conditions must be created gradually, as the foetus, which is in the womb of a woman, requires the proper conditions for its nourishment and growth, so that it becomes a human being. How can a body that has decomposed have the ability to regain life?

The answer to this question is that the appeared order of this universe is not the only possible order or sequence, and the cause and conditions that are found in this, based on experience are not limited causes. The evidence for this is that there are exceptional phenomena in this universe, such as the coming to life of certain animals and human beings, which have taken place. Hence this could be the answer taken from the Noble Qur'an for the above argument.

The argument with respect to the strength of a creator

Another of the spurious arguments raised is the establishment of a phenomenon apart from being essentially and outwardly possible, the strength of a creator is also necessary and from where does God obtain such strength so as to raise the dead?

Those who have no knowledge of the infinite strength of God raise this argument. The answer to this is that Divine strength is limitless and God can actualize everything that has the ‘possibility of existence’, as God has created this universe with all its greatness and wonderment.

“Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and [who] was not exhausted by their creation, is able to revive the dead? Yes, indeed he has power over all things.” (al-Ahqāf:33) Moreover the bringing of a creation back to life is not more difficult than that of a new creation, which requires more power and strength as compared to the case of returning to life:

“They say, ‘What, when we have become bones and dust, shall we really be raised in anew creation? Say, ‘Should you be stones or iron, or a creature more fantastic to your minds!’ they will say, ‘Who will bring us back?’ Say, ‘He who originated you the first time.’ They will nod their heads at you and say, ‘When will that be?’ Say, ‘Maybe it is near!’” (al-Isrā’:49-51) And in another of its noble verses:

“It is He who originates the creation, and then He will bring it back -and that is more simple for Him” (al-Rūm:27) The argument with respect to the knowledge of a creator If God wanted to return all the spirits to their respective bodies and give them the reward and punishment for the actions committed, then ‘He’ must have knowledge of the countless bodies. How is it possible for the body after it has decomposed to be recognised and brought back together? How is it possible to record all the different actions of all human being for millions and millions of years?

This doubt is also raised by some of those who do not have enough awareness of God’s infinite knowledge. The answer to this doubt is that Divine Knowledge does not have any limits or bounds and it encompasses all things, and God never forgets anything. The Noble Qur’an quotes Pharaoh addressing the Prophet Moses (as):

“He said, ‘Who is your Lord, Moses?’ He said, ‘Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it.’ He said, ‘What about the former generations?’ He said, ‘Their knowledge is with my Lord in a Book. My Lord neither makes any error nor forgets” (Tāha:49-52) In another of its noble verses the Qur’an, says: “Say, ‘he will revive them who produced them the first time, and He has knowledge of all creation” (Yāsīn:79)

Questions

1. Explain the spurious argument for the ‘impossibility of return from non- existence’!
2. Give the explanation in regard to the ability of the material body to regain new life!
3. What is the answer given in regard to the doubt of the strength of the creator?
4. How can the doubt concerning the limitless knowledge of God be answered?

LESSON FORTY-SEVEN: GOD’S PROMISE REGARDING THE RESURRECTION

Introduction

The Noble Qur’an fulfils its case to mankind by highlighting the issue of Resurrection. It establishes Resurrection through intellectual arguments so that man furthers his understanding of this concept.

The following explanation of Resurrection given by the Qur’an is outlined in the two subsequent sections.

The inevitable promise of God

The Noble Qur’an informs us that the Day of Judgement is inevitable:

“Indeed the Hour is bound to come” (Ghāfir: 59)

In the following verses the Qur’an states:

“They swear by Allah with solemn oaths that Allah will not resurrect those who die. Yes indeed, it is a promise binding upon Him, but most people do not know” (al- Nahl:38)

“The faithless claim that they will not be resurrected. Say, ‘Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected; then you will surely be informed of what you did, and that is easy for Allah’” (al-Taghābun:7)

“Raiser of ranks, lord of the Throne, He casts the spirit of His command upon whomever of His servants that He wishes, that he may warn [people] of the Day of Encounter.” (Ghāfir:15)

“Rather they deny the Hour, and We have prepared a Blaze for those who deny the Hour” (al-Furqān:11)

Whoever recognizes the genuineness of this Divine Book will therefore accept the fact of Resurrection. The realisation of the Qur’an being the reality is achievable for every man who is in search of truth, unless his mind is deficient or there is some other preventative factor.

Examples of intellectual arguments

Many Qur’anic verses are written in such a way that they help to establish the necessity of Resurrection and therefore they could be considered as contributing towards an intellectual and wise argument. Such verses also refute the polytheists and infidels:

“Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?” (al-Mu’minūn:115)

This verse clearly indicates that the entire universe and creation of mankind would be futile without the principle of Resurrection. God is the All-Wise and nothing is made in vain, therefore the return of creation is certain.

This argument is an exclusive syllogism (qiyās), whereby the first premise is a conditional proposition, which indicates that the creation of man in this world is with a wise purpose whereby he returns back to God and receives the outcome of his actions in this world. This has been clearly explained in a previous lesson (See argument for ‘Wisdom’).

However the second premise (that God does not perform absurd acts) is that very subject related to the Divine Wisdom and has already been

discussed in the section on theology, therefore the verse mentioned above conforms with it.

Likewise, the Noble Qur'an mentions the quality of the 'people of understanding' as:

"Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say], 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the fire.'" (Āl-'Imrān:191) By contemplation upon this verse man will realise his obligation of relying on the wisdom of God. While doing so, he will understand that this great creation is fashioned with a purpose and if the next life ceased to exist then the creation of the universe would be illogical.

Another classification specified in the verses indicates the intellectual argument and the necessity of Resurrection, which is in conformity with the argument of justice ('adl). The demand of justice is that those who do good and evil must be rewarded and punished for their performed action. There should be a clear distinction between the right and wrong doers, this is not possible in this world, and hence Divine justice can only be realised in the next world. Regarding this the Qur'an says:

"These are eye-openers for mankind, and guidance and mercy for a people who have certainty. Do those who have perpetrated misdeeds suppose that We shall treat them as those who have faith and do righteous deeds, their life and death being equal? Evil is the judgment that they make! Allah created the heavens and the earth with the truth, so that every soul may be requited for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged." (al-Jāthiyah:20-22) It is essential that we remember that "the creation of the heaven and the earth with truth," indicates the argument for wisdom. As the argument for justice is related to the argument for wisdom, we may remind the reader of the discussions concerning Divine Justice, whereby justice was the referent for wisdom.

Questions

1. How does the Qur'an prove Resurrection?
2. Quote the Qur'anic verses, which indicate the argument of wisdom and its explanation.
3. Explain the verses indicating the argument for justice ('adl). How can the argument for justice ('adl) be returned to the argument for wisdom (hikmah)?

LESSON FORTY-EIGHT: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEXT LIFE

Introduction

One cannot speak about those things that one has not experienced, or sensed, whether inwardly or without intuitional knowledge.

Taking into consideration the above point, one should realise that it is not possible to comprehend all the realities of the next life. Therefore one must comply with the intellect and with the information we receive from revelation in order to understand the realm of the next world and restrain from inaccurate interpretations.

Regrettably, some have compared this world directly to this life and imagine it is somehow within the realm of this universe. They further believe that through development and research man will reach it and enjoy a blissful and luxurious life.

However if one was to hold this belief, that the next life is within this universe where does that leave the principle of Resurrection, which has been established in the Qur'an? How can the reward and punishment be allotted for past actions?

In addition to this there are some who completely deny the essential existence of the next world, and regard heaven as a moral honour (al-qīmah al-akhlāqī), therefore those who want to serve society are seduced towards fame and so on. They claim that the difference between this world and the Hereafter is nothing but like the distinction between economic profit and moral values. This type of belief must be questioned aswell; that if heaven is only mere moralistic benefit why has the Qur'an placed so much emphasis on the return to life of mankind and established the principle of Resurrection? If this were the case then the prophets (as) could have given the same explanation and saved themselves from the allegations of insanity!

Following such absurd arguments, one is then faced with the differences of opinion between the philosophers and the theologians in their discussions regarding matters such as the spiritual and bodily resurrection (ma'ād jismāni wa rūhi). A further example debated over is as to whether matter has the capability of being completely annihilated or not, and as to whether the body in the next life is similar to the material body.

This type of intellectual and philosophical discussion aims to arrive at the reality, however it will result in the realisation of the limitation of one's thought. One should not presume that these discussions would lead towards a complete and essential understanding of the life of the next world. It should be highlighted that mankind has not yet arrived at a complete understanding of some of the realities of this world.

Have the scientists figured out the reality of matter and energy? Can they predict the future? Have they realised what the outcome would be to the world if electrons ceased to move? Are such things possible in this present life or not?

Furthermore, do the philosophers manage, with certainty, to solve all intellectual issues regarding this life? Do the issues pertaining to form, genus, and the relation of the spirit and the body require further research?

Under these above-mentioned restricted circumstances, how can one resolve the issues of the next life considering we have absolutely no experience at all?

Man's imperfect knowledge does not imply that he should fail to at least try and understand the reality of existence. It is beyond question that with the bestowal of the intellect, man has the ability to recognise numerous realities, and through the help of the senses one can discover many secrets from the natural realm. Man must endeavour to carry out research and increase his knowledge and perception through philosophical and practical exertion. Simultaneously he must also have constant awareness of his limitations and guard himself against false interpretations, bearing in mind that:

“You have not been given of the knowledge except a littlefew” (al-Isrā:85) It is sufficient for a believer to know that his destiny is from God, even when he cannot precisely foresee the details or understand the accuracy of certain phenomenon due to the deficiency of his knowledge in that realm.

We will now view the extent to which the intellect can perceive the qualities of the next life and how this life differs from the world we are now in.

Characteristics of the next life from an intellectual viewpoint

Considering the already mentioned arguments for Resurrection, one can deduce that the most important characteristics of the next life are that:

1. The next life must be eternal, as this attribute is placed in the intrinsic nature of man and Divine Wisdom necessitates it.

2. The order of the next world is synthesized in a special manner. This includes the Divine mercy and bounties bestowed by God for those who have reached the ultimate in their existence and are free from sin and imperfection. Such individuals are blessed with absolute felicities unlike those found in this life (dunyā), as it is impossible for such manifestations to be apparent in this life due to the limitation of this world.

3. Two parts characterize the third special feature of the next life. This is in order to divide the tyrants and oppressors from the righteous and upright. The distinction reached by the individual results from their actions carried out in this life. These two divisions are Heaven and Hell.

4. The fourth attribute is derived from the argument for justice, whereby the next life must be so comprehensive that millions of individuals acquire their reward or punishment according to every specific action that they have performed. For example if an individual killed many people then the possibility for his punishment must exist in the next life. In contrast if a person saves many lives then that world must have the potential to reward.

5. Many features can be derived from the argument for justice, including the presumption that the next life must be based on recompense (jazā) as opposed to responsibility and duty (taklīf).

The explanation for understanding the above point is that this world is composed of opposite forces, or actions and reactions where man's desire arrives at a point at which he has to decide between two alternatives. This is the very factor, which makes him responsible or places him in the realm of action (taklīf), and these situations will last until the end of his life. Subsequent to this, Divine Wisdom and Justice are expedient of precisely rewarding or punishing the specific individual for fulfilling the responsibility or carrying out the duty or action. At this time if it is assumed that the Hereafter necessitates responsibility or duty then it is necessary for God to leave the individual free to determine their path. Thereupon there has to be another world for rewarding or punishing them depending upon their actions performed. In reality the world assumed to be the next life is another entirely different world, which is the final abode free from the test of obligation, (meaning that it must not contradict our desires).

Hence, this world is the place of action and duty where man has to choose and endure tests, as compared to the next life where he will receive the fruits of his deeds, in an everlasting realm. Imam Ali (a) in sermon 42 mentions:

“Surely today is the day for action and tomorrow is the day of accounts not action.” Therefore it is from here that the major distinctive factor between this world and the next is understood.

Questions

- 1- Why is it impossible to have complete comprehension of the next life?
- 2- Criticise two examples of the incorrect understandings of the next life.
- 3- How can the characteristics of the next world be known?
- 4- Explain the characteristics of the next world from the intellectual viewpoint.

LESSON FORTY-NINE: FROM DEATH TO RESURRECTION

Introduction

We know that with our limited knowledge we cannot completely or essentially understand the reality of the Hereafter and the hidden abstract world. Therefore we have to suffice with the collective understanding through the intellectual arguments and revelation. In the previous lesson we have indicated the general characteristics of the next life on the bases of certain intellectual arguments and the Qur'an.

It is worth emphasising that some of the words used to describe the Hereafter are vague, as our understanding is not completely accurate because it applies incorrectly to a different example (misdāq). This is not due to the fault of the explanation, rather it is due to the limitation of our understanding and it is doubtless that the best of words used for the portrayal of the realities of the Hereafter are the ones mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an begins explaining the Hereafter, by reminding us of death, and it is for this reason that we shall also begin our explanation with the death of a human being.

All men will die

The Noble Qur'an has emphasised that all men will die and that nothing is eternal or will remain forever in this world. "Everyone on it is ephemeral" (al-Rahmān:26).

In another verse the Qur'an says:

"Every soul shall taste death" (Āl-'Imrān:185).

While addressing to the Prophet of Islam (s) the Qur'an asserts: "You will indeed die, and they [too] will die indeed" (al-Zumar:30)

"We did not give immortality to any human before you. If you are fated to die, will they live on forever?" (al-Anbiyā':34)

Death is considered a universal rule, which does not have any exceptions to it - all humans are aware of this rule.

The one who takes the soul at death

The Noble Qur'an refers to God the Supreme as taking away the souls at death:

"Allah takes the souls at the time of their death." (al-Zumar:42)

In another of its verses God introduces the angel of death (malāk al-mawt) as being appointed for carrying out this task:

"Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord'" (al-Sajdah:11)

In another place the Qur'an describes the taking away of the souls is carried out through the angels and emissaries:

"When death approaches any one of you, our messengers take him away and they do not neglect [their duty]" (al-An'ām:61)

It is evident that when a person uses another person for accomplishing a task, it is correct to attribute the task to both of them. If the second person

utilises a medium to accomplish the task, it would also be correct to attribute the task to all three. Since God, takes the soul away at the time of death through the angel of death and the angel death through those angels who work under him, therefore attributing the taking away of the soul at the time of death through all three agencies would be correct.

Dying with difficulty or ease

One can understand from the Noble Qur'an that the Divine emissaries do not take away souls on an equal level; rather some are taken with ease, whilst others are taken with difficulty and pain. As the Qur'an says, "Those whom the nagels take away while they are pure. They say to them, 'Peace be to you!'" (al-Nahl:32)

In another of its noble verses related to this subject, God says, "Were you to see when the angels take away the faithless, striking their faces and their backs, [saying], 'Taste the punishment of the burning.'" (al-Anfāl:50) One can also say that the manner, in which the souls are taken, depends on the level of faith of the believers and level of infidelity of the disbelievers.

The non-acceptance of faith and forgiveness at the time of death

When death arrives for the infidels and sinners, they will become hopeless and despair over their life, regretting their past and expressing their repentance and faith in God.

However forgiveness will not be granted. The Qur'an says in this regard:

"Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them, or your Lord should come, or some of your Lord's signs should come? The day when some of your Lord signs do come, faith shall not benefit any soul that had not believed beforehand and had not earned some goodness in its faith. Say, 'Wait! We too are waiting!'" (al- An'am:158)

"But [acceptance of] repentance is not for those who go on committing misdeeds: when death approaches any of them, he says, 'I repent now.' Nor is it for those who die while they are faithless. For such We have prepared a painful punishment" (al- Nisā':18) Pharaoh said while drowning in the Nile: "I believe that there is no god but He in whom the children of Israel believe and I am of those who submit." (Yūnus:90)

In response, he is told:

"What! Now? When you have been disobedient heretofore and were among the agents of corruption?! " (Yūnus:91)

The value of returning to the world (dunyā)

Likewise, the Noble Qur'an mentions that when death approaches the infidels and tyrants, a demolishing punishment will descend upon them. At this moment they will wish that they could return to the world and perform all those actions, which are carried out by the faithful believers. They will also wish for God to allow them to return to the world, so that they can compensate for the actions, which they had previously carried out. However their wishes will not be fulfilled.

In certain traditions it has been mentioned that if their wish were granted, they would return and still commit the same heinous actions they committed

throughout their lifetime. Such individuals will express the same desires on the Day of Judgement; however the same negative response will greet them.

“When death comes to one of them, he says, ‘My Lord! Take me back, that I may act righteously in what I have left behind’. ‘By no means! These are mere words that he says.’” (al-Mu’minūn:99-100)

“Or say, when he sights the punishment, ‘If only there had been a second chance for me I would be among the virtuous!’” (al-Zumar:58)

“Were you to see when they are brought to a halt by the Fire, whereupon they will say, ‘If only we were sent back [into the world]! Then we will not deny the signs of our Lord, and we will be among the faithful!’” (al-An’ām:27, 28)

“They shall cry therein for help: ‘Our Lord! Bring us out, so that we may act righteously -different from what we used to do!’” (Fātir:37)

From these verses one can clearly understand that the Hereafter is not the place where one can choose a path or take responsibility. Even the certainty (yaqīn) that is accomplished shortly before death, or in the next world will not benefit, nor contribute to the perfection of the disobedient individuals. The infidels will desire their return to this world and wish to adopt the correct faith and act accordingly; however their pleas will not be acknowledged.

The ‘intermediate world’ (barzakh) We can detect from the Qur’anic verses that after death and before the Day of Judgement, man is placed for duration in the world of the grave (qabr) and in the intermediate world (barzakh), where he experiences relative pleasure and pain. In several traditions it has been mentioned that a believer in this intermediate world encounters punishment for any sins he has committed, as a form of purification in order that he may be saved on the Day of Judgement.

The verses indicating the intermediate world require a detailed discussion of interpretation (tafsīr), which is not suitable here due to certain limitations. Therefore we have compensated by only mentioning the verses that are referred to as the ‘barzakh’ in the Qur’an:

“And ahead of them is a barrier until the day they will be resurrected” (al-Mu’minūn: 100).

Questions

1. Explain the Qur’anic verses related to the characteristics of the life of human beings as being non-eternal.
2. Who takes the soul away at the time of death and how can the contradiction between the verses be resolved?
3. What types of differences exist when taking the soul away?
4. Explain the verses with regards to faith and repentance and forgiveness at the time of death.
5. Which type of return (back to life) is denied in the Qur’an, and is this different from Resurrection? Illustrate your answer.
6. Explain the intermediate world.

LESSON FIFTY: THE IMAGE OF RESURRECTION IN THE QUR'AN

Introduction

It is understood from the Holy Qur'an, that the establishment of the Resurrection is not restricted to restoring life to human beings; rather the system of this world will change fundamentally, and another world with different characteristics will come into existence i.e. an unpredictable world about whose particularities we cannot acquire any exact insight. All human beings from the entire time span of creation will then be presented with the results of their deeds and meet eternal bliss or chastisement.

There are numerous Qur'anic verses in relation to this subject, and we will present here a brief summery of their contents.

The conditions of the earth, sea and mountain

There will be a horrific earthquake (refer to al-Zalzalah:1, al-Hajj:1, al-Wāqī'ah:4, al-Muzzammil:14); the earth will bring forth that which it contains (al-Zalzalah:2, al- Inshiqāq:4); it will explode (al-Hāqqah:14, al-Fajr:21); the seas will split (al- Takwīr:6, al- Infitār:3). The mountains will move (al-Kahf:47, al-Nahl:88, al- Tūr:10, al-Takwīr:2), explode (al-Hāqqah:4, al-Wāqī'ah:5), change into hills of sand (al-Muzzammil:14), and will later change into blown cotton (al-Ma'ārij:9, al- Qāri'ah:5), and scatter in the sky (Tāha:105-107, al-Mursalāt: 10); nothing except a mirage will remain where once the highest mountains existed (al-Kahf:8, al-Naba':20).

The condition of the sky and stars

The moon (refer to al-Qiyāmah:8, Ibrāhīm:2, al Ādiyāt:10. al-Tāriq:9, Qāf:22, al- Hāqqah:18), the sun (al-Takwīr:1, al-Hajj:65, al-Furqān:26, Ghāfir:16, al- Infitār:19), and the larger stars (some of which are far bigger and brighter than our sun), will become dark and cool (al-Takwīr:2, Hūd:105, Tāha:108-111, al- Naba':38), and will face disorders in their movement (al-Infitār: 2, 'Abasa:34-37, al-Shu'arā':88, al-Ma'ārij:10-14, Luqmān:33). For example, the sun and the moon will come together (al-Qiyāmah:9, al-Baqarah:166, al-Mu'minūn:101), and the sky, which has surrounded the world like a strong ceiling will become loose and trembling (al-Tūr:1, al-Hāqqah:16, al-Zukhruf:67), it will split and tear (al-Rahmān: 37, al- Hāqqah:16, al-Muzzammil:18, al-Mursalāt:9, al-Naba':19, al-Infitār:1, al- Inshiqāq:1), and become totally annihilated (al-Anbiyā:104, al-Takwīr:11). Other heavenly bodies will change into melting metals (al-Ma'ārij:8, al-An'ām:31, Maryam:39, Yūnus:54) and the whole atmosphere will become full of smoke and clouds (al-Furqān:25, al-Dukhān:10).

The trumpet of death

It will be under these circumstances that the trumpet of death will be blown and cause all living things to perish (al-Zumar:68, al-Hāqqah:13, Yāsīn:49), no sign of life will remain. Terror and fear will grip all (al-Naml: 87-89) except those who know the facts and secrets of existence, their hearts will be filled with the knowledge and love of God the Supreme.

The trumpet of life and the beginning of resurrection

Then, another world with the capability of being eternal will be established (Ibrāhīm:48, Zumar:67, Maryam:38, Qāf:22), and the whole universe will be illuminated in the light of God (al-Zumar:69), and the Horn of Life will be blown (al-Zumar:68, Kahf:99, Qāf:20,42, al-Naba':18, al-Nāzi'āt:13-14, al-Muddaththir:8, al-Sāffāt:19). All human beings [even animals (al-An'ām:38, al-Takwīr:5)] will become alive at once (al-Nahl:77, al-Qamar:50, al-Naba':18), and like grasshoppers and butterflies which scatter in the air (al-Qāri'ah:4, al-Qamar:7), will move quickly (Qāf:44, al-Ma'ārij:43), fearfully and excitedly (Qāf:20) towards God (Yāsīn:51, al-Mutaffifīn:30, al-Qiyāmah:12,30). All the people will gather together (al-Kahf:99, al-Taghābun:9, al-Nisā':87, al-An'ām:12, Āl-Imrān:9, Hūd:103) and most of them will think that their stay between the material world and the Resurrection has been for one hour, one day or a few days (al-Rūm:55, al-Nāzi'āt:46, Yūnus:45, al-Isrā':52, Tāha:103-104, al-Mu'minūn:113, al-Ahqāf:35).

The presence of God's government and the disappearance of consanguine and relative-in-law relations In the other world, the facts will be revealed, and God's government and Kingdom will reign supreme. The people will become so affected that no-one will dare to speak aloud; everybody will be concerned with his/her own faith, even the children will escape from their parents and the relatives from each other. Any kind of relationship among the people will be destroyed. Friendships based on worldly and satanic benefits and standards will change into enmity and the hearts will be full of sorrow and regrets about the sins of the past.

The Divine court of justice

The Divine court of justice will be established after the resurrection, and the deeds of all God's servants will be presented to them (Āl-Imrān:30, al-Takwīr:14, al-Isrā': 49); and the deeds' documents will be distributed (al-Isrā':13-14,71, al-Hāqqah: 19,25, al-Inshiqāq:7,10). The correspondence between the doer and the action is so obvious that there will be no need to ask anyone what he/she has done (al-Rahmān: 39). In that court, the angels, the prophets and other selected people by God will bear witness (al-Zumar:69, al-Baqarah:143, Āl-Imrān:140, al-Nisā':41&69, Hūd:18, al-Hajj:78, Qāf:21, Nahl:84,89). The hands, feet, and even the skin of the people will provide evidence (for what their owners have done) (al-Nūr:24, Yāsīn:65, Fussilat:20-21); the case of every body will be carefully analysed and all deeds will be measured by the Divine scale (al-A'rāf:8-9, al-Anbiyā':47), everybody will be judged according to justice (Yūnus:54,93, al-Nahl:78, al-Zumar: 69,75). Every individual will meet with the result of his attempts (al-Najm:40-41, al-Baqarah:281,286, al-An'ām:70, Hūd:111, Ibrāhīm:51, Tāha:15, Tūr:21, Yāsīn:54, al-Zumar:24), and the doers of good will receive reward tenfold (al-An'ām:160). No-one will bear the responsibility of what others have done (al-Najm:39, al-An'ām:146, Fātir:18, al-Zumar:7) except those who mislead others, who will carry not only the responsibility of their own sins but also those of all the mislead individuals (Nahl:25, 'Ankabūt:13, Also it is possible from these verses to

guess that those who have helped people move towards God in this world will receive double reward. This is, nevertheless, explicitly stated in the traditions). However, no reduction will be made in the punishment of the misled. Moreover, no exchange (of deeds) will be accepted from anybody (al-Baqarah:48-123, Āl-‘Imrān:91, Luqmān:23, al-Mā’idah:36).

Nobody’s mediation will be accepted, (al-Baqarah: 48,123,254, al-Muddaththir:48) except that of those who are permitted to do so by God, and they will mediate according to the standards, which are inline with His satisfaction (al-Anbiyā’:28, al-Baqarah:255, Yūnus:3, Saba’:23, al-Zukhruf:86, Tāha:109).

Towards the eternal residence

God’s judgment will be announced and the doers of good will be separated from the guilty (Hūd:105-108, Yāsīn:59). The believers with their happy and glorious faces will move towards Paradise (al-Zumar:73, Maryam:85, ‘Abasa:28-29), while the unbelievers and hypocrites with their unhappy and dark faces move abjectly towards Hell (al-Zumar:60-71, Yūnus:27, Maryam:86, Isrā:72,97). Both groups will, nevertheless pass Hell (Maryam:71-72); the glory of the believers’ faces will shed light making their way clear (al-Hadīd:12), whilst the unbelievers and hypocrites will remain engulfed in darkness.

The hypocrites who had some connection with the believers in the world will call upon them and ask them, “Look at us so that we can use your light”, but they hear “You should go back to the world to get light”. They will again ask “Weren’t we friends in the world?” and hear that “You were with us outwardly but you made problems for yourselves; you became hard-hearted and surrendered to doubts and today you meet the results of all your deeds; no excuse is accepted from you and the unbelievers”.

Finally the unbelievers and hypocrites will descend deep into Hell (al-Hadīd:13-15, al-Nisā’:140).

When the believers approach Paradise, its doors will open, the angels will welcome them and together with greetings and respect they will give them the good news of eternal prosperity (al-Zumar:73, al-Ra’d: 22,24). On the other hand, when the unbelievers and hypocrites arrive in Hell, its doors will open and the angels of punishment will harshly blame them and inform them about the eternal punishment (al-Zumar:71-72, al-Tahrīm:6, al-Anbyā’:103).

Paradise

There will be gardens as vast as the skies and earth in Paradise (Āl-‘Imrān:133, al-Hadīd:21). The gardens will be filled with different types of trees with all kinds of ripe fruits, easily accessible (al-Hāqqah:23, Dahr: 6,1,21). There will be magnificent buildings, and clear and pure rivers of water (al-Baqarah:25, Āl-‘Imrān:15), milk, honey (Muhammad:15, al-Dahr:6,18,21, al-Mutaffifīn:28); whatever the residents of Paradise wish for (al-Nahl:31, al-Furqān:16, al-Zumar:34, Fussilat:31, al-Zukhruf:70-71, Qāf: 35), and even beyond their wishes (Qāf:35), will be at their disposal.

Those who enter Paradise will become adorned in clothes made of the softest thread like silk, and different types of jewellery (al-Kahf:31, al-

Hajj:23, Fātir:33, al- Dukhān:53, al-Dahr:21, al-A'rāf:32), they will sit in front of each other, leaning on their soft seats studded with jewels, and praise and worship God (al-A'rāf:43, Yūnus:10, Faātir:34, Zumar:74). They will not talk in vain nor hear any meaningless speech (Maryam:62, al-Naba':35); they will not be disturbed by cold or hot weather (al-Dahr:13). They will never become tired, and nothing will cause them to suffer (Maryam:62, al-Naba':35). No fear, sadness (al-A'rāf:35, al-Hijr:48) or rancour (al- A'rāf:35, al-Hijr:48) will they find in their hearts. Beautiful maids will move around them (al-Wāqī'ah:17, Dahr:19) and offer glasses of Paradisal drink to them, which will provide them with happiness and refreshment and will suffer them no ill (al- Sāffāt:45&47, Sād:51, al-Tūr:23, al-Dahr:5-6,15-19, al-Naba':34). They will also eat various fruits and the meat of different kinds of poultry (Sād:51, al-Tūr:22, al- Rahmān: 52,68, al-Wāqī'ah:20-21), and will have dialogues with their pretty, kind and clean spouses (al-Baqarah:25, Āl-'Imrān:15, al-Nisā': 57, al-Tūr:20, al-Rahmān:56,70-74, al-Wāqī'ah: 22-23,34-37), above all they will enjoy the spiritual pleasure of living in God's Paradise (Āl-'Imrān:15, al-Tawbah:21,73, al-Hadīd:20, al-Māidah:119, al-Bayyinah 8). They will be subject to God's kindness, which will delight them; however, no-one can imagine the degree of such happiness (al- Sajdah:17). This unique prosperity and those indescribable blessings, kindnesses, life in God's Paradise and residence close to Him continue forever (al-Baqarah:25,82, Āl-'Imrān:107,198, al-Nisā':13,57,122, al-Tawbah:22,72, Yūnus:26, Ibrāhīm:23, al- Kahf:3,108, Tāha:76, 'Ankabūt: 58, Qāf:34) and never end (al-Dukhān:56).

Hell

The unbelievers and hypocrites in whose hearts there is no belief in God will reside in Hell (al-Nisā':140). The capacity of Hell is so that after surrounding the guilty, it will still ask for more (Qāf:30). Hell is but fire and torture.

The flames of fire will blaze from everywhere and the ear-splitting and harsh sounds will increase the fright and anxiety of the disbelievers (Hūd:106, al-Anbyā':100, al- Furqān:12, al-Mulk:7-8). The faces will be sad, frowning, dark, ugly and wrinkled (Āl-'Imrān:106, al-Mulk:27, al-Zumar:60). No sign of love, mercy, or flexibility will even be seen on the faces of the angels of Hell (Tahrīm 91). The residents of Hell will be tied in iron chains (Ra'd, Ibrāhīm:49, Saba':33), and fire will engulf them from head to toe (Ibrāhīm: 50, Furqān:13, Jinn:15); they are in fact, the fuel for the fire (al-Baqarah:24, Āl-'Imrān:10, al-Tahrīm:6). There is no voice in Hell except the groans, complaints, and screams of the residents and the dreadful shouts of Hell's guards (al-Furqān:13-14, al-Inshiqāq:11). Boiling water, which will cause their insides to melt, will be poured on the inhabitants of Hell (al-Hajj:19-20, al- Dukhān:48). When, due to their great thirst and temperature, they ask for water, some hot, polluted, and fetid water will be given to them and they will drink it eagerly and greedily (al-An'am: 70, Yūnus:4, al-Kahf: 29, al-Wāqī'ah:42-44). Their food will be from the Zaqūm tree, which grows from fire and whose fruit will increase

the irritation of their insides (al-Sāffāt:62-66, Sād:57, al-Dukhān:45-46, al-Naba':25).

Their clothes are made of a black and sticky material and are by themselves a torture (Ibrāhīm:17, Tāha:74, Fātir:36). Their companions will be the Satans and Jinn to whom the residents of Hell would wish they had no relation (Zukhruf:38-39, Sād:85). Moreover, they curse and damn each other (al-A'rāf:38-39, al-'Ankabūt:25).

As soon as they start apologizing to God about their deeds, the commands of 'Go away!' and 'Shut up!' make them quiet (al-Mu'minūn:108, al-Rūm:57, al-Mursalāt:35-36). They will ask the guards of Hell to intervene and request some decrease in their punishment from God; they will answer "Didn't God send you His prophets and provide you with all the means of guidance?" (Ghāfir 49-50). Then, they will ask for their death and learn that they will be in Hell forever (al-Zukhruf:77).

Although death rushes to them from everywhere, they will never die (Ibrāhīm:17, Tāha:74, Fātir:36); as their skins burn, they will be replaced by new skins, so that the punishment continues forever (Nisā':56).

They will ask the people in Paradise for some food and water, and will hear in reply that; "God has prohibited you from the blessings of Paradise" (al-A'rāf:50). Then the residents of Paradise ask them "What caused your bad luck and took you to Hell?" They will answer "We didn't pray and worship God, and didn't help the poor. In addition, we accompanied wrong doers and rejected the Resurrection" (al-Muddaththir:29-47).

They will then start to struggle and fight against each other (Sād:59-64); the mislead will tell the misleaders, "You deceived us" and they will reply, "You followed us willingly" (al-A'rāf:38-9, al-Sāffāt:27-33, Qāf:

27-28). The inferior will say to their superiors "You caused us to be in such desperate conditions", and they will answer, "Did we change your way towards God forcefully?" (Ibrāhīm:21, Saba':31-33).

Finally, they will turn to Satan saying, "You mislead us" and he will reply, "God promised you with truth, but you didn't accept, while I promised you with untruth and you accepted. Therefore, instead of blaming me blame yourselves". He will then continue, "however, at present, none of us can help the other" (Ibrāhīm:22). Thus, they have no alternative but to accept the results of their own disobedience and face the consequences of remaining in torture forever (al-Baqarah:39, Āl-'Imrān: 88&116, al-Nisā':169, al-An'ām:128, Tāha:101, al-Jinn:23).

Questions

1. Describe the conditions of the sky and the earth at the time of Resurrection.
2. Explain the way Resurrection begins and discuss its characteristics.
3. Describe the Divine court of justice.
4. Explain the movement of the believers and disbelievers towards their eternal residence.
5. Describe the blessings in Paradise.
6. Discuss the conditions of Hell and its residents.
7. Explain the dialogues among the residents of Hell.

LESSON FIFTY-ONE: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

Introduction

It is possible to employ our knowledge acquired through wisdom and tradition and compare and evaluate this world and the Hereafter in different ways. Fortunately, such a comparison has been made in the Holy Qur'an, and it is possible to use Qur'anic assumptions for a true evaluation of life in this world and in the Hereafter and explore the priority of life in the Hereafter.

The finiteness of this World and infiniteness of the Hereafter

The first remarkable difference between this world and the Hereafter is the finite life of this world and the endless life in the world following it. Anyone's life in this world will sooner or later come to its end. Even though a person may live in this world for hundreds or thousands of years, his life will eventually come to its end at the time of nature's final evolution and when the first trumpet is blown, as explained in the previous lessons. On the other hand, about eighty verses of the Holy Qur'an express the eternity of life in the Hereafter (refer to verses cited in previous lesson re:

the eternity of Paradise and Hell), and it is obvious that any finite life, no matter how long it is, will not be comparable to an infinite life.

Therefore, the Hereafter due to its infinity has great priority over this world; this has been a matter of concern in a number of verses. Words like infinite - 'Abqaa' (al- Kahf: 46, Maryam:76, Tāha:73,131, al-Qasas:60, Ghāfir:39, al-A'la: 17), and finite - qalīl (Āl-'Imrān:197, al-Nisā':77, al-Tawbah:38, al-Nahl:117), have been employed to explain the Hereafter and this world respectively. In some other verses, such concepts have been expressed by making a simulation between worldly life and a plant, which is green for a few days, then changes to yellow, and later fades and dies (Yūnus:24, Kahf:45-46, Hadīd:2). Finally, in one verse, it is stated that, "what is with Allah shall last" (al-Nahl:96).

Isolation of Blessing from Punishment

Another fundamental difference between the worldly life and the Hereafter is that this world's pleasure and life is mixed with suffering and hardship. It is unlikely that a group of people will always live in happiness and tranquility while another group live in sadness and anxiety. Rather, all people are involved, more or less, in happiness, pleasure and peace together with suffering, sadness and anxiety. However, the Hereafter comprises of two separate sections (Paradise and Hell). In one section, there is no sign of punishment, suffering, panic or sadness; while in the other, there is nothing but fire, pain, regret and sadness. All the joys and sufferings are obviously of this world's nature.

Similar comparisons have also been made in the Holy Qur'an, and the priority of the blessings of the other world, and living close to God has been emphasised over this world's blessings (Āl-'Imrān 15, al-Nisā':77, al

An'ām:32, al-A'rāf:32, Yūsuf:109, al-Nahl:30, al-Kahf 46). Similarly, it has been maintained in the Holy Qur'an that punishment in the Hereafter is much harder than suffering and hardship in this world (al-Ra'd:34, Tāha:127, al-Sajdah:21, al-Zumar:36, al-Qalam:33).

The nobility of the Hereafter

Another vital difference between this world and the Hereafter is that life in this world is an introduction to the other world and is a means for reaching eternal prosperity; life in the other world is the main objective. Even though, the life of man with all its material and spiritual blessing is merely a means to test man and cannot be considered as the aim of this life. The real value of what man attains in this life can only truly be seen in the Hereafter (al-Qasas:77).

Therefore, one who ignores the other world and focuses on the bounties of this world and selects the worldly pleasures as his ultimate objective has not recognised the real value of this world. He has, nevertheless, considered some imaginary value for it and has mistakenly chosen the means instead of the goal. This will be nothing more than 'entertainment' and 'deception'; and this is why the Holy Qur'an refers to worldly life as 'play' and 'entertainment' and a means of 'deception' (Āl-'Imrān:185, al-'Ankabūt:64, Muhammad:36, al-Hadīd:20); whereas, the Hereafter is claimed to be the true life (al-'Ankabūt:64, al-Fajr:24). However it is the intention behind and way by which the blessings of this life are used that will be judged, as the true believer can take advantage of worldly blessings in order to aim towards eternal bliss.

Due to the privileges of the Hereafter and the blessings bestowed upon man by choosing a life close to God over worldly desires, it would certainly seem unwise to choose the path of this life over that of the next (al-A'lā:16, al-Fajr:24). Choosing the wrong path would result only in regret and remorse. However, the disgracefulness of such a selection is more vivid when we realise that choosing this world over the Hereafter is not only the cause of one's deprivation from eternal prosperity but it is also a vital factor affecting his/her adversity. Note:

If man could select the finite pleasures of this world over the eternal prosperity of the Hereafter without facing any evil outcome, such a decision due to the priority of the Hereafter would still be idiotic.

However, no one can avoid his faith in the Hereafter; therefore, the one who spends his life in favor of worldly desires and ignores or totally rejects the Hereafter, will not only be deprived from Paradise but also will be tied up in Hell's torture forever and meet a double loss (Hūd:22, al-Kahf:104-105, al-Naml:4-5).

This is why the Holy Qur'an, on one hand, refers to the blessings of the Hereafter and warns against being deceived by worldly desires (al-Baqarah:102,200, al-Tawbah:38, al-Rūm:33, Fātir:5, al-Zukhruf:34-35) and, on the other, counts the losses of falling in love with this world and forgetting or rejecting the Hereafter or casting doubt on it. Such points as the Holy Qur'an emphasises will cause one's adversity and eternal misfortune (al-Isrā':10, al-Baqarah:86, al-An'ām:130, Yūnus:7-8, Hūd:15-16, Ibrāhīm:3, al-Nahl:22, Luqmān:4). Therefore, it is unlikely that one who

chooses this world over the other will only be deprived from the other world's rewards; rather in addition to that, such a person will be sentenced to eternal punishment.

The secret behind the above point is that the lover of this world has wasted the talents provided for him by God and has destroyed or changed them for a fruitless tree for example, which could have given the fruit of eternal prosperity. Such a person has not thanked (worshiped) the real provider of such gifts and has wasted His blessings in a way, which has failed to cause His satisfaction. Thus, when he finds the evil results of his choice, he would wish to be mere dust (al-Naba':40).

Questions

- 1- Discuss the differences between this world and the Hereafter.
- 2- Explain the reason why this world is at loss.
- 3- Describe the failings of falling in love with the material world.
- 4- Why will disbelief in the Hereafter cause eternal punishment?

LESSON FIFTY-TWO: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND HEREAFTER

Introduction

So far, we have realized that man's life is not limited to the transient life of this world and that he will be brought to life again in the Hereafter, and granted eternal life. It also became apparent that the future life in comparison with this life is so pure and noble, that earthly life does not deserve to be called life. However, this does not mean that life in the Hereafter refers to one's good or bad reputation, nor does it mean that it is conceptual and unreal.

It is now reasonable to discuss the relationship between life in this world and the Hereafter, and to clarify the type of relationship between the two. In the course of our previous discussions such a relationship what made somewhat clear, but due to some misunderstanding of the concept, it will be helpful to elaborate using wisdom and Qur'anic evidence to specify its nature.

This world is the fertile land for the Hereafter

The first point to be stressed is that prosperity and adversity in the Hereafter depend on man's behaviour in this world. It will be impossible for a person in the Hereafter to exert efforts to obtain blessings in the same world. It is unlikely that those with a higher physical or mental capability can further benefit, or that sly individuals can benefit from others efforts and struggles. However, some ignorant people have thought that the Hereafter is totally independent from this world.

The Holy Qur'an quotes some disbelievers saying as follows: "and I do not think that the Hour will ever set in. And even if I am returned to my Lord I will surely find a resort better than this" (al-Kahf:36) In another verse, the Holy Qur'an maintains: "I do not think the Hour will ever set in, and in case I am returned to my Lord, I will indeed have the best [reward] with Him" (Fussilat:50) Such people either supposed that they could exert their efforts in the Hereafter and receive blessings forthwith or speculated that their being wealthy in this world indicates that God had shown them special favor, and as a result they would receive the same favor in the Hereafter. Finally, if a person believes that the other world is completely isolated from this world and good or evil deeds in this world will not affect the blessings or punishment in the Hereafter, he has no belief in Resurrection -- one of the main principles of all Divine religions. This principle is fulfilled by one's being punished or rewarded for his worldly deeds. This is why this world is compared to a 'market', 'commercial firm', or as a 'fertile land' where ones sows the seeds for the Hereafter'. It means that in this world, one should work, cultivate, and make every effort to meet the everlasting outcomes in the Hereafter (N.B. In the Qur'an the worldly rewards and punishments have been mentioned; however the continuing reward and punishment is specific to the Hereafter). This is the essence of all reasoning and debates concerning the Resurrection in the Holy Qur'an and needs no further explanation.

The worldly benefits (blessings) will bring no prosperity in the Hereafter

Some have thought that their wealth, children or other means of worldly pleasures will bring them peace and tranquility in the Hereafter. The burial of precious jewelry and even food together with the dead person has probably resulted from a similar belief.

The Holy Qur'an states that neither wealth nor children by themselves (irrespective of their behavior) will lead to living in closeness to God (Saba':37), nor will they bring any benefit to their owners in the Hereafter (al-Shu'arā:88, Luqmān:33, Al-'Imrān:10,116). Such relations are mainly specific to this world and will be broken in the Hereafter (al-Baqarah:166, al-Mu'minūn:101). Everyone will lose his worldly relations (al-An'ām:

94) and will face God alone (Maryam:80,95). However, the spiritual and Divine relations will continue and as a result, the believers who had such relationships with their spouses, children and relatives will be together in Paradise (al-Ra'd:23, Ghāfir:8, al-Tūr:21).

Therefore, the relationship between this world and the Hereafter is not of the type of the relationship between worldly phenomena. It is unlikely that one who is more powerful, more beautiful, and more joyful or one who enjoys more pleasures in this world will live similarly in the Hereafter. If this were the case, then the Pharaohs and other rich people would be more likely to be prosperous in the Hereafter. Nevertheless, there will be those who have been powerless, ill and poor in this world but due to the performance of their Divine duties they will exchange their pitiful earthly life for the bountiful and prosperous Hereafter, enjoying eternal blessings.

Some ignorant people believe that the message of the verse: "But whoever has been blind in this [world], will be blind in the Hereafter, and [even] more astray from the [right] way". (al-Isrā':72) Is that worldly health and pleasures are in direct correspondence with health and pleasures in the Hereafter; however, they do not consider the fact that the term 'blind' in the above verse does not mean physical blindness rather it means 'ignorance', or spiritual blindness. Another verse maintains:

"Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but the hearts turn blind -those which are in the breasts!" (al-Hajj:46) The Holy Qur'an states elsewhere:

"But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind. He will say, 'My Lord! Why have You raised me blind, though I used to see?' He will say:

'So it is. Our signs came to you, but you forgot them, and thus you will be forgotten today.'" (TāHa:124-126) Therefore, the reason for blindness in the next world results from forgetting God's signs in this world, as opposed to physical blindness.

Finally, it must be noted that the relationship between this world and the Hereafter is not similar to the relationship between causes and their effects in this world.

Worldly benefits (blessings) will not lead to adversity in the Hereafter

Some people have cause to believe that the blessings of this world and those of the Hereafter are on a counter-relationship. Hence those who failed to enjoy the blessings of this world will consequently meet prosperity in the Hereafter, while those who enjoyed the blessings of this world will be deprived from prosperity in the Hereafter.

The advocates of this idea have justified it by referring to some verses and traditions in which the worshippers of this world have claimed not to enjoy any of the blessings of the Hereafter (al-Baqarah:200, Āl-‘Imrān:77, al-Isrā’:18, al-Shu’arā:20).

However, being in love with this world does not equal enjoying worldly blessings, rather the lover of this world is one who sets worldly desires as the objective of all his attempts and employs all his strength in gaining them even if he does not meet his desires. On the other hand, a lover of the Hereafter is one who does not fall in love with worldly pleasures, but chooses the life of the Hereafter as his objective, even though he may be enjoying worldly blessings. For example, Solomon (a) and many of the prophets and Imams (a) have found pleasure in worldly blessings; however, they have employed them for obtaining prosperity and God’s paradise in the Hereafter. Therefore, there is neither a direct nor a counter-relationship between the blessings of this or the next life. All the blessings and disasters of this world have been distributed amongst the people based on God’s perfect wisdom (al-Zukhruf:32), and all shall be tested through them (al-Anfāl:28, al-Anbiyā:35, al-A’rāf:168, al-Kahf:7, al-Māidah:48, al-An’ām:165, al-Naml:40, Āl-‘Imrān:186). Thus, enjoying or being deprived from worldly blessing does not by itself indicate living close to or far from God’s mercy and will not lead to prosperity or adversity in the Hereafter (Āl-‘Imrān:179, al-Mu’minūn:56, al-Fajr:15-16).

Conclusion

It can be deduced from such discussions that if we reject every kind of relationship between this world and the Hereafter, it amounts to the rejection of the concept of Resurrection. However, there is no relationship between the blessings in this world and in the Hereafter, nor is there any relationship between adversity in this world and that in the Hereafter. In general, the relationship between this world and the Hereafter is not of the type of relation between worldly phenomena and is not limited to physical or biological rules. On the contrary, the cause of joy or punishment in the Hereafter is the result of the use of man’s free-will in this world. This does not have any connection with (the rule of) using power and energy for the changing of matter; rather it refers to the origin of such deeds, such as inner belief or disbelief. This is the message of hundreds of verses in the Holy Qur’an which state that prosperity in the Hereafter depends on one’s belief in God, Resurrection, God’s prophets and performance of acts related to worship, such as praying, fasting, holy war, spending money on the needy, carrying out favours for God’s servants, ordering others to enjoin the good and prohibiting them from committing sins, struggling against the disbelievers and the oppressors, and establishing justice in the society. On the other hand, it maintains that being bound by God’s punishment will be the outcome of disbelief, dualism, hypocrisy, rejecting the Resurrection and

prophets, and committing all types of sins and oppressions. The Holy Qur'an in a number of verses briefly introduces 'belief and good deeds' (Refer to: al-Baqarah: 25,38,62,82,103,112,277, Āl-Imrān:15,57,114,115,133,179,195,198, al-Nisā':13,57,122,124,146,152,162, 173, al-Maidah:9,65,69, al-An'ām:48, al-Tawbah:72, Yūnus:4,9,63-64, al-Ra'd:29, Ibrāhim:23, al-Nahl:97, al-Kahf:2,29,30,107, Tāha:75, al-Hajj:143,50,56, al-Furqān:15, al-Ankabūt:7,9,58, al-Rūm:15, Luqmān:8, al-Sajdah:19, Saba':4,37, Fātir:7, Sād:49, al-Zumar:20,33,35, Ghāfir:40, Fussilat:8, al-Shūra:22,26, al-Ghāshiyah:30, al-Fath:17, al-Hadīd:12,21, al-Talāq:11, al-Inshiqāq:25, al-Burūj:11, al-Tīn:6, al-Bayyinah:7-8) as the cause of prosperity in the Hereafter and 'disbelief and the committal of sins' (Refer to: al-Baqarah:24,39,81,104,161-162, Āl-Imrān:21,56,86,88,91,116,131,176-177,196-197, al-Nisā':14,56,121,145,151,161,168-169,173, al-Maidah:10,36,72,86, al-An'ām:49, al-Tawbah:3,68, Yūnus:4,8, al-Ra'd:5, al-Kahf:32, Ghāfir:6, al-Shūra:26, al-Ghāshiyah:11, al-Fath:13,17, al-Hadīd:19, al-Taghābun:10, al-Mulk:6, al-Inshiqāq:22,24, al-Ghāshiyah:23-24, al-Bayyinah:6) as the reason for one's eternal bad luck.

Questions

1. What problem arises if we reject the relationship between this world and the Hereafter?
2. What is meant fertile land concerning the next world?
3. What is the relationship between the blessings of this world and those of the next?
4. What is the relationship between the blessings of this world and the punishment in the next?
5. Among which worldly affairs and prosperity or adversity in the Hereafter, is there a true relationship?

LESSON FIFTY-THREE: THE TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE HERE AFTER

Introduction

We understand (from previous discussions) that there is a direct relationship between belief in God and good deeds on one side, and living close to God and His blessings in the Hereafter on the other, or between disbelief and sins on one side and living far from God and being deprived from eternal blessings on the other. Moreover, we found that there is a counter-relationship between belief in God and good deeds on one side and punishment in the Hereafter on the other, or between disbelief and sins on one side and eternal blessings on the other. There is no doubt about the origin of such relationships, and rejection of them amounts to the rejection of the Qur'an. However, there are some points about this vital issue, which need explanation. For example, are such relationships true and noble or are they dependent on situations and conventions? What kind of relationship is there between belief in God and good deeds, or between disbelief and sin? Is there any cause/effect relationship between good and evil deeds?

In this lesson, the first point will be explained and it will be clarified that such relationships are not false or conventional.

True or conventional relationships

As already mentioned, the relationship between worldly deeds, and blessings or punishment in the Hereafter is not similar to material or common relationships, and cannot be explained in terms of physical, chemical, or other similar relations. The assumption that, on the basis of the rules of the conversion of matter and energy, the consumed energy in performing actions would be converted into blessings or punishment in the Hereafter, would be wrong. Firstly the consumed energy of one's speech and behavior would be insufficient, and could not even provide enough energy to be converted into an apple, let alone the infinite number of paradise's blessings.

Secondly, the conversion of energy and matter follows specific rules and does not have anything to do with the goodness or badness of deeds, or the intention of their performer. There is no rule of nature for distinguishing between sincere or hypocritical acts so that the energy consumed for one changes to blessing and for the other changes to punishment. Thirdly, the energy, which was once used for some kind of worship, may be used for the committing of a sin on another occasion.

However, rejecting such a relationship does not equate complete rejection of true relations because the scope of true relations includes unknown and non-experimental relationships. Moreover, in the same way empirical sciences cannot approve cause/effect relations between the events of this world and those of the other, they cannot reject all types of such relations between them either. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that good or evil acts will have true effects on one's soul and due to that some individuals are able to do extraordinary acts in this world. The same effects

will also cause blessings or punishment in the Hereafter. Such points can be proved on the basis of philosophical principles, which are beyond the scope of this book.

Qur'anic Evidence

Although in some verses there are references to reward and punishment (The term reward has been mentioned 90 times in the Qur'an and the term punishment 100 times), Qur'anic expressions justify false and conventional relations, other verses indicate that the relationship between one's deeds in this world and results in the Hereafter is beyond such relations. Therefore, it might be reasonable to say that the former group of verses is to make understanding such concepts easier for the majority of people to whom they are more familiar.

In some traditions, there is evidence indicating that man's free deeds have different spiritual representations revealed in the world between this world and the Hereafter and on Resurrection.

The following represents some verses in which the existence of a true relationship between one's deeds and their outcome in the Hereafter is emphasized.

"Any good that you send ahead for your souls, you shall find it with Allah" (al-Baqara: 110)

"The day when every soul will find present whatever good it has done; and as to whatever evil it has done it will wish there were a far distance between it and itself" (Āl-ʿImrān: 30)

"The day when a person will observe what his hands have sent ahead" (al-Naba':40)

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (al-Zalzalah:7-8)

"Shall you be requited except with what you used to do?" (al-Naml:90)

"Indeed those who consume the property of orphans wrongfully, only ingest fire into their bellies, and soon they will enter the Blaze" (al-Nisā': 10)

It is obvious that by merely meeting with what one has done in this world, it is not the reward or punishment for his or her deeds in the Hereafter. On the contrary, what is met is the spiritual representation of them revealed in the form of blessings or punishment and accordingly the person will either be in pleasure or in torture. As it is understood from the last verse explained above, the underlying representation of eating (consuming) an orphan's wealth is eating fire; when in the Hereafter the facts are revealed, one finds that by eating illegal food one has in fact been eating fire and accordingly the person will feel the irritation of his inside. He will then be questioned: "Is this fire different from the illegal wealth you ate (consumed)?"

Questions

1. What is the problem with assuming that the representation of deeds in the Hereafter follows the rule of converting matter and energy?

2. How is it possible to explain the true relationship between one's deeds and their results in the Hereafter?

3. What verses indicate the representation of deeds? Why have terms like 'reward' and 'punishment' have been used?
4. Is it possible to describe the representation of deeds (in the Hereafter) as 'being represented by their worldly characteristics'? Why?

LESSON FIFTY-FOUR: THE ROLE OF FAITH AND BLASHEMY IN ONE'S ETERNAL PROSPERITY OR ADVERSITY

Introduction

The point of discussion is as to whether eternal prosperity will be caused by faith and good deeds jointly or independently and irrespective of each other. Also whether disbelief and rebellion against God will independently result in eternal punishment or both will cause it together, and if the latter is right, what then happens if a person manages to have only one of the above (i.e., belief in God or good deeds).

The same point is true if an individual has no belief in God and performs sinful deeds; what would happen to such a person? Moreover, if a believer commits many sins and a disbeliever performs a number of good deeds, will they be prosperous or in adversity? Hence, if a person has passed part of his life believing in God and in the performance of good deeds and another part in disbelief and in the committal of sins, what would his fate be?

Such points have been taken into consideration since the first century of the presence of Islam. Some people such as the Kharijite³ believed that committing sins was an independent cause for one's eternal adversity and that it further causes disbelief and apostasy. However, other groups such as the Murjeia⁴ believed that faith was sufficient for eternal prosperity, and by committing a sin; the prosperous life of the believer was not threatened.

Nevertheless, the truth is that not every sin leads to disbelief and bad luck; however, the accumulation of sins will destroy faith. It means, nonetheless, that faith does not cause sins to be forgiven and does not make one free from punishment.

In this lesson, I will first explain the nature of belief and disbelief, and secondly, their role in eternal prosperity and adversity will be discussed. Other (relevant) points will be dealt with in future lessons.

The nature of faith and disbelief

Faith is an inner, spiritual state, which is formed (in a person), due to:

1) knowledge of a concept, and 2) having a tendency towards it. The intensity or weakness in each of them will cause the perfection or deficiency of faith. However, unless a person is aware of something, even speculatively, he will not believe in it. Nevertheless, knowledge or awareness does not suffice, because the subject of one's knowledge or its requisites might be contrary or against one's desires, and therefore, he may decide not to behave accordingly or even to function against it.

As the Holy Qur'an with respect to the followers of Pharaoh maintains:

"They impugned them -though they were convinced in their hearts- wrongfully and defiantly. So observe how was the fate of the agents of corruption!" (al-Naml:14) Moses (a) addressed Pharaoh and said:

"You certainly know that no one has sent these [signs] except the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-openers" (al- Isrā':102). Although he (Pharaoh) did not believe in God, he said to the people:

“I do not know of any God that you may have other than me” (al-Qasas:38).

Only when he was about to drown, he said:

“I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit [to Him]!” (Yūnus: 90)

However, we found earlier that such compulsory faith, if it can be called so, is not accepted by God (See lesson 9). Therefore, the essence of faith is in one’s inner tendency, and willingness; this is contrary to the acquisition of knowledge and awareness, which can be achieved unwillingly. Thus, faith can be called a ‘cordially force-free act’ (i.e. expansion of the meaning of the word ‘act’) in this way faith can also be regarded as a type of action.

On the other hand, the term disbelief is sometimes employed as lack of the ‘faculty of faith’ (malakat-al-Īmān). Lack of faith is a result of doubt and ignorance or due to compound ignorance, or even as a result of a contradictory tendency. This is manifested in the form of intentional rejection and enmity, is called ‘disbelief’. It may, nevertheless, in some cases amount to enmity - an observable phenomenon considered as anti-faith.

The norm of faith and disbelief

Our understanding from the Holy Qur’an and traditions makes us believe that the minimum amount of faith necessary for eternal prosperity is belief in:

God, reward and punishment in the Hereafter, and in the rightfulness of whatever has been revealed to the prophets. Such a belief also necessitates one’s decision to behave accordingly with the orders of God; however, the highest level of faith is specific to the prophets and Imams.

On the other hand, the minimum amount of disbelief is the denial or rejection of: monotheism, prophethood, Resurrection or in whatever one has ascertained that has been sent by God to His prophets. However, the worst stage of disbelief is the hostile rejection of all such facts, whilst knowing that they are all true; and further being determined to fight against the true religion.

The above identification suggests polytheism (denying monotheism) as a manifestation of disbelief. However, hypocrisy is considered as inner disbelief mixed with deception whilst outwardly behaving like a Muslim.

Moreover, the hypocrite’s (disbeliever) decline is much harsher than that of the other disbelievers, as the Holy Qur’an states: “Indeed the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach of the Fire” (al-Nisā:145) The point to be mentioned here is that Islam and disbelief, which are discussed in jurisprudence and which are the subjects of the approval or rejection of cleanliness, formal slaughtering of an animal, marriage and heritage, do not necessarily involve faith and disbelief being discussed as the principles of religion. It is possible for a person to express the Islamic formula (Shahādātān) and consider the rightfulness of Islamic jurisprudence, yet in his heart, such a person may hold no sincere belief in their contents and the requisites of monotheism and prophethood.

Moreover, if one is not capable of realising the principles of religion (i.e. a mad or stupid person), or if one, due to the conditions of his society cannot

find the true religion, he will be forgiven for such a failure. However, if another person fails to find the true religion whilst having access to all the necessary means for such recognition or if a person remains in doubt or denies the principles and necessities of the religion with no specific reason, he will not be forgiven and will be sentenced to eternal punishment.

The effect of faith and disbelief on eternal prosperity or adversity

Since man's true perfection is due to his closeness to God, and on the other hand, his decline is the result of being far from Him, it is reasonable to claim that belief in God and His canonical and creative dominance which necessitate belief in Resurrection and prophethood, is the sapling of man's true evolution. In that case, man's God-pleasing deeds resemble the sapling's branches, and the leaves and fruit will be the eternal prosperity represented in the Hereafter. Thus, when a person fails to plant the seeds of faith in his heart or would rather plant the poisonous seeds of disbelief and rebellion instead, he has then ruined and wasted the gifts provided for him by Almighty God. He has subsequently planted for himself a tree, whose bitter fruit is the 'Zaqūm' from Hell. Such a person will not approach eternal prosperity and his good deeds will have no effect beyond this world.

The reason why such a person's good deeds have no effect beyond this world is that each free deed done by man is an attempt for his soul to approach its final objective specified by God. How is it possible for one who does not believe in the eternal world and in life close to God, to consider such an objective and manage his behavior so that it can be obtained? Such a person cannot naturally expect eternal reward from God.

However, the only acceptable point about the disbelievers' good deeds is that such deeds may reduce their punishment as they weaken selfishness and enmity.

Evidence from the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an reminds us of the fundamental role of faith in man's eternal prosperity, and in addition to employing the term 'good deeds' after 'faith' in numerous verses, has emphasized that faith guarantees that good deeds will affect our prosperity in the Hereafter. In relation to the same point, the Holy Qur'an states:

"And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, should he be faithful- such shall enter paradise and they will not be wronged [so much as] the speck on a date-stone" (al-Nisā:124 see also al-Naml:97, al-Isrā:19, TāHa:112, al-Anbiyā:94) On the other hand, the Qur'an also states how the disbelievers will be greeted with Hell and punishment in the Hereafter and their deeds have been described as being useless and spoilt. In one verse such deeds have been compared to ashes, which have been scattered and then blown away by the wind:

"A parable of those who defy their Lord:

their deeds are like ashes over which the wind blows hard on a tempestuous day:

they have no power over anything they have earned. That is extreme error". (Ibrāhīm:18) In another verse, the Holy Qur'an states that the deeds

of the disbelievers will be scattered in the sky like dust: “Then We shall attend to the works they have done and then turn them into scattered dust” (al-Furqān:23) In addition to this, such deeds have also been compared to a mirage in which a thirsty person believes; however, when he reaches it he finds no water:

“As for the faithless, their works are like a mirage in a plain, which the thirsty man supposes to be water. When he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing; but there he finds Allah, who will pay him his full account, and Allah is swift at reckoning” (al-Nūr:39) “Or like the manifold darkness in a deep sea, covered by billow upon billow, overcast by clouds, manifold [layers of] darkness, one on the top of another:

when he brings out his hand, he can hardly see it, and one whom Allah has not granted any light has no light” (al-Nūr:40) (The metaphor here is that a disbeliever moves in darkness and will go nowhere.) In other verses, the Holy Qur’an maintains that the advocates of this world will meet the results of their deeds in the same world and will not find any benefit (out of their deeds) in the Hereafter. One such verse is as follows:

“As for those who desire the life of this world and its glitter, We will recompense them fully for their works therein, and they shall not be underpaid in it. They are the ones for whom there shall be nothing in the Hereafter but Fire: what they have accomplished in the world has failed, and their works have come to naught” (Hūd:15-16, see:

al-Isrā:18, al-Shūra:20, al-Ahqāf:20) Such verses reveal the little amount of knowledge of those who claim they know Islam but prefer the infidel non-Muslim scholars to the Shi’ah’s great scientists (like Khaja nasir al-dīn Tūsī and Allamah Majlisi).

Questions

1. Explain the viewpoints of the Kharijite and Murjeia about faith and disbelief, and discuss the correct idea.
2. Discuss the nature of faith and disbelief and their relationship with knowledge and ignorance.
3. Explain the norm of faith and disbelief.
4. What is the relationship between polytheism and hypocrisy with disbelief?
5. Make a comparison between Islam and disbelief according to jurisprudence with faith and disbelief according to theology.
6. Discuss the effect of faith and disbelief on eternal prosperity and adversity, and explain the reason behind it.
7. Discuss the Qur’anic evidence representing such an effect (Question 6 above).

LESSON FIFTY-FIVE: THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND DEEDS

Introduction

We have realised so far that the main factors leading to eternal prosperity or adversity are faith and disbelief, and that secure faith guarantees eternal prosperity, but the committal of sins will result in limited punishment. On the other hand, constant disbelief will bring about eternal adversity and will cause good deeds to become obliterated.

Moreover, it was pointed out that faith and disbelief can be weakened or intensified and it is possible that the accumulation of sins will result in the destruction of faith; on the contrary, the performance of good deeds may weaken the root of disbelief and pave the way for the development of faith.

This clarifies the importance of the question about the relationship between faith and deeds. This lesson attempts to answer such a question.

The relationship between faith and disbelief

Our previous discussions clarified the point that faith is a spiritual state, originating from knowledge and an attitude that necessitates the believer to behave in accordance with the requisites of what he believes in.

Therefore, one who is aware of a truth and decides not to behave according to its requisites does not have any belief in it. Such a person, even in the case of doubting as whether to behave according to the requisites of that truth or not, will still be categorised as a disbeliever. The Holy Qur'an maintains:

“The Bedouins say, ‘We have faith’. Say, ‘You do not have faith yet; rather say, ‘we have embraced Islam,’ for faith has not yet entered into your hearts” (al- Hujurāt:14) Moreover, true faith is comprised of different stages; however, the accomplishment of each stage does not necessitate the performance of all its requisites. It is probable that, in a weak believer, excitement due to lust or anger may causes rebellion; however, it might not necessarily cause him to rebel permanently and struggle against his faith and all its requisites. Nevertheless, the stronger and more complete the faith, the more effective it will be in committing deeds accordingly.

To sum up, having faith naturally necessitates behaving in accordance with its requisites; however, the extent of that depends on the weakness or intensity of one's faith and finally this is the will and decision of the individual, which determines the performance, or abandonment of the deed.

The relationship between deeds and faith

Any arbitrary act is either deserving and in line with one's faith or undeserving and contradictory to it; the former strengthens the faith and makes one's heart brighter while the latter weakens the faith and darkens the heart. Therefore, any good deed committed by a believer will not only originate from his faith but will also strengthen and stabilise it, paving the way for other good deeds. The effect of good deeds on the perfection of one's faith can be understood from the following verse:

“To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct” (Fātir:10)

Provided that the subject pronoun refers to (al-‘amal al-sālih) (righteous conduct) and the object pronoun refers to al-kalām al-tayyib (good word).

In the same way, in a number of verses, the Holy Qur’an maintains that the promotion of belief, enlightenment, and guidance in good-doers is the consequence of their good deeds (Refer to: Āl-‘Imrān:172, al-Anfāl:2, al-Tawbah:124, al-Kahf:13, Maryam:76, al-Ahzāb:22, Muhammad:17).

However, if opposing motives appear against the requisites of faith and if they lead to undeserving acts and one’s level of faith is not high enough to prevent them, faith will begin to weaken and this in turn will pave the way for the repetition of sin. The continuation of this process will lead to greater sins and their repetition, and this will eventually threaten the essence of faith and (May I ask for God’s shelter) convert into disbelief or hypocrisy.

The Holy Qur’an in relation to those who ended up as hypocrites’ claims:

“So He caused hypocrisy to ensue in their hearts until the day they will encounter Him, because of their going back on what they had promised Allah and because of the lies they used to tell” (al-Tawbah:77) The Holy Qur’an states elsewhere:

“Then the fate of those who committed misdeeds was that they denied the signs of Allah and they used to deride them” (al-Rūm:10) Similarly, in many verses, the Holy Qur’an discusses the increase of disbelief, darkness, and hard-heartedness in the sinners (See: al-Baqarah:10, Āl-‘Imrān:90, al-Nisā:137, al-Maidah:68, al-Tawbah:37, al-Isrā’: 60,82, al-Saff: 5,9,24).

Conclusion

Concerning the interrelationship between faith and deeds and their role in man’s prosperity, it seems reasonable to compare prosperous life with a tree (See: Ibrahim: 24-27) whose roots resemble faith in the unique God, His prophets, messages, and Resurrection; the trunk resembles the decision made for behavior in accordance with the requisites of faith originating directly from it; the branches and leaves resemble the deserving deeds which originate from the root (faith), and finally, its fruit will be the eternal prosperity. Had it had no root, there would be no trunk, branches, or leaves nor would it bear any fruit.

However, there is no guarantee that the roots will always result in suitable branches and desirable fruits; rather it is often possible that due to unsuitable conditions of the environment and various diseases, a number of branches fail to grow, and any fruit that is born may instead cause the death of the tree.

Moreover, it is possible that due to specific grafts on the branches, trunk or even the roots of the tree, either its appearance or the whole plant may change into another tree. This event resembles the change from faith into apostasy.

To conclude, faith with relation to the topics discussed above will be the main factor affecting man’s prosperity; however, the complete effect of such a factor depends on the absorption of necessary nutrition, by the performance of deserving acts, and the destruction of diseases and harmful elements, by the avoidance of sins.

Finally, the abandonment of obligatory deeds and the committal of forbidden acts weaken the root of faith and will occasionally result in its death just as grafting (believing in) wrong ideas causes change in the nature of faith.

Questions

1. Explain the effect of faith on good deeds.
2. Describe the effect of good or bad deeds on the weakness or intensity of faith.
3. Explain the inter-relationship between faith and deeds and their correspondence with man's prosperity.

LESSON FIFTY-SIX: SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

Introduction

Some of those who know little about Islamic culture evaluate man's acts on the basis of superficial standards and pay no attention to the importance of one's motivation or intention. In other words, they ignore 'the doer' in favour of 'the action'. Such people may also think of a deserving act in relation to the extent to which it affects other peoples' happiness. The advocates of such an idea will, nevertheless, deviate in their analysis of Islamic beliefs and thoughts or may misunderstand them. For instance, in realising the role of faith and its relation to good deeds, and on the other hand, the destructive role of disbelief and dualism they will face deviation. Similarly, they misunderstand the priority of some small short term acts over larger long term ones, and will, for example, suppose that the great inventors who brought tranquility to others or the liberals who struggled for their nation's freedom should possess an exalted position in the Hereafter even though they have no belief in God or Resurrection. In some cases, they claim that the necessary faith for true prosperity is belief in humanitarian values and labours' final victory in this world. For them, the concept of God equals a cultural value and an ethical ideal.

Although our discussions in previous lessons can distinguish weak and deviated points in the above thoughts, it seems reasonable, due to their spread, and at the same time, dangerous for the future generations, to explain them more.

However, detailed and comprehensive discussions need more time and space; therefore, what I present below is the most fundamental points with reference to their ideological aspect. I will, nevertheless, try to present my arguments so that the style of this book is not violated.

Man's true perfection

If we compare an apple-tree with a fruitless one, we will find the apple-tree more worthy; this is not merely because man uses the fruit of a fruitful tree, rather the fact that such a tree is a more complete organism and is more effective, causes it to be naturally more valuable. However, if the same apple-tree faces disease and changes its way towards complete development, it will lose its value and may even become the origin of pollution and harm for others.

The same case applies to man in comparison with other animals. If man reaches his deserving perfection and presents the characteristics relevant to his creation, he will be more valuable than other animals. However, if he meets deviation, he will become inferior and more harmful than the animals. That is why the Holy Qur'an refers to some people as 'worse than all living things' (Refer to al-Anfāl:22) and 'more astray than four- legged animals' (Refer to al-A'rāf:179).

Moreover, if somebody observes the apple-tree up to when it blossoms, he may think it is at the highest stage in its development. Similarly, those who observe man's middle stages of perfection will not be able to realise his true and final perfection.

Only those who are familiar with man's final perfection will be able to understand his true values.

In addition, man's true perfection is not the same as material or natural perfection because as I discussed earlier, the humanitarian aspect of man depends on his heavenly soul. Similarly his evolution is infact the evolution of his soul, which is performed through his own free deeds, happening either in his inside (heart) or outside and by means of different parts of his body. Such a kind of perfection cannot be recognised by means of experiments neither can it be measured through quantitative scales. Thus, it will not naturally be understood through laboratory tools.

Therefore, one who has not reached such perfection and has not realised it through his innate knowledge and ability, should try to understand it by means of intellectual theorem, revelation or Divine book.

Furthermore, revelation, Qur'anic teachings and traditions from the Prophet's family members, ascertain that man's final perfection is a stage in his life called 'living close to God' which is together with eternal blessings and Divine paradise presented to him in the Hereafter. The general way to this type of perfection is that worship of God and piety should dominate all aspects of one's individual and social life.

From an intellectual point of view, more complicated theorems can be employed in this discussion, which necessitates a detailed philosophical introduction. However, in this section, I have attempted to provide a simplified explanation of the topic.

Intellectual clarification

Man naturally desires infinite perfection whose manifestations are knowledge and power; approaching such perfection results in endless pleasure and eternal prosperity.

However, infinite perfection is attainable when it is linked with the origin of infinite knowledge, power and absolute perfection - God; this link is called 'closeness to God' (See 'Knowing oneself for empowering one's soul', by the same author).

Therefore, man's true perfection, which is the aim of his creation, is achieved by means of his relationship and closeness to God. Thus, one who has not reached the first or the lowest level of faith is similar to a tree, which is not fully developed and has not born its first fruit. Such a tree will lose its capability for bearing fruit and will become worse than a fruitless tree if it faces disease.

Finally, the importance of faith's role in man's perfection and prosperity is because of his soul's main characteristic - the intentional and free relationship with God - without which he will be deprived of deserving perfection and its traces; in other words, his humanitarian dimension will not be fulfilled. However, if man makes the wrong choice, he spoils such vital talents and damages his dignity; this, therefore, necessitates him to be punished forever. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an maintains: "Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are those who are faithless; so they will not have faith" (al-anfāl:55) To summarise, both faith and disbelief determine man's main way either towards perfection and prosperity or towards decline

and adversity; the more powerful any one of them is in one's life the more influential and determining it will be.

The role of motivation and intention

The above principle clarifies that the true value of man's arbitrary deeds depends on their role in his approaching true perfection (i.e., closeness to God). Although the deeds, which promote one's evolution in one way or another or even through some mediators undergo virtue and excellence, their effect on the doer's eternal prosperity depends on the extent to which they affect his soul's evolution.

Moreover, one's own intention mediates his deeds and soul. Intention originates from one's tendency, eagerness, and love towards the end or result of something. It, at the same time, causes movement within one's soul towards its aim and is manifested as intention. Therefore, the value of an arbitrary act depends on the motivation and intention of its doer, and one's good deeds without good intention will have no effect on the promotion of his soul neither will they affect his eternal prosperity. That is why deeds performed on the basis of material and worldly motivations will not affect eternal prosperity. Even causing the greatest benefit to society will be of no benefit to the performer, had they been done in a hypocritical way (Refer to al-Baqarah:245, al-Nisā':38,142, al-Anfāl:47, al-Mā'ūn:6). Such deeds may even cause spiritual loss and decline. This is the reason why the Holy Qur'an has conditioned the effect of good deeds on eternal prosperity on faith and the intention of gaining closeness to God (Refer to al-Nisā':124, al-Nahl:97, al-Isrā':19, TāHa:112, al-Anbiyā:94, Ghāfir:40, al-An'ām:52, al-Kahf:28, al-Rūm:38, al-Baqarah: 207,265, al-Layl: 20).

In conclusion, firstly good deeds are not limited to working for the benefit of others.

Secondly, working for other people's benefit like other individual acts of worship will be effective on one's perfection and eternal prosperity provided that it originated from Divine motivation.

Questions

1. What does one's true value depend on?
2. How is man's final perfection recognised?
3. Prove that man's final perfection is achievable only if his life relates to God and being close to Him.
4. Prove that the effect of good deeds on man's eternal prosperity depends on his Divine motivation.

LESSON FIFTY-SEVEN: THE MISCARRIAGE BY EVIL ACTS (Habt) AND REMITTANCE OF SINS AFTER GOOD DEEDS (Takfīr)

Introduction

One point in relation to the interaction between faith and good deeds on one side and eternal prosperity on the other, or between disbelief and rebellion on one side and eternal adversity on the other, is (to know) whether the relationship between any moment of faith or disbelief (in one's life) and its result in the Hereafter, or any good or evil deed and its reward or punishment, is certain, fixed and unchangeable or whether it can be changed in one way or another. Is it, for instance, possible to recompense for a sin by performing a good act or vice-versa? Or will those who spend part of their lives in apostasy and rebellion and another part in faith and obedience be involved in punishment for some time and reward for the other? Or will the algebraic sum of the two parts determine one's good or bad luck in the eternal world? Or is there something else involved?

The above point is known as "Habt and Takfīr" ('Habt' and 'takfīr' are two Qur'anic terms; the former means good deeds becoming inefficient or miscarried and the latter means remitting sins), which has been a topic of discussion and dialogue amongst the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite scholars since ancient times. However, in this lesson I will briefly explain the issue from the Shi'ite point of view.

The relationship between faith and disbelief

In previous lessons, I pointed out that where there is no faith in the principles of belief, no good deed can end in eternal prosperity; in other words, disbelief will remove the effect of deserving deeds. However, I add in this section that man's faith at the end of his life removes the evil effects of his previous disbelief just as a bright light removes the effect of previous darkness. Similarly, disbelief at the end of one's life destroys the effect of his previous faith; it spoils his record (of good deeds) and annihilates his fate just like a fire destroys wood.

As another example, faith resembles a bright light, which makes one's heart and soul bright and clear and puts an end to their darkness. On the other hand, disbelief resembles switching the same light off, removing the brightness and causing darkness. Therefore, as long as man's soul belongs to the material world and varying or changing universe, it will be subject to brightness and darkness or increase and decrease of light and darkness until he passes away and the opportunity of choosing between faith and disbelief terminates. Then he may wish to have the opportunity to go back to the world and remove the darkness (of his soul) but this will not materialize (See lesson 49). There is no doubt about this kind of interaction between faith and disbelief in the Holy Qur'an; there are many pieces of evidence in this relation such as: "And whoever has faith in Allah and acts righteously, He shall absolve him of his misdeeds" (al-Taghābun:9) Or the following Qur'anic verse maintains:

“And whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies faithless - they are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter. They shall be inmates of the Fire and they shall remain in it [forever].” (al-Baqarah:217).

The relationship between good and evil deeds

The relationship between good and evil deeds is very similar to the relationship between faith and disbelief; however, it is not general, so that one's record will always include deserving acts and the previous evil deeds will be destroyed (as Mu'tazilite scholars believe), or the algebraic sum of past deeds including their quality and quantity will always be reflected in one's record (as some others speculate). Nevertheless, with reference to deeds we should consider separation; in other words, some deeds, if performed in a deserving way and (if they) please God, will destroy the effect of past evil deeds, for instance repentance will forgive one's sins if performed properly (Refer to al-Nisā:110, Āl-'Imrān:135, al-An'ām:54, al-Shūra:25, al-Zumar: 57).

This is exactly like a ray of light, which illuminates a dark space. However, not all good deeds remove the effect of sin; therefore, it is possible for a believer to be punished for some time as a result of his sins and then enter eternal Paradise. It seems that man's soul has different dimensions to which different groups of deeds - good or evil - are related. For example, a good deed related to dimension (A) will not remove the effect of an evil deed related to dimension (B) unless the good deed is so bright that it can penetrate other dimensions of the soul. On the other hand, an evil deed may be so unpleasant that it can defect other dimensions of the soul. That is why it is been claimed in the noble traditions that God-pleasing prayers wash the sins away and forgive them. The Holy Qur'an also maintains:

“Maintain the prayer at the two ends of the day, and during the early hours of the night. Indeed good deeds efface bad deeds.” (Hūd:114) Moreover, some sins including being undutiful to parents, and the consumption of alcohol will prevent the acceptance of worship for some time, and reproaching others for what one has done to them will remove its good effect. As the Holy Qur'an claims:

“Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts” (al-Baqarah:264) However, to determine the type and extent of the interaction between good and evil deeds, one should refer to Revelation and the traditions of the Imams, as it is impossible to draw a general rule for all of them.

At the end of this lesson it seems reasonable to claim that good and evil deeds may often affect one's joy, sadness, or success in some work and failure in others in this world. For example, being kind to others, particularly parents and relatives, lengthens one's life and destroys harm and misfortunes. Or being irrespective towards the great people particularly one's teachers and professors will remove success; however, this type of interaction does not postpone real reward or punishment as the true origin of rewards and punishment is in the Hereafter.

Questions

1. Explain what 'Habt and Takfeer' mean.
2. What are the manifestations of the relationship between faith and disbelief? Which of them is right?
3. What are the manifestations of the relationship between good and evil deeds?
Which of them is right?
4. Can the worldly effects of good and evil deeds replace their reward and punishment in the Hereafter or not?

LESSON FIFTY-EIGHT: PRIVILEGES OF THE BELIEVERS

Introduction

In the section on ‘Theology’ (See lesson 11), we realised that God’s Will consists basically of righteousness and perfection and there is no place therein for deficiency.

Therefore, with respect to man, God’s primary Will naturally tends to belong to his perfection, eternal prosperity and enjoyment of eternal blessings. However, the sinners’ punishment and bad luck, which are due to their own wrong choices, are included in God’s wise Will aswell. Nevertheless, had it not been the requisite of the peoples’ wrong choices, in meeting their punishment and adversity, God’s infinite mercy would necessitate no creature to meet punishment.⁵

It is the same overwhelming Divine mercy, which characterizes man’s creation with freedom and the right of choice; however, the requisite of being able to choose between faith and disbelief is to meet its good or bad outcome. The difference, nevertheless, is that meeting a joyful end belongs to God’s primary Will, while meeting a painful end belongs to His subordinate Will. The same difference necessitates that in both creation and canonization, righteousness is preferred. In other words, man is created so as his personality becomes more deeply affected by good deeds, whilst canonically he has been ordered to perform easy deeds so that other than for gaining prosperity and relief from eternal punishment he would not need to perform hard and intolerable deeds (Refer to al-Baqarah:158, al-Hajj: 78).

Moreover, at the time of assigning reward or punishment to people, reward is preferred and God’s mercy will precede His anger. This precedence or preference of God’s mercy is manifested in different ways; some of which are discussed below.

Increase in reward

With respect to the results of good deeds, the first privilege for those who seek prosperity is that their reward does not merely equal the amount they deserve; rather it exceeds their deeds. This has been cited in the Holy Qur’an in different verses such as:

“Whoever brings virtue shall receive [a reward] better than it” (al-Naml:89).

Moreover, the following verse states:“Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness” (al-Shūra:23).

And the following verse maintains:“Those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward and an enhancement” (Yūnus:26).

The Holy Qur’an also claims:

“Indeed Allah does not wrong [anyone] [even to the extent of] an atom’s weight, and if it be a good deed He doubles it [s reward], and gives from Himself a great reward” (al-Nisā:40).

And:“Whoever brings virtue shall receive ten times its like; but whoever brings vice shall not be requited except with its like, and they will not be wronged” (al- An’ām:160).

Forgiveness of minor sins

Another privilege is that if those who believe in God avoid committing major sins, God, the kindest, will forgive their minor sins and destroy their effect.

This has been claimed in the following verse:

“If you avoid the major sins that you are forbidden, We will absolve you of your misdeeds, and admit you to a noble abode” (al-Nisā:31).

Clearly, the forgiveness of minor sins for such believers does not require their repentance, as repentance forgives major sins as well.

Receiving benefits from the deeds of others

Another merit for believers is that Almighty God accepts the requests for forgiveness for believers of His angels and selected slaves (Refer to Ghāir: 7, Āl-‘Imrān:152, al- Nisā’:64, Ibrāhīm:41), and accepts the prayers and requests of other believers in their favor. Almighty God also accepts to allocate the reward of a good deed done by a person to the person of the doer’s choice.

Such points have been discussed in a number of verses and traditions; however, since they are directly related to ‘Intercession’ and should be discussed in more detail, in the present section, the above points seem sufficient.

Questions

1. What is the secret behind the precedence of God’s mercy?
2. Discuss the manifestations of such precedence in creation and canonisation.
3. Explain its usage in man’s reward and punishment.

LESSON FIFTY-NINE: INTERSESION

Introduction

One of the privileges devoted by God to the believers, is that if a believer protects his faith until death, and does not commit any sins which lead to the removal of prosperity, bad luck, and eventually doubt and denial (of God), thus dying a believer in God, he will not meet with eternal punishment. His minor sins will be forgiven as a result of him avoiding major sins, and major sins will be forgiven via a complete and acceptable repentance. However, if one does not succeed in performing such repentance, his involvement in worldly troubles and disasters may lighten his load of sin and the life between this world and the Hereafter together with the first stages of Resurrection will remove his impurities. Nevertheless, if there are still some impurities in the believer, he will be saved from Hell through intercession - the greatest Divine blessing represented particularly by the Prophet (s), and his noble family members (a) (The Prophet (s) maintains that:

“I have saved my intercession for those among my nation who commit major sins.” (Bihār al-Anwār:Vol. 40:378) According to a number of traditions, a praised position (Maqām Mahmūd) (Refer to al-Isrā’:79), promised to the Prophet in the Holy Qur’an, is the position of intercessor. Moreover, the noble verse below refers to God’s forgiveness presented to deserving people through the Prophet’s intercession: “Soon your Lord will give you [that with which] you will be pleased” (al-Duhā:5)

Therefore, the guilty believer’s greatest and last hope is intercession; however, they should always keep themselves alert, and fear committing a sin which may bring them bad luck and disbelief at the time of death. They should also be concerned over their interest in worldly affairs and that (may I seek God’s shelter) they may die whilst feeling hatred towards God because they assumed that it was He who caused separation between them and their beloved.

The concept of intercession

The term ‘shafā’ah’ the Arabic word for ‘Intercession’ is derived from the word ‘Shaf’ meaning ‘associate’. In Arabic conversations, the term is used when an honorable person asks a noble individual to ignore the guilt of a criminal or to increase the reward of a servant. The term intercession has, presumably been used in such conditions because the guilty person does not deserve forgiveness without such help, as indeed the servant does not deserve reward; however, the association of an intercessor’s request makes them deserving.

In usual situations, the reason why one accepts the request of an intercessor is to avoid him becoming annoyed; this might, in turn, cause one to be deprived from the pleasures of the intercessor’s companionship or services, or it might even cause harm from the side of intercessor. The dualists, who associate human characteristics such as the need for companionship with a spouse, maids, friends, and colleagues, or fear from one’s partners and mates, present their requests to their imaginary gods to attract God’s attention or to protect them from His anger. They also

worshipped Angels and Jinn or bowed down before idols and statues and said:

These are our intercessors with God. (Yūnus:18, see also: al-Rūm:13, al-An'ām:94, al-Zumar:44) Or they said: "We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah" (al-Zumar:3). The Holy Qur'an in rejecting such ignorant ideas maintains: "It shall not have any guardian besides Allah, nor any intercessor" (al-An'ām:70, see also: al-An'ām:51, al-Sajdah:4, al-Zumar:4) Nevertheless, rejecting such intercessors or intercession does not mean the total rejection of intercession, as there are verses in the Holy Qur'an, which prove that 'God permits intercession'. There are also some verses, which state the conditions for the intercessors as well as the subjects of intercession. The Holy Qur'an maintains that acceptance of the intercessors' request is not due to fright or need, rather it is a gate God Himself has opened for those who have the least merit for receiving His eternal mercy; He has nevertheless, identified some conditions and limitations for such intercession. Therefore, the difference between belief in true intercession and in the false one is the same as the difference between management and political authority by God's permission, and management and political authority independent from Him is discussed in the section on monotheism (See lesson 16).

The word intercession is sometimes used in a more general term including the representation of any pleasurable effect in an individual's life initiated by a third party. This applies to parents who may function as intercessors for their children or vice versa, and in the same way to teachers for their students, or even to a muizzin (one who calls people for prayers) for those who have remembered prayers and gone to the mosque after hearing his voice. In fact, the same good effects of the above cases represent as intercession and help in the Resurrection.

Another point is that 'asking for forgiveness' by others for the sinners in this world is a kind of intercession. Even praying for others and asking God for the fulfillment of their needs is a type of intercession with God because they are all mediations between God and His servants in allowing them to receive a benefit or preventing them from receiving harm.

Conditions of Intercession

As pointed out above, the main condition for the performance of or being the subject of intercession is God's permission. The Holy Qur'an maintains: "Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission" (al-Baqarah:255). In addition, the Holy Qur'an claims: "There is no intercessor except by His leave" (Yūnus:3).

Also:

"Intercession will not avail that day except from Him whom the All-beneficent allows and approves of his word" (TāHa:109). The Holy Qur'an also claims:

"Intercession is of no avail with Him except for those whom He permits" (Saba':23)

The above verses generally prove God's permission as a prerequisite for intercession; however, they do not have anything to do with the characteristics of its subjects. Other verses, nevertheless, provide more

clarified conditions for both sides (the intercessors and the subjects of intercession). For example:

“Those whom they invoke besides Him have no power of intercession except those who are witness to the truth and who know [for whom to intercede]” (al-Zukhruf:86) The phrase ‘someone who testifies to the truth’ might refer to the (Angel) witnesses who are aware of the servants’ deeds and intentions through God’s teachings and can witness the quality and value of their deeds. Moreover, as it is understood from the proportion between religious statements and their subjects, the intercessors should be knowledgeable so as that they can recognise whether one deserves intercession or not.

Certainly amongst those who possess both characteristics are our innocent Imams.

Moreover, it is understood from some verses that the subjects of intercession should have acquired God’s satisfaction. As stated in the Qur’an as follows: “and they do not intercede except for someone He approves of” (al-Anbiyā’:28)

Also:

“How many an angel there is in the heavens whose intercession is of no avail in any way except after Allah grants permission to whomever He wishes and approves of” (al-Najm:26) Clearly, God’s satisfaction towards one who is the subject for intercession does not mean that all his deeds are acceptable, as in that case there would be no need for intercession; it rather means that the person himself should be satisfactory with respect to his faith and religion. The above point has been commented on in the same way in the traditions.

Moreover, in several verses the characteristics of those who are not included for intercession have been discussed. For example, Qur’an al-Shu’arā:100 quotes the dualists as saying:

We have no intercessor. In Qur’an al-Muddaththir:40-48, it maintains that when the sinners are asked as to why they entered Hell, they refer to their abandonment of prayer (Imam Sadiq (a) in the last minutes of his precious life stated:

“Our intercession does not reach those who do not respect prayers.” Bihar- Al-Anwar, Vol.4:3), postponement of giving help to the oppressed, and the denial of Resurrection as the main reasons. The Holy Qur’an then claims:

They will find no benefit out of the intercessors’ intercession. These verses clarify the point that the dualists and those who deny Resurrection, fail in worshipping God, refuse helping His needy servants and do not believe in the true principles, and will never be included amongst those worthy of intercession. Moreover, considering the fact that the Prophet’s ‘asking for forgiveness’ is a kind of intercession in this world, and that it will not be accepted (by God) for those who do not request it (Refer to al-Munafiqūn:5-6), it can be realised that those who deny intercession will not be included for it aswell. Such an idea has also been discussed in the traditions. (The Prophet (s):

“God will not include in my intercession those who do not believe in it” Bihar-Al-Anwar. Vol. 8 p.58 tradition 84).

To summarize, the main intercessor in addition to having permission by God to do so, should be free from sin and capable of evaluating the extent of obedience or rebellion in others. The true followers of such people can possess some lower levels of intercession under their dominance; such followers are included amongst the martyrs and pious people (Those who believe in God and His prophets will be near their Lord with the martyrs and the pious).

Furthermore, one deserves to be the subject of intercession if he in addition to being permitted by God, has true belief in God, His prophets, Resurrection, and whatever God has sent to His prophets.

Questions

1. Explain what is meant by intercession and in what ways it is used.
2. Discuss the difference between true intercession and false intercession.
3. What are the conditions for an intercessor?
4. What are the conditions for a person who is subject to intercession?

LESSON SIXTY: RESPONSES TO CERTAIN SPURIOUS DOUBTS

Various questions and doubts have arisen concerning the subject of intercession; in this lesson, I will provide the answers to the most important doubts raised.

Doubt 1:

The first doubt is that several verses in the Holy Qur'an maintain that on Resurrection no intercession will be accepted for anyone. For example, it is claimed in al-Baqarah that:

“Beware of the day when no soul shall compensate for another, neither any intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any ransom shall be received from it, nor will they be helped” (al-Baqarah:48)

Response 1:

The point aimed at here is the rejection of independent and non-regulated intercession in which some people believe. Moreover, such verses are general and can be dealt with by the verses in which the acceptance of regulated and God-permitted intercession has been discussed as I explained in the previous lesson.

Doubt 2:

The requisite for the rightfulness of intercession is that Almighty God should become affected by intercessors; in other words, their intercession causes forgiveness - an action performed by God.

Response 2:

The admittance of intercession does not mean ‘to become affected by’ just as accepting repentance and granting a prayer also do not have such an incorrect requisite. In all these cases the deeds of the servants make readiness in them to accept Divine blessings; in other words, “it is the readiness of the person which counts not the performance of the one who forgives”.

Doubt 3:

The requisite for intercession is that the intercessors are in fact more merciful than God, as the assumption is that without their intercession the sinners would be engaged in punishment or their punishment would continue.

Response 3:

The intercessors' sympathy or kindness is a manifestation of God's endless mercy. In other words, intercession is a means or way Almighty God has considered for forgiving His sinful servants. This indeed manifests His highest levels of mercifulness towards His selected and deserving servants. Similarly, prayer and repentance are other ways He has recognized for the fulfilling of needs aswell as the forgiving of sins.

Doubt 4:

If God's decree for punishing the sinful is the requisite for justice, the acceptance of intercession will be against justice. On the other hand, if being secured from punishment, which is a requisite for intercession, is just, sentencing one to punishment before the establishment of intercession would be unjust.

Response 4:

All of God's sentences, either in punishment before intercession or in releasing from punishment after, is in line with justice and wisdom. However, the point that both of them are wise and just does not mean the togetherness of two contradictory points, as their subjects are different. This means that being sentenced to punishment, irrespective of the conditions, which cause intercession and its being accepted in relation to a sinner, is the outcome of committing sins, just as receiving security from punishment follows its own conditions. Change in a decree due to change in its conditions has been frequently used in canonical and creational laws and regulations. Moreover, the fact that an abolished decree, was considered just at the time of its issue, does not contradict with the decree that replaces it. Similarly, the wisdom behind both the approval of disasters -pre-prayers and almsgiving- and their removal -after prayers and almsgiving- is undeniable. In the same way, the decree towards forgiving sins issued after intercession does not contradict the decree towards punishment pre-intercession.

Doubt 5:

Almighty God has mentioned that the followers of Satan will certainly be punished in Hell:

“Indeed as for My servants you do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you, and indeed hell is the tryst of them all” (al-Hijr:43)

Therefore, punishing the sinful in the Hereafter is in fact a Divine decree and as we know, such traditions cannot be abrogated or replaced.

“You will never find any change in Allah's precedent, and you will never find any revision in Allah's precedent” (Fātir:43)

How is it possible for such a decree to change as a result of intercession?

Response 5:

Accepting intercession for those sinners who possess the necessary qualifications is one of the unchangeable Divine decrees. In other words, Divine decrees are affected by real norms and standards, and should the conditions for occurrence or non-occurrence of a decree exist, it would be unchangeable. However, the words, which express such decrees, do not often include all the relevant limitations and conditions, as it is possible to find verses which on the surface relate to certain decrees, but in reality they represent a specific case. Such verses are interpreted in relation to the most probable case they refer to. Therefore, any decree is unchangeable in terms of its real conditions and limitations (rather than conditions and limitations used in the phrases). One such decree is intercession for those specific sinners who possess the necessary qualifications and follow special regulations; such an intercession is fixed and unchanged.

Doubt 6:

The promise of intercession will cause boldness and impudence in people, leading them to commit sins and become astray.

Response 6:

The response to this doubt, which is also applicable to the acceptance of repentance and compensating sins, is that; being subject to intercession and forgiveness is limited to certain conditions, the fulfillment of which cannot be guaranteed by the sinner. For example, one condition for intercession is that the sinner must protect his faith until the last minute of his life, and we know that no-one can guarantee to fulfill such a condition. Moreover, if one who has committed a sin does not hope to be forgiven, he will become hopeless and disappointed; this will in turn weaken the motivation for the abandonment of sins and will cause the continuation of his wrong and deviated way. This is why it has been the approach of the teachers of religion to instill into the people the balance between hope and fear - neither holding so much hope in God's mercy as to make them become complacent, nor to hold so much fear of His punishment as to make them lose hope in His Mercy - both of which, as we know, are among the major sins.

Doubt 7:

The effect of intercession on one's security from punishment means that someone else (intercessor's) has an effect on one's prosperity and release from adversity, yet the verse:

'There is nothing for man except what he attempts to get,' clearly implies that it is only one's own labor which brings reward.

Response 7:

One's attempt in reaching an aim is often direct and continues to the end; however, on some occasions such attempts are indirect and are therefore performed following the preparation of their means and preliminaries. A person who is subject to intercession attempts to approach the preliminaries of prosperity, because becoming a believer and behaving in a way whereby one deserves intercession, are considered as attempts at reaching prosperity, even though it is incomplete and deficient. This is the reason why such a person will be involved in the pains and difficulties of the life between this world and the Hereafter as well as the first stages of Resurrection. Nevertheless, this same person himself has planted the roots of prosperity - faith - in his heart and has watered it with his deserving deeds so that it will not dry out until the end of his worldly life. Therefore, one's eventual prosperity depends on his efforts and hard work; however, the intercessors will contribute in growing the fruits of this tree (of prosperity), exactly as we witness the fruit of guiding people in this worldly life, as such guidance cannot replace each individual's efforts and hard work.

Questions

- 1- How can one believe in intercession while there are some verses denying it?
- 2- Is the effect of others on God not a requisite for intercession?
- 3- Are the intercessors more merciful than God?

- 4- Explain the relationship between intercession and Divine justice.
- 5- Does intercession cause change in Divine decree?
- 6- Does the promise of intercession cause impudence in the sinners?
- 7- Explain how intercession does not contradict with the claim that people's prosperity depends on their own attempts and hard work.

Glossary of Terms

Epestimology

- ‘adliyyah*
‘aql: Intellect
‘ayn al-rabt wa-l-ta’alluq:
‘illah: Cause
‘illah fā’iliyyah: Active cause
‘illah ghāi’yyah: Ultimate cause
‘illah i’ dādiyyah: Preparatory Cause
‘illah inhisāriyyah: Substitute causes
‘illah māddiyyah: Material cause
‘illah mu’iddah: The preparatory cause
‘illah mufīda lil-wujūd: Cause that Bestow Existence
‘illah muwjidah: Cause that Bestow Existence
‘illiyyah fā’iliyyah: Efficient cause
‘ilm azali: Eternal Knowledge
‘ilm hudūri: Knowledge by Presence; Immediate Knowledge
‘ilm hudhuri: Knowledge by presence
‘ilm tahsili: Knowledge by acquisition
‘sūrah dhihniyyah: Image
‘usyan: Rebellion
akhlāq: Ethics
al-‘ilm al-ft’li:
al-‘illah al-haqīqiy yah: The real cause
al-sifāt al-salbiyyah: Negative Attributes
al-wujūd al-khārijī: Existent
Amr: Command
asl al -‘illiyyah: Causal nexus
awliyā: Saints
ayāt: Sign
f ‘al: Voluntary Action
fā’il: Active Agent
fītrah: Intrinsic nature; Primordial Nature; Theomorphic Nature
furu al din: Branches of religion
hādith: Temporal
husn wa qubh ‘aqli: Good and Evil from intellectual point of view
hukm al aql: Command of the intellect
ibdā’: Primordial innovation
‘ikhtiyār: Free-will
ilhām: Intuition
imkān: Possible
imtinā’: The real cause
irādah: Will
irfan: Mysticism
Jabr: Pre-determination
kammi: Quantity
karāmāt: Miracles of the Saints

kashf: Illumination
kayf nafsāni: Psychical quality
kayfi: Quality
lawh mahfūz: The Safe Tablet
ma'ād: Ressurrection
ma'd: Resurrection
ma'lūl: Caused thing
ma'sumīn: The Infallible Ones
ma'sūm: Infallible
māddah: Material
māddah al-awwaliyyah: Prime Matter
mafhūm idāfi: Relative concept
makān: Space
malakah: Faculty
malakat al-'ismah:
mawjūd: Existent
mawjūdāt jawhariyyah: Substantial existents
misdāq: Referent (of a concept)
mudhakkir: Reminder
muhāl: Impossible
mukashafa: Mystical vision
mukhlas: Purified by God
mukhlis: Purifies for God
mutakallimīn: Scholars of theology
nabuwwah: Prophethood
nadhīr: Warner
nubuwwah: Prophethood
qadīm: Pre-existent
qudama al-thamāniyah:
rabb al-arbāb: Lord of the lords
rubūbiyyah: Lordship
sair wa suluk: Spiritual journey
sarmadi: Sempiternity
shuhud: Witnessin
tadhkirah: Reminder
tahdīth:
tarbiyah:
tark al-awla:tasalsul: Infinite series
tawhīd al-sifāti: Unity of Divine Attributes
tawhid: Monotheism
touriyah:ūlu al-'azm:
usul al din: Princiles of religion
wahi; revelation
wilāyah al-takwīniyyah: Divine Authority
wilāyah al-tashrī'iyah:Legislative Authority
wilāyah: Authority
zalāl:
zamān: Time

al-‘ulūm al-naqliyyah: Narration Sciences
Sunnah
Imāmah

Endnotes

1. Such as Mirza Muhammad Rida the Jewish scholar from Tehran and author of the book 'The Reasons for the Rejection of Judaism' (Iqāmat al-Shuhūd fi Radd al- Yahūd), Hajj Baba Qazwini Yazdi another Jewish scholar author of the book 'In the Presence of the Reasons that Reject the Jewish Faith' (mahar al-Shuhūd fi Radd al- Yahūd) and professor 'Abd al-Ahad Daud (His previous name was Asqaf the Christian, author of the book 'Muhammad in the Torah and Bible'
2. One can refer to the Bihār al-Anwār vol. 17, p. 225 until the end of this vol., and many other prominent history books
3. See Al-Muzzaffar, shaykh M. Al-Hussayn, Imam Al-Sadiq. p. 60, trans.: J. Al-Rasheed. Ansarian Publ. Qum, 2000 (Editor's note)
- 4.. See Al-Muzzaffar, shaykh M. Al-Hussayn, Imam Al-Sadiq. p. 46, trans.: J. Al-Rasheed. Ansarian Publ. Qum, 2000 (Editor's note)
5. In the prayer of Kumail we read: So I declare with certainty that were it not for what you have decreed concerning the chastisement of Your deniers and what You have foreordained concerning the everlasting home of those who stubbornly resist, You would make the fire all of it, coolness and safety, and no one would have a place of rest or abode within it. (Author's note)