

Understanding Ṣalāt

A Word by Word Commentary on Ṣalāt

Murabbi Rizwan Khan



How often do you find yourself observing Ṣalāt and focusing on everything but God? With thoughts of grocery shopping, dinner, homework, and your phone going off, it is easy to be distracted during prayer. Yet, Ṣalāt is a time reserved for building a personal relationship with Allah. Spiritual growth necessitates removing distractions that keep us from the remembrance of God during Ṣalāt.

A challenge in removing distractions is that many are unaware of the deep meanings behind every word of Ṣalāt. Take Allah's attributes of Al-Kabīr, invoked when we say Allahu Akbar, and Al-'Azīm which is said during Ruku. Both refer to Allah's greatness, but Kabīr refers to objective greatness, while Azīm is a personal attestation to Allah's grandeur. Through a word by word commentary, *Understanding Ṣalāt* seeks to help readers progress on the spiritual path towards God.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Murabbi Rizwan Khan is a graduate from Jami'ah Ahmadiyya Canada, 2011. Since graduating, Murabbi Rizwan Khan has been posted to different cities serving as a missionary of Islam.

In his spare time, Murabbi Rizwan Khan enjoys live-streaming and answering questions about Islam under the subject of, "Ask an Imam."

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



References to the Holy Quran contain the name of the *sūrah* [i.e. chapter] followed by a chapter:verse citation, e.g. *Sūrah al-Jumu'ah*, 62:4, and count *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* ['In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful'] as the first verse in every chapter that begins with it.

The following abbreviations have been used:

- sas *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him', is written after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.

- as *'alaihi-salām*, meaning 'peace be on him', is written after the names of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.

- ra *radīyallāhu 'anhu/'anhā/'anhum*, meaning 'may Allah be pleased with him/her/them', is written after

the names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas} or of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

rta *rahmatullāh ‘alaihi/‘alaihā/‘alaihīm*, meaning ‘may Allah shower His mercy upon him/her/them’, is written after the names of those deceased pious Muslims who are not Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas} or of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

aba *ayyadahullāhu Tā‘āla binaṣrihil-‘Azīz*, meaning ‘may Allah the Almighty help him with His powerful support’, is written after the name of the present head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Ḥaḍrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ V.

Readers are urged to recite the full salutations when reading the book. In general, we have adopted the following system established by the Royal Asiatic Society for our transliteration.

- ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word *honor*.
- ث *th* – pronounced like *th* in the English word *thing*.
- ح *ḥ* – a guttural aspirate, stronger than *h*.
- خ *kh* – pronounced like the Scottish *ch* in *loch*.

- ذ *dh* – pronounced like the English *th* in *that*.
- ص *ṣ* – strongly articulated *s*.
- ض *ḍ* – similar to the English *th* in *this*.
- ط *ṭ* – strongly articulated palatal *t*.
- ظ *ẓ* – strongly articulated *z*.
- ع ‘ – a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.
- غ *gh* – a sound similar to the French *r* in *grasseye*, and to the German *r*. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the ‘gargling’ position to pronounce it.
- ق *q* – a deep guttural *k* sound.
- ء ’ – a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by:

- a* for $\text{—}^{\text{َ}}$ (like *u* in *bud*).
- i* for $\text{—}^{\text{ِ}}$ (like *i* in *bid*).
- u* for $\text{—}^{\text{ُ}}$ (like *oo* in *wood*).

Long vowels by:

\bar{a} for $\text{—}^{\text{ا}}$ or $\bar{\text{ا}}$ (like *a* in *father*).

\bar{i} for $\text{ع} \text{—}^{\text{ي}}$ or $\text{—}^{\text{ي}}$ (like *ee* in *deep*).

\bar{u} for $\text{و} \text{—}^{\text{و}}$ (like *oo* in *root*).

Other vowels by:

ai for $\text{ع} \text{—}^{\text{ا}}$ (like *i* in *site*).

au for $\text{و} \text{—}^{\text{ا}}$ (resembling *ou* in *sound*).

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe. As noted above, the single quotation mark ‘ is used for transliterating ع which is distinct from the apostrophe ’ used for ء.

We have not transliterated some Arabic words which have become part of English language, e.g. Islam, Quran, Hadith, Mahdi, jihad, Ramadan, and ummah. The Royal Asiatic Society’s rules of transliteration for names of persons, places, and other terms, are not followed throughout the book as many of the names contain non-Arabic characters and carry a local transliteration and pronunciation style.

FOREWORD



We gain nearness to Allah the Almighty with *Ṣalāt*. *Ṣalāt* allows us to find comfort and joy in our lives. It helps us overcome difficulties and trials. It helps us stay away from immodesty. *Ṣalāt* is the basis for our spiritual advancement.

I am thankful to Murabbi Rizwan Khan for writing this book entitled *Understanding Ṣalāt*. I hope and pray that readers may benefit from this. I am grateful to the publication team lead by *Mohtamim Ishā'at*, Talha Saifi, and his team including Faraz Hussain (book compilation) and Wajahat Ali (cover) for producing this book.

Finally, I am thankful to Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ V^{aba} for the continued prayers and guidance. I am immensely grateful to Allah *Tā'āla* for enabling us to publish this book.

Wasalaam,
Madeel Abdullah
Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya,
United States of America, April 2021

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QIYĀM



When a person stands, then he adopts a way of respect. When a slave stands in front of his master, he always stands with his hands folded. (Malfūzāt (10 vol edition), vol. 9, pp. 110)

The Ṣalāt taught by Islam is only its reflection. The standing of the spirit signifies that it shows readiness to suffer every hardship and to obey every command for the sake of God. (Lecture Sialkot, pp. 33)

When a person stands to praise and glorify God, this posture is known as Qiyām or ‘the standing position.’ Now, everyone knows that the standing position is the physical state best suited for praise and glorification. After all, when eulogies are recited before kings, they are done so whilst standing. And so, in the Prayer, the apparent posture prescribed is the standing position,

while the tongue is instructed to praise and glorify God in this state. The purpose in this is so that man stands before Allah the Exalted in the spiritual sense as well.

Praise is expressed by standing firm on one point. A person who truthfully and sincerely praises someone, stands firm on one view. Therefore, an individual who says: 'All praise belongs to Allah' can only sincerely proclaim these words when they develop a firm belief in the fact that Allah Almighty is the Possessor of all forms of praise in totality. When a person accepts this fact with complete open-heartedness, this is known as Qiyām or 'standing' in the spiritual sense, because the heart begins to 'stand' firm in this belief, as though it were upright, so to speak. Therefore, in the Prayer, a person stands demonstrating an apparent state, so that they may be blessed with the ability to 'stand' in the spiritual sense. (Malfūzāt (English), vol. 2, pp. 148)

Man is required to stand in the presence of God Almighty and standing is also from among the etiquettes of servants. (Malfūzāt (English), vol. 1, pp.

161)

The Prayer starts with *Takbīr-i-Tahrīmah*, i.e. the Imam raises both hands to the level of his earlobes and says *Allāhu Akbar* (God is the Greatest)....After raising his hands to the lobes of his ears and reciting

Allāhu Akbar, the Imam lowers his hands and folds them on his chest so that the right arm is over his left arm. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 32, 33)



اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allah is the greatest

The word 'greatest' has to bring to our mind the other things that it is being compared to. For example, the statement 'Allah is great' does not necessitate a comparison. In the statement 'Allah is great', the greatness of Allah can be expressed in and of itself. However, in the statement 'Allah is the greatest', the greatness of Allah is expressed in direct comparison to all other things. 'Greatest' is a comparison

When we stand before Allah presenting ourselves to Him, but our mind is thinking about someone else, then in that moment, that someone is greater to us than Allah.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

When *Allāhu Akbar* is called he is warned: Stand with full attention because the One in Whose presence you are standing is the Greatest. (*Remembrance of Allah*, pp. 43)

Saying ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ) seems like a statement of the obvious, but in practical application, it is not. Often, we actually believe others are greater than Allah. For example, when we stand before Allah Almighty in *Ṣalāt*, sometimes our mind is lost in thinking about someone else. We came to *Ṣalāt* with the purpose of reflecting on the beauties of Allah, but in reality, we find someone else’s beauty more worthy of attracting our attention than Allah Almighty. When we say ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ), it’s not because we need a reminder of a concept, it’s because we need a reminder of a reality. When we say ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ), we should think of what in our mind is competing with Allah for greatness. What is so attractive about that distraction and what is the cause of our boredom in *Ṣalāt*? The statement of ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ) is a comparison in application. When we say it, we should remind ourselves that the distraction which seems more attractive than Allah is not greater; rather, Allah is the greatest.

The repetition of ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ) allows us to break up *Ṣalāt* into segments where we renew our resolve that Allah is greater than anything else on our mind.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣṣleḥ Mau‘ūd^{ra} said,

A useful technique for them is to concentrate on one posture at a time. When they stand for *Qiyām* they should resolve not to let any thoughts disturb them up to the end of *Rukū‘*. Going in to *Rukū‘* they should

make the same resolution for the time up to the end of *Rukū'*. They should do the same at every change of posture. This will give them great strength to overpower any distracting thoughts. (*Remembrance of Allah*, pp. 49)

At each change of posture, we can ask ourselves what in that segment of *Ṣalāt* competed with Allah Almighty in our mind for greatness. Then, we can renew our resolve with a reminder that it is Allah, in fact, who is the greatest.

Body language is a universal human language. When we feel happy, the muscles in our face involuntarily express that happiness with a smile, we cannot resist it. Similarly, the muscles of our face are involuntarily tied to our emotions of fear, or anger, or sadness, etc. Our emotions are tied directly to specific facial expressions, and this language of the face is universal across cultures and centuries. This relationship between our emotions and our face is not one way, rather it goes both ways.

Raising our hands symbolizes leaving everything behind

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

If you do not know how to weep, then make a weeping face, and ultimately tears will follow themselves. (*Malfūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 246)

Similarly, if we force ourselves to smile for long enough, a

feeling of happiness will start to rise within us. Our emotions and our facial expressions are inseparable.

The rest of our body is also linked to our thoughts and emotions. This language of the body is so universal that we can even understand it in animals. We can immediately see if a dog is feeling vulnerable and afraid, or when it is feeling strong and aggressive. Similarly, we project confidence in our stance when we feel strong. This relationship between our emotions and our body also goes both ways. If someone is feeling vulnerable, he feels like protecting his body and closing up, but if he forces himself as an exercise to hold a spread posture that projects strength, then he will slowly start to feel more confident.

Some expressions of body language are more obvious, others are more subtle, but there is a universal language behind it. Some cultures are more conscious and expressive of body language than others. For example, among European cultures, Italians are more expressive with their body when they speak. Whether our culture is more expressive or not, we are all familiar with the more obvious expressions of body language, and we have an intuitive understanding of the more subtle expressions as well.

Ṣalāt is a conversation between a worshipper and his Creator. The meanings of *Ṣalāt* are not just conveyed through words, but also through the universal language of the body.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

God Almighty has kept a reciprocal connection between the soul and the body, and the body affects the soul. For example, if a person tries to cry as a formality, after all, he does start crying. Similarly, a person who tries to laugh as a formality eventually starts laughing. Similarly, the conditions that come upon the body in *Ṣalāt*, like standing and prostrating, also affect the soul. The extent to which he shows humility in his body is the extent to which it is created in the soul. Although God does not accept prostrations alone, but prostration has a connection with the soul. That is why the last station in *Ṣalāt* is prostration. When a person reaches the furthest station of humility, at that time, all he wants is to go into prostration. This condition is witnessed even in animals. When dogs love their master, they come and place their head on his feet, and they express their connection of love with prostration. From this, we clearly find that the body has a special connection with the soul. Similarly, the effect of the conditions of the soul becomes visible on the body. When the soul is sorrowful, its effects become apparent on the body as well, and tears and dejection become visible. If the soul and body do not have a reciprocal connection, then why does this happen?

The physical and spiritual lines run parallel. When

humility is created in the soul, it is also created in the body. When humility is truly in the soul, then its effects automatically become visible in the body. Similarly, when the body is affected, the soul is also affected. That is why it is essential that when one stands before God Almighty in *Şalāt*, he should express humility and devotion with his being. Although, at that time, it is a type of hypocrisy, but slowly its effect becomes permanent, and that devotion and humility is truly created in his soul. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol. edition), vol. 4, pp. 421-422)

Each posture in *Şalāt* conveys a certain sentiment and is a two-way street. In one way, each posture is an expression of the emotion that we are feeling. In another way, each posture helps to create the emotion that we wish to feel. For example, the posture of *Sajdah* can be an expression of the sentiments of humility we are feeling, or it can help create the sentiments of humility that we want to feel but are not feeling.

When we raise our hands at the beginning of *Şalāt*, it carries the symbolism of leaving everything behind and turning to Allah Almighty.

Ḥaḍrat Muşleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said that when a believer raises his hands before prayer,

He removes all other thoughts and becomes engrossed in thoughts of worshipping God. Aside

from maintaining our attention, another wisdom in raising our hands in this way is that this gesture is a natural expression that is used for leaving everything else behind. With this gesture, a Muslim expresses that he has separated himself from all thoughts and work of the world and has turned his attention to his Lord. In a couplet, the poet Ghalib indicated to this movement of our hands, “The courtiers place their hands on their ears as they greet, by which they mean that we are not acquainted.” Thus, by this movement, a believer expresses that he cuts himself off from the entire world and has turned his attention towards his Lord. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 110)

When we raise our hands to begin *Ṣalāt*, we should consciously express with our body the sentiment of leaving everything behind, of turning our attention away from the world. Combining this gesture with the statement of ‘Allah is the greatest’ (الله أكبر) creates a complete intention. We leave everything that is insignificant behind with our gesture and we move forward towards the One who is Greatest with our words. When our body, our words, and our heart come together to turn our attention away from the world and towards Allah, then we begin *Ṣalāt* with a solid *Niyyah* [determination of the mind].

Niyyah

Expressing *Niyyah* in the following words is optional. We can say *Allāhu Akbar* and express our *Niyyah* in these words if we like, or we can say *Allāhu Akbar* and begin our *Ṣalāt* with the *Thanā'*

وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ
 I have turned my face toward Him Who created the
 heavens and the earth, being ever inclined *to God*,
 and I am not of those who associate gods *with God*.



وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ

I have turned my full attention

When reciting these words, we should ask ourselves what we are turning our attention away from, because we cannot turn our attention towards something without turning our attention away from something else. What was our mind occupied in before *Ṣalāt*? It is the thoughts of that work or that conversation that are most likely to pick up from where they left off as soon as our mind wanders in *Ṣalāt*. What

thoughts does our mind generally wander into when we get distracted in *Ṣalāt*? Being aware of our daydreams is an important self-analysis. Here, we preemptively make up our minds to turn our attention away from them. The words ‘I have turned my full attention’ (وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي) make us aware of what we need to be turning our attention away from.

This same point is also found in the word حَنِيفًا, which means, ‘one who turns his attention away from one thing and inclines towards something else’ (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 208). In the words ‘I have turned my full attention’ (وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي), the emphasis is on our mind turning to Allah, whereas in the words ‘being ever inclined’ (حَنِيفًا), the emphasis is on our heart turning towards Allah.

The same sentiment is expressed when we raise our hands at the beginning of *Ṣalāt*. Whether we choose to verbalize our *Niyyah* with this verse of the Holy Quran or not, when we raise our hands for prayer, we say with our body language that we turn our attention away from everything else.

لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ

towards Him Who has created

Ibn Abbās says that he did not know the meaning of

Fāṭiris Samāwāt until two Arabs of the desert came to him disputing respecting the mastery of a well, and one of them said: *Ana Faṭartuhā*, i.e. I originated or began it. (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 657)

The words *خَلَقَ* (*Khalaqa*) and *فَطَرَ* (*Faṭara*) are used in the Holy Quran to refer to creation. The distinction of the word *فَطَرَ* (*Faṭara*) is its emphasis on creating from nothing.

When we recite the words ‘towards Him Who has created’ (اللَّذِي فَطَرَ), the thought of something being created from nothing should cause us some disorientation. Our mind can comprehend the concept of creating from something, but the idea of creating from nothing is inherently beyond our comprehension. The more we try to visualize the attribute of creating from nothing, the more frustrating it is. We cannot relate to it. When we recite the attribute of The Merciful (الرَّحِيمِ), then our mind can immediately relate to how people can be merciful to others. We can easily visualize this attribute. With the attributes of Lord (رَبِّ), The Gracious (الرَّحْمَنُ), Master of the Day of Judgement (مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ), each can easily be processed in our mind and visualized. However, when we recite, ‘Him Who has created’ (اللَّذِي فَطَرَ), our mind hits a roadblock. How can anything be created from nothing? It doesn’t seem to make sense, but we cannot dismiss it because, logically, we know that there should be a cause of all causes. We know that in this finite world, the chain of cause and effect has to start somewhere.

The beauty of the words ‘Him Who has created’ (اللَّذِي فَطَرَ) is how disorienting they are. We cannot recite them with just our minds. We have to recite these words with a heart that is filled with an awe of our Incomprehensible God. Only with that awe in our hearts can we enjoy reciting these words. *Ṣalāt* is an experience of the heart. It begins with an exercise in humility.

This same attribute of ‘Him Who has created’ (اللَّذِي فَطَرَ) reassures us that no matter how weak we are, Allah Almighty has the power to accept our prayers.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Your God is One Who has suspended numberless stars without any support and Who has created heaven and earth from nothing. Then would you think so ill of Him as to imagine that your objective is beyond His power? (*Essence of Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 213)

When our heart is moved by the awe of how incomprehensible ‘Him Who has created’ (اللَّذِي فَطَرَ) is, the prayers we offer after will be filled with a hope that was not there before. The purpose of *Ṣalāt* is to move the heart, for us to reach out to our Creator from the depths of our heart. If the words ‘towards Him Who has created’ (لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ) succeeds in moving our heart, then the frame of mind needed for prayer is created.



السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

the heavens and the earth

*Grandeur of
the Creator*

At times, Allah Almighty is described in the Holy Quran as the Creator of everything, at other times as the Creator of all creatures, and at other times as the Creator of mankind. Each description evokes a different visualization and a different emotion. The most personalized way to describe the attribute of the Creator is on the individual level. For example, the Holy Quran says,

Why should I not worship Him who has created me
(36:23).

When we recite this verse and apply it to ourselves, it evokes a personal and individual relationship we have with our Creator. For someone to know that Allah is his individual Creator is sufficient reason for him to worship Allah.

However, the words used at the beginning of *Ṣalāt* introduce us to Allah Almighty in a broader sense that is filled with grandeur. If we had said, ‘I turn my attention to Him who has created me,’ it would have been personal, but it would have been a very narrow description of the attribute of The Creator. If we had said, ‘I turn my attention to Him who has created everything,’ it would have been an encompassing description of the attribute of The Creator, but it

would not have carried the same grandeur that comes with the words, ‘the heavens and the earth.’ When we recite the words ‘the heavens and the earth’ (السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ), the vastness of the galaxies that Allah Almighty created comes to mind, and our insignificance as just one tiny creation in all of it evokes a unique feeling of smallness. The greatness of Allah as The Creator is expressed here not only in concept but in a way that inspires awe.

With the words ‘the heavens and the earth’ (السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ), everything that exists that could distract us away from Allah is connected back to Allah Almighty. In fact, all of creation is there to remind us of its Creator.

*Link between
all of creation
and its
Creator*

Explaining how insight is needed to see The Creator in the creation, Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau‘ūd^{ra} said,

In reality, knowledge of the being of God is an encompassing knowledge and comes after knowledge and understanding of other things. Some things are visible in themselves, and by seeing them, we become aware of them. For example, if we put our finger in front of an infant, he will just think that an object has come in front of him. He isn’t aware that the finger is connected to a hand, and that hand is connected to an arm, and that arm is connected to a shoulder. That shoulder is connected to a head through a neck, and in that head is a mind, and that mind instructed all

of these things to come into motion after which this finger appeared in front of him.” (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 316)

When we play with an infant, he sees our face and smiles because he recognizes us. Then if we give him our finger to play with, he gets distracted from us and starts playing with our finger. He doesn't yet have the understanding that we are connected with our finger, that when he is playing with our finger, he is playing with us. Similarly, when we are unable to make the connection between the world and its Creator, then the world distracts us away from our Creator rather than reminding us of Him. As an infant gets a little older and develops the motor skills to understand how his hands are connected to his mind, then he starts to understand how our hand is also connected with our mind. Then, when he sees our finger, he recognizes it, and he looks for our face. When he finds our face, then he smiles and recognizes us and then plays with our finger. He connects the two. Now, when he plays with our finger, it doesn't turn his attention away from us, it turns his attention towards us. He plays with our finger knowing that he's playing with us. Our finger reminds him of us; it no longer distracts him away from us.

In our spiritual infancy, we also have to gradually develop the insight to connect the creation with The Creator. When we recite that Allah Almighty is The Creator of 'the heavens and the earth' (أَلْسَمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ), everything in existence we can

think of reminds us of its Creator. Anything that can be distracting us from Allah is ultimately connected to Allah. The very things we worry about and that distract us from *Ṣalāt* makes us more focused on our *Ṣalāt*. This realization harnesses those distractions into even more powerful prayers. Rather than fighting a battle against our distractions, this teaches us to work with our distractions to make our *Ṣalāt* more focused. Repetition of this exercise in our daily prayers makes it more intuitive. Eventually, what was a distraction from Allah Almighty starts to become a reminder of Allah Almighty.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

“There is none among you with whom is not an attachment from among the *jinn* [devil].” The Companions said: “Allah’s Messenger, with you too?” Thereupon he^{sas} said: “Yes, but Allah helps me against him, so I am safe from his hand and he does not command me but for good.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 52, Chapter 16)

Explaining this Hadith, Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau‘ūd^{ra} said,

There is a general influence that satan has on all people, and no one is safe from it. The Holy Prophet^{sas} said that when such an influence reaches me, it changes into righteousness....Thus, even satanic

influences can be used for righteousness. (*Anwārul ‘Ulūm*, vol. 5, pp. 554, *Malāikatullāh*)

For example, imagine our mind wanders during *Ṣalāt* into thinking about what we need to put on our list of groceries we’re going to get. There is nothing wrong with thinking about groceries, but when the thought distracts us from *Ṣalāt*, then it becomes wrong in that time and place. We can instead take that thought and be grateful during *Ṣalāt* to Allah The Provider who has provided us with food. Our children never worry about how groceries get to the table. They take it for granted because they never think about the chain of events that ends with food appearing on their plate. Similarly, we may never think about the long chain of events that starts with Allah Almighty and ends with groceries appearing on our local store shelves. We don’t think about how fragile that chain is and how we could face food shortages if it is disturbed. Taking a distraction in *Ṣalāt* and making it into a reminder of gratitude is how a satanic influence can be used for righteousness. Thus, when we know that Allah is The Creator, then everything in ‘the heavens and the earth’ (الْأَسْمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ) becomes a reminder of Him. When we see a painting, we think of the painter. When we receive a gift, we think of the sender. The gift does not distract us from the sender; it reminds us of him.

Ḥaḍrat Abdul Qādir Jīlānī^{ra} said,

The allotter is Allah and the executor is Allah and the creator is Allah, so He is more deserving of thanks than others. For example, one does not look towards the slave who carries a present but towards the master, the sender of the gift....Whoever looks to the outside and the cause, and his knowledge does not go beyond these, is ignorant and defective in his intelligence. The term ‘intelligent’ applies to a person on account of his insight into the ultimate end of things. (*Futūḥul Ghaib*, Discourse 59)



حَنِيفًا

being ever inclined

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The very essence of Islam is that all of one’s faculties—whether inner or external—must always lay prostrate at the threshold of Allah Almighty, just as a large engine fuels many other parts. In the same way, until a person’s every action and movement is not made to follow the overall power and control of the

engine, how can they believe in the divinity of Allah Almighty? Until this is so, can such an individual call themselves ‘one who is ever inclined to God,’ in the true sense when reciting the words, “I have turned my face towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth.” If a person reinforces their words through action and turns towards God, then undoubtedly such a one is a Muslim; they are a believer and *Hanīf* [one who is ever inclined to God]. (*Malḡūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 163)

In the words ‘I have turned my full attention’ (وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي), the emphasis is on turning our attention towards Allah. In the word حَنِيفًا (being ever inclined), the emphasis is on turning our hearts towards Allah. Turning our attention to someone simply requires control of our thoughts. We can change our thoughts much more easily than we can change our hearts. If we fall in love with someone, then nobody can change the way we feel; even we can’t change it. There is something in their beauty that has infatuated us. We can easily change our thoughts and focus our minds on something, but we cannot change our hearts. If someone is forced to marry someone they don’t want to marry, they can’t force themselves to fall in love with that person. We can force our mind to focus on something, but we cannot force our heart to love someone we don’t.

If our heart is inclined away from Allah Almighty, then

we will find no pleasure in *Ṣalāt*. We will force our thoughts towards Allah, but the flow of our hearts in the opposite direction will pull our minds back. If our hearts are inclined to Allah Almighty, then our minds will automatically join the flow of our hearts. There is naturally a pleasure in turning towards the one we are in love with, and we will effortlessly find pleasure in *Ṣalāt*. Even the weakest among us have experienced at least one *Ṣalāt* in our lives where we felt a pleasure in the remembrance of Allah that did not require any effort on our part. When we recite the word حَنِيفًا (being ever inclined), our goal should be to make that experience a regular part of our lives.

Continuing, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Another cause which gives rise to the habit of abandoning Prayer and becoming indolent is that when an individual inclines towards that which is besides Allah, the faculties of the soul and heart forever remain bent in that direction in the manner of a tree (whose branches are bent in a certain direction and then left to grow in that shape). The hearts of such people become so rough and hard that they solidify, like a rock, in the very manner of the branches I have just described. After they harden, they cannot be bent in any other direction. So too is the case with a person's heart and soul, which continue to move further away from God with every passing day. Therefore, to

forsake Allah Almighty and ask of another is a very dangerous thing and makes the heart tremble. This is why it is absolutely necessary to regularly observe the Prayer, so that first and foremost, it becomes a deep-rooted habit and a person becomes inclined to turn towards Allah. Then gradually a time comes when one attains to a state in which they become completely detached from all other relations to the exclusion of Allah; and in this state, they become the recipient of divine light and derive pleasure in Prayer. (*Malḡūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 163-164)

If our heart is not inclined to Allah, then it will incline to the world. The more years we spend in materialistic desires, the more we become irreversibly inclined to the world. Every day spent neglecting our purpose is a day we move further away from it. Knowing this should create a sense of urgency in us. Some people say that they will start observing *Ṣalāt* when they are more mature. They think spirituality is only for when you're older. They don't realize that every day they spend inclining away from Allah Almighty, their inclination towards the world becomes reinforced. Their abstract ideals will not decide who they will be when they are older; it will be the reality of what they did every day up until that time that will decide who they will be. We should imagine our inclinations as branches of a tree that grow each day in the direction of the light we shine on them. When we shine light

from one direction, its branches will grow crooked. After decades of growing a tree like this, if we try to bend it in a different direction, we will break it before we straighten it. Similarly, a habit that we spent decades reinforcing can only be changed with decades of work, except if Allah's special mercy saves us. If we think we will change when we get older, we are setting ourselves up for a rude awakening. The only way to counter a daily inclination towards the world is with a daily commitment to detaching ourselves from the world. *Ṣalāt* is an exercise in completely leaving the world behind as if it is nothing. There is a euphoric feeling of pleasure in the freedom of full detachment from the world during *Ṣalāt*.

However, an occasional pleasure and a passing inclination towards Allah does not make a person *حَنِيف* (ever inclined). If we are mildly interested in someone, no one would ever say we are in love with them. When our heart is ever inclined to someone, our thoughts and actions are motivated by that love as well.

Hanīf means true pleasure in obedience of Allah and steadfastness therein. It does not just mean that an inclination towards goodness is found in him. Rather, it is also necessary that he be established on goodness and the quality of consistency is found in him. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 9, pp. 372)

The only way to become *حَنِيف* (ever inclined) is through a commitment to the habit of daily *Ṣalāt*. Then the inclinations

of our heart will grow in the direction of the love of Allah, and our mind and actions will automatically follow.

In almost every instance where the word *Hanīf* is used in the Holy Quran, it is immediately followed by an absolve-ment from those who are idolaters (مُشْرِكٍ).



وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

and I am not among those who associate partners with Allah

In the verses leading up to this verse of the Holy Quran, which is the *Niyyah* of *Ṣalāt*, Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} explains to his people the different stages of leaving idolatry. The idolatry mentioned in these verses does not just refer to physical idols.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Remember, there are many types of idolatry, of which one is called *Shirk Jalī* [apparent idolatry] and another *Shirk Khafī* [hidden idolatry]. The general example of apparent idolatry is how idolatrous people consider idols, trees, or other things as objects

of worship. Hidden idolatry is that a man glorifies a thing just as he does or should do to Allah, or that he loves a thing as Allah should be loved or that he fears it or places his trust in it. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 8, pp. 114).

The lessons in the story of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} are relevant to us as well. First, when the stars set, he^{as} explained the first stage and said, 'I like not those that disappear.' (6:77) This is the stage of disappointment in idolatry. Then when the moon set, he explained the next stage and said, 'Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray.' (6:78) This is the stage of desperation in idolatry. Then, when the sun set, he explained the next stage and said, 'O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah.' (6:79) This is the stage of disgust with idolatry. In the end, he said the words we say in *Niyyah* and ended with, 'I am not among those who associate partners with Allah.' (6:80) This is the stage where we not only absolve ourselves of the action of idolatry, but we absolve ourselves of the people who commit idolatry. The starting point of *Ṣalāt* is the ending point of idolatry.

The stages in these verses describe the process of how we leave hidden idolatry. Past commentators on the Holy Quran have taken this story of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} literally and mistakenly believed that he committed idolatry.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

The literal interpretation of these events by commentators is incorrect. However, commentators have correctly concluded that when the human mind gains guidance without revelation, it goes from low to high. According to a child, in the beginning his mother is everything. In other words, she is his god. Rather, he is not even aware of his mother; he considers her breast to be his god because he knows that this is where he receives milk. If he does not find her breast, then he cries. Then he recognizes his mother, so he loves her. Then he recognizes his father, so he loves him. Then he loves his brother; then he loves the children he plays with, he loves his neighbors. Then he starts to love other needs, like food and drink and clothes. At each stage, he considers each of these to be his purpose. However, slowly he leaves all of these until these things lead him to God. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 318-319)

Disappointment

The first stage of leaving idolatry starts with disappointment.

What makes us distinct in the animal kingdom is that we are spiritual beings. Because of this spiritual nature, whenever we search for satisfaction in material pleasures, we ultimately feel disappointed. We share our capacity for material pursuits with animals as well, and animal pursuits can never truly satisfy us. We may think that loving and sacrificing for our fellow man is a noble and unique trait, but even in

animals, the love mothers have for their children puts some humans to shame. Hens will stand in front of predators and sacrifice their lives to protect their chicks. The accumulation of wealth for status is not a concept foreign to animals either. Some species of birds attract mates based on the beauty of the nest they build. In most of our basic behaviors, we are no different than animals. The only thing that makes us distinct in principle is our capacity for spirituality. As humans, we look for purpose in one material thing after another until we have no choice but to come to terms with our distinct spiritual nature. Our spiritual nature is what makes us distinct from animals, and as long as we live our lives like animals, we can never find true happiness.

For us to devote our lives to worldly pursuits is like a human devoting all of his time to animal pursuits. It is like an adult devoting all of his time to childish diversions. For example, an infant can be pacified by dangling keys in front of his face, and he cries when it is taken away. But when he grows into a teenager, he can only be pacified by having a new car to go with those keys. As a teenager, he becomes obsessed with cars, but then he slowly grows out of it. As a man, his obsession changes to women, and that is what he devotes his time and energy to. The value of a nice car becomes its value in courtship. As he grows old, he loses interest in lust, and his new obsession is his position in society. The only value a car has to him now is as a status symbol.

Ḥaḍrat Muşleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

One by one, these things come in front of him, and about each, he estimates that he cannot live without it, as if it is his god. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 318)

If a six-month-old child could speak and understand, and he was told that when he grows up, he will leave his mother's lap and that his attachment to his mother would decrease, he would be shocked. If a seven-year-old were told that when he grows up, he will marry a woman and his attachment will be more to her and he will leave his mother, then he will say, 'I'm not insane, I wouldn't leave my mother. Other people would do this, I will never do this.' Thus, it is a part of nature that at different times man is inclined to different things. When he is inclined to each of those things, he cannot imagine that he will one day leave it. When he gets older, he never thinks that at one time he was inclined to those things, and he considered his life empty without them. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 319)

Each time we grow out of an obsession, looking back it seems like nothing more than child's play. But we are so short-sighted that we don't realize that our current obsession is no different. That is why Allah Almighty has described the life of this world as child's play.

Keep in mind that the life of this world is only sport

and pastime, and a display, and a subject of boasting among yourselves, and rivalry in multiplying riches and children. (57:21)

Whatever it is that we presently feel like we cannot live without, after a while, we will become hopelessly bored with it and we will need something more meaningful. No matter how real it feels, that reality disappears. With each disappointment, our heart says, ‘I like not those that disappear.’ (6:77) Our heart feels the sentiments with which Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} described the first stage.

As we start to recognize this pattern in our lives, those feelings of disappointment change to feelings of desperation. *Desperation* Desperation comes when we have a midlife crisis. It comes when we realize that the disappointments in our lives have wasted time we can never have back. For example, a person thinks he’ll be happy when he achieves his career goals. After years of schooling and climbing the ladder, when he finally reaches the position he aspired to, he realizes it doesn’t give him the happiness he was looking for. His coworkers aren’t as happy with their positions as he thought they would be. He realizes he spent half his life trying to get something that isn’t enough, something that he doesn’t really want anymore. When he finally achieves his ambitions, he finds the void is still there, only greater than before.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

If Adam's son had a valley full of gold, he would like to have two valleys, for nothing fills his mouth except dust. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 81, Chapter 10)

We all have to face an existential and midlife crisis at some point or another. When we realize that life is passing us by, we start to feel desperation. We have no choice but to look beyond the physical and search for purpose in the spiritual.

Ḥaḍrat Abdul Qādir Jilānī^{ra} said,

So long as he finds resources in his own self, he does not turn towards the people, and so long as he finds resources in the people, he does not turn towards the Creator. (*Futūḥul Ghaib*, Discourse 3)

As we turn away from the world in disappointment and search for our Creator, our helplessness brings feelings of desperation, and our heart says, 'Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray.' (6:78) Our heart feels the sentiments with which Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} described the second stage.

Disgust Desperation on its own is not enough to reach the stage of disgust with idolatry. For this stage, we have to have experienced heartbreak. For example, falling in love means making ourselves vulnerable. When a person falls in love with someone and builds their future around them, they make

themselves vulnerable. If their spouse suddenly dies, their sense of security is shattered. For some time, they become incapable of vulnerability. To imagine falling in love during that time of heartbreak is inconceivable; if anything, it is repulsive. To suggest to them during this time that they fall in love with someone is offensive. This is a period of heartbreak. What we avoid thinking about is that every single person we have attached happiness to and built our future around is going to disappear from this world. Either they will leave first or we will leave everything behind. We have no control over whether it will happen today or not, but we will have to face that heartbreak and it will turn our existence upside down.

Disappointment threatens our sense of security but it does not break it. Desperation shakes our sense of security but it is not enough to break it. It is only heartbreak that bursts the security bubble that we were so sure we were safe in. Our heart is broken by the loss of what we thought belonged to us. When our world is shattered, that is the moment of grief when nobody in this world can make the pain go away. That is the moment of vulnerability when the thought of turning back to trusting the world is inconceivable. That is the moment of clarity when we see that no attachment in this world is lasting. We see that any attachment to anything is a time-bomb that could shatter our world again. The only worldly attachments that are a source of peace are the ones that we connect to our attachment with Allah Almighty. It is

in that moment of disgust that our heart says, ‘O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah.’ (6:79) Our heart feels the sentiments with which Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} described the third stage.

*Purifying
our
environment*

The stage after this is where we not only absolve ourselves of the action of idolatry, we also absolve ourselves of the people who commit idolatry. When we try to leave a habit, we rid ourselves more easily of the harmful action than the harmful company that we keep. An alcoholic will have a hard time leaving alcohol, but he will have an even harder time leaving all of the friends he gets together to drink with. When we abandon the harmful action, we purify only our internal condition, but when we abandon the harmful company, we purify our external condition as well. When we say ‘I am not among those who associate partners with Allah’ (6:80), we say that our affinity is only with those who love Allah. We say that our love for Allah is so great that we only have close love with those who love Allah.

‘I am not among those who associate partners with Allah’ is a strongly-worded statement. It is not something that can be said passively. There is a forceful sentiment underlying it. When we recite it, we should remind ourselves of that heart-sinking feeling when our sense of security in attachment to this world was suddenly shattered. Then, with a feeling of disgust for idolatry, the words flow along with our

heart, 'I am not among those who associate partners with Allah.'

The more we refresh this epiphany, the more our capacity to experience materialistic pleasures dies away on its own. Heartbreak is a temporary feeling, and when it fades, our heart inclines back to worldly attachments. This feeling has to be refreshed again and again in our *Ṣalāt*; then our moment of clarity will start to become a life of clarity. We slowly find our hearts turning away from idolatry (*shirk*) and becoming ever inclined to Allah.

The verse of the Holy Quran that we say in *Niyyah* starts with the words *innī wajjahtu*. However, when the Holy Prophet^{sas} would start *Ṣalāt* with this verse, he would do so without the words *innī*. Instead, he would begin with the words *wajjahtu*. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 6, Chapter 26)

*Why
does
Niyyah
not start
with the
words
"innī"?*

The words *wajjahtu* mean, 'I have turned.' The words *innī* mean 'surely I' and add strong emphasis on the 'I' in 'I have turned.' Literally, *innī wajjahtu* means 'surely I, I turned.'

In the context of the story of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} narrated in the Holy Quran, the reason for the strong emphasis on the 'I' in 'I have turned' is to create a contrast between the idolaters and Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as}. When he refutes the idolaters, he establishes himself in opposition to them. The idolaters turned their attention to the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, whereas Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} turned his attention to the

worship of Allah. In this context, *innī wajjahtu* is as a juxtaposition and has the meaning of, ‘as for me, I have turned.’ The emphasis in the words *innī* [surely I] have an important significance in this context.

However, when we recite this verse in *Ṣalāt*, we are not contrasting ourselves against anyone. Rather, we are saying this verse as an independent statement. To say ‘as for me, I have turned’ does not have the same purpose in an independent statement. Placing extra emphasis on ‘I’ does not carry the significance that it does in the context of contrasting Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} with the idolaters. For this reason, rather than start with *innī* [surely I], we start with *wajjahtu* [I have turned]. Since the words *innī* are at the beginning of the verse, so starting from *wajjahtu* does not change any sentence in the Holy Quran. Rather, this practice of the Holy Prophet^{sas} reveals another meaning of this verse.

Also, when the Holy Prophet^{sas} would say this verse as *Niyyah* for *Ṣalāt*, he would do so after saying *Allāhu Akbar*. (*Abū Dāwūd*, Book 2, Chapter 272, *Tirmidhī*, Book 42, Chapter 32, *Nasāī*, Book 11, Chapter 17)

Thanā'

If we chose to express our *Niyyah* in the words of 6:80 of the Holy Quran, then after completing *Niyyah*, we recite *Thanā'*. If not, then after beginning our prayer with *Allāhu Akbar*, we recite *Thanā'*, which is in the following words:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ
 Holy are You, O Allah, and all praise is Yours, and
 blessed is Your name, and exalted is Your majesty,
 and there is none worthy of worship except You.



سُبْحَانَكَ

Holy are You

The difference between *Tasbīh* (saying *Subhānallāh*) and *Tahmīd* (saying *Alḥamdulillāh*) is that in *Tasbīh* we say that Allah is free of all imperfections and in *Tahmīd* we say that Allah has all perfections. In one we negate, and in the other we affirm.

*Allah is
 pure of
 imper-
 fections*

Sabbahallāh means, he declared God to be free from

all defects and weaknesses; he glorified God (Aqrab). The word is used about God and conveys the sense of glorifying Him and declaring Him to be free from all defects- anything that may detract from, and adversely affect, His attributes of Oneness, Knowledge, Power, Purity, etc. (Taj & Mufradat). (*The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 90)

In concept, *Tasbīḥ* may seem redundant. After all, if we believe in Allah, then we already believe that He is free of all defects. The definition of the word Allah is ‘the name of the Supreme Being Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is free from all defects.’ (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 28) If we already believe in Allah and know that He is free of all imperfections, then why emphasize that He is free of imperfections?

The reason for this emphasis is that there is a difference in believing in something in concept and believing in something in practice. There are many imperfections that we unknowingly attribute to Allah Almighty. Doing *Tasbīḥ* means we identify these and correct them. For example, in concept, we believe that Allah Almighty is near. However, we may not have experienced His nearness as a reality in a long time, or ever. As a result, if we look within ourselves, we will find that we feel that Allah is distant. This feeling of distance naturally results in weakness in our prayers. When we feel that Allah is distant, then we feel that He doesn’t

really hear us. As a result, our prayers lack certainty and our words lack gravity. When we feel Allah is distant, then we feel that He doesn't really see us. As a result, our stance and facial expression in *Ṣalāt* reflect carelessness. When we feel that Allah is distant, we feel that he doesn't really speak. As a result, we don't seek an answer, and our relationship dies. If we feel that Allah is distant, then we feel that He doesn't really know everything. As a result, our mind easily wanders into one embarrassing thought or another. If the person next to us knew what we were thinking when we daydream in *Ṣalāt* and why we were thinking it, it would be awkward.

If we do not recite 'Holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ) with attention, our concepts will contradict with our practices. Our belief, in concept, will tell us that Allah is supposed to be near, but our belief in practice will tell us that He is distant. Our prayer will be spent in frustration because we are trying to act on beliefs that contradict each other.

When we say 'holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ), we find these imperfections in our practice and then realize that they attribute imperfections to our concept of Allah Almighty.

Subhānahū means, 'I declare God to be far removed or free from every imperfection, defect, impurity, and I magnify, celebrate, glorify, and praise Him.' (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 376)

If we recite 'holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ) with attention, then we begin prayer with our beliefs being consistent and in harmony with one another. Just realizing our wrong beliefs will

make those feelings of distance from Allah Almighty start disappearing on their own. An awareness of Allah Almighty's presence comes over us that we did not feel the moment before we said 'holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ). We suddenly realize that He is not deaf, rather He has heard everything we have said. We realize that He is not blind, rather He sees us in this very place. We realize that He is not mute, rather He can answer us at this very moment. When we say 'holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ), we should ask ourselves, 'Do I really believe that Allah has the power to accept my prayer right now?'

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Never miss *Ṣalāt*. Observe it repeatedly and with this thought that I am standing in front of a Being of such power that if He wills, He can accept my prayer now, in this very state, in fact, in this very moment, in fact, in this very second. (*Malḡūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 4, pp. 401)

*Vested
interest
in
thinking
less of
Allah*

We must also remember that our lower-self has a vested interest in attributing imperfections to Allah Almighty. For example, when Muslim scholars lost their righteousness and no longer received the favor of revelation, they had two choices. They could either admit that they had become misguided and were no longer worthy of receiving revelation from Allah, or they could hide their misguidance by claiming that Allah no longer speaks to anyone. They chose

to conceal their misguidance and attribute imperfections to Allah instead. This created a vicious cycle; their weaknesses changed their concept of God, and then their wrong concept of God led to greater weaknesses. When they stopped believing that Allah would speak to them, they stopped seeking interaction with Allah Almighty, and as a result, they ceased being spoken to.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh I^{ra} used to relate about one of his teachers that he saw a dream when he was in Bhopal that he was standing near a bridge in the outskirts of the town. There he found a leper whose whole body had been infested with worms. Flies were resting on his body. He asked him who he was. He replied that he was God, his Lord. The teacher said that he had read so many praiseworthy things about God in the Holy Quran; that He is so beautiful and there is none who is comparable to Him. What has become of His condition? God replied to him, “My appearance that you are seeing is not the one I possess in reality. This is how I look through the eyes of the people of Bhopal.”

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} advised,

Examine yourselves closely, and analyze your actions, words, sayings, your movements and your rest.

Examine how you see God as compared to the things that you love in this world, lest your view of God be the same as the people of Bhopal, or similar to it. Remember well that God is entirely free and pure of all ugliness, vice, and disfigurement. (*Anwārul ‘Ulūm*, vol. 2, pp. 236-237, *Barakāte Khilāfat*)

If our prayers are not being accepted, then the uncomfortable truth is that we are doing something wrong. The difficult path is to change ourselves so that we become worthy of the acceptance of prayers. However, it is much easier to change our concept of Allah rather than changing ourselves. It is easier to attribute imperfection to Allah and believe that He no longer accepts prayers. With this excuse, we can say that we tried our best but it's not our fault that our worship produced no results. This creates a vicious cycle because when we convince ourselves that Allah does not accept prayers, then we have little reason to pray, and we gradually cease to pray at all.

If we don't practically believe that Allah can accept our prayers, then we start to disbelieve in the attribute of The Responder (الْمَجِيبُ). That attribute ceases to exist for us and we cease to seek blessings from that attribute. If we believe in practice that Allah Almighty does not hear, or see, or speak, then we will slowly stop praying to Him and obeying Him and expecting a response from Him. The lack of correct doctrines will result in a lack of action on our part. The lack of action will result in a lack of response from Allah Almighty.

Allah Almighty says,

I am to my slave as he thinks of Me (*Bukhārī*, Book 97, Chapter 35).

To us, He will become a deaf, blind, and mute God. It does not matter how much religious knowledge we have or how much of a scholar we are. If we do not have a correct belief in Allah Almighty in practice, we can never have a living relationship with Him.

In *Tasbīḥ*, we recognize that our lower-self has a vested interest in attributing imperfections to Allah Almighty. We realize that if there is any weakness, it is not a weakness in Allah; *Subḥānallāh*, it is in fact a weakness in us. When we say ‘holy are You’ (سُبْحَانَكَ), we reflect on the being of Allah with emphasis on negating imperfections we attribute to Him.



اللَّهُمَّ

O Allah

Any name is meaningless to us if we don't know someone

with that name. For example, if you don't know anybody named Zaid, Zaid is a meaningless word to you. However, if someone close to you is named Zaid, then the person comes to your mind when you hear their name. You picture his face along with who he is. Think of the name of someone very close to you. The mention of that word brings with it an immediate recognition and a flow of thoughts and emotions. It brings to mind the person you know.

With the word Allah, we are addressing Allah Almighty personally.

In the Arabic language, this word is never used for any other being or thing. No other language has a distinctive name for the Supreme Being. The names found in other languages are attributive or descriptive. Allah is always used in the singular. (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 28)

The name Allah can only be meaningful to us if we know Him. When we say Allah, we think of the Being we know. The degree to which we are familiar with Allah is the degree to which this name will carry meaning for us.

There is, however, a distinction between how we recognize people and how we recognize Allah Almighty.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

We see people's beauty first, and then we see their

characteristics after. The beauty of a person is visible and his characteristics are hidden. For this reason, character is higher than beauty. However, with the Being of Allah Almighty, we see the characteristics of Allah first and His beauty after. The beauty of Allah is more hidden than the characteristics of Allah. (*Ta'alluq Billāh*, pp. 79)

When we hear the name of someone we are barely acquainted with, then only their face comes to mind, but when we hear the name of someone we are close to, then their characteristics come to mind. In the initial stages of spirituality, when Allah is only an acquaintance, hearing His name brings to mind the attributes we know or have interacted with. As we experience His favors more and more, we start to understand the Being behind those favors. The more we get to know Allah Almighty through understanding and experiencing His attributes, the more we see His beauty. Eventually, when we hear the name of Allah, it is His beauty that now comes to mind.

When we say 'O Allah' (اللَّهُمَّ), we can ask ourselves how familiar we are with Allah Almighty. The word should bring with it a spontaneous recognition and a flow of thoughts and emotions. It brings to mind a Being who we know. When we have a presence of mind on who we are addressing, then the words 'O Allah' (اللَّهُمَّ) carry a feeling of intimacy.

True believers are only those whose hearts tremble when the name of Allah is mentioned (8:3)



وَبِحَمْدِكَ

and all praise is Yours

Difference between Tasbīḥ and Tahmīd *Tasbīḥ* (saying *Subḥānallāh*) is a foundation for *Tahmīd* (saying *Alḥamdulillāh*). It is important to remove any imperfections from our minds before we can reflect on the perfections of Allah Almighty. That is why the words ‘holy are You’ (سُبْحَانَكَ) come before the words ‘and all praise is Yours’ (وَبِحَمْدِكَ).

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau‘ūd^{ra} said,

In extolling the holiness of God, only being free from imperfection is mentioned. However, explaining the attributes of God only up to this point is not sufficient for a person who is at a higher stage of reflection. For a complete mind, it is necessary to express the attributes that affirm His qualities. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, p. 284)

The reality is that a complete connection with

Allah Almighty cannot be achieved without reflecting on and benefitting from the affirming attributes of God. A person who simply extols the holiness of God, he only says that God Almighty is a superior being. However, a person who praises God, he demonstrates Him to be a living God. He benefits from the attributes of God, and he causes their benefit to reach others. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 286)

Let's use the example of distance and nearness. When we say 'holy are You' (سُبْحَانَكَ), we remove the misconception that Allah is distant. The emphasis here is not on how near Allah Almighty is, but on how He is not distant. When we say 'and all praise is Yours' (وَبِحَمْدِكَ), the emphasis here is on how near He is. We say that Allah Almighty is praiseworthy and is closer to us than we can imagine.

We don't just say that Allah is not deaf, but we reflect on His praiseworthy attribute of being the All-Hearing; 'It is He Who hears all things, and is ever-near.' (34:51) We don't just say that he is not blind, but we reflect on His praiseworthy attribute of being the All-Seeing; 'And He is with you wheresoever you may be. And Allah sees all that you do.' (57:5) We don't just say that he is not mute, but we reflect on His praiseworthy attribute of being the Answerer of Prayers; 'And when My servants ask you about Me, say: "I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me."' (2:187) We don't just say that Allah is not oblivious,

but we reflect on His praiseworthy attribute of being the All-Knowing; ‘We know what his self whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein.’ (50:17)

When we do *Tasbīḥ* (saying *Subḥānallāh*), we look inwards and find all of the imperfections that we ourselves attribute to Allah Almighty. When we do *Taḥmīd* (saying *Alḥamdulillāh*), we look outwards and observe all of the perfections of Allah Almighty. The emphasis of *Tasbīḥ* is not to affirm a reality that exists; it is to negate a falsehood that does not exist. This is why there are very few ways of doing *Tasbīḥ*, but there are a hundred ways of doing *Taḥmīd*. In almost all the places that we do *Tasbīḥ*, we express it with only one word, which is *Subḥān*. We don’t need a vast vocabulary to negate the imperfections we invented ourselves, but we do need a vast vocabulary to describe the countless beauties of Allah Almighty. When we do *Taḥmīd*, then we can say ‘Holy is my Lord, the Most Great,’ or ‘Holy is my Lord, the Most High,’ or ‘Holy is Allah, Lord of the Throne,’ or ‘Holy is Allah, Lord of all the worlds,’ or ‘Holy is Allah, and all praise is His.’ When we say ‘and all praise is Yours’ (وَبِحَمْدِكَ) in *Thanā’*, we look outward and observe all of the different ways that Allah Almighty is praiseworthy.

What does
وَبِحَمْدِكَ
mean?

1. ‘and praise be to You’

One meaning of بِحَمْدِكَ is, “praise be to You.” This makes سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ into two separate statements. Its translation

would be, “Holy are You, O Allah, and praise be to You.” The و is here interpreted as “and,” referring to consecutive action.

or by بِحَمْدِكَ is meant الْحَمْدُ لَكَ praise be to Thee: (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: حمد - Entry: حَمْدٌ)

When we recite with this interpretation in mind, we first reflect on how Allah Almighty is free of all weaknesses, we pause, and then we reflect on how He possesses all perfect attributes.

2. ‘while praising You’

Another meaning of بِحَمْدِكَ is, “praising You.” This makes the phrase سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ into one statement rather than two statements. Its translation would be, “I declare Your holiness, O Allah, while praising You.” The و is here interpreted as “while,” referring to simultaneous action.

Authors differ respecting the ب in the saying, فَسَبِّحْ...some saying that it denotes concomitance, and that حمد is prefixed to the objective complement, so that the meaning is, سَبِّحْهُ حَامِدًا لَهُ [Declare thou his (thy Lord's) freedom from everything derogatory from his glory, praising Him], i. e. declare thou his freedom from that which is not suitable to Him, and

ascribe to Him that which is suitable to Him; (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: ب - Entry: ب).

Also, “حَامِدِينَ لَكَ بِحَمْدِكَ” that by حَمْدِكَ is meant حَامِدِينَ لَكَ” (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: حمد - Entry: حَمْدٌ)

When we recite with this interpretation in mind, we reflect on how every weakness that we falsely attribute to Allah Almighty is connected to a true attribute of His that refutes it. For example, when we remind ourselves that Allah Almighty is not oblivious to what we do, we are simultaneously reminded that He is All-Knowing and He sees everything we do. *Tasbīḥ* and *Taḥmīd* can be done separately or, as in this case, simultaneously.

3. ‘and with Your praise’

Another meaning of بِحَمْدِكَ is, “with Your praise.” In this interpretation, there would be an implied verb before or after this phrase. This implied verb is also found in the use of بِ (with) in بِسْمِ اللَّهِ (with the name of Allah).

The compound word بِسْمِ therefore would mean ‘with the name of.’ According to the Arab usage, the words *iqra’* or *aqra’u* or *naqra’u* or *ishra’* or *ashra’u* or *nashra’u* would be taken to be understood before بِسْمِ اللَّهِ. The expression بِسْمِ اللَّهِ would thus mean ‘begin

with the name of Allah’ or ‘recite with the name of Allah,’ or ‘I or we begin with the name of Allah.’ or ‘I or we recite with the name of Allah.’ (*The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 5)

The words “with the name of Allah” are left open-ended so that we can use them in every situation. If a person is going to go for a walk, he can add this verb and say, “I walk with the name of Allah.” If a person is going to cook, he can add this verb and say, “I cook with the name of Allah.” Any verb can be used to fit every situation in our daily lives. The meanings of the words “with the name of Allah” are vast because they can have so many verbs implied with it. Similarly, the words “with Your praise” can also have many verbs implied with it. The following are some possible verbs:

- a. ‘and I begin with praising You’

Since we are beginning our prayer, the act of “beginning” can be the implied verb. Thus, we mean to say, “Holy are You, O Allah, and I begin with praising You.” (وَأَبْتَدِيُ بِحَمْدِكَ)

and I begin with praising Thee; أَبْتَدِيُ being understood (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: حمد - Entry: حَمَدٌ).

When we recite with this interpretation, we bring to mind

the entire *Ṣalāt* we are about to observe, and then we make the intention of beginning that *Ṣalāt* with the praise of Allah.

b. ‘and with Your praise I declare Your Holiness’

Since we are declaring the holiness of Allah, the implied verb can continue this subject of “holiness.” Thus, we mean to say, “Holy are You, O Allah, and by praising You I declare your holiness.” (وَبِحَمْدِكَ سَبَّحْتُكَ)

and by praising Thee I extol thy remoteness, or freedom, from every impurity... سَبَّحْتُكَ being understood (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: حمد - Entry: حَمْدٌ).

One says also, سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ, meaning سَبَّحْتُكَ بِجَمِيعِ آيَاتِكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ سَبَّحْتُكَ [i. e. I glorify Thee by enumerating all thy benefits, and by the praising of Thee I glorify Thee]. (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: سبح - Entry: سُبْحَانٌ)

There are so many small weaknesses that we falsely attribute to Allah Almighty without noticing. Were it not for the countless ways of praise that have been revealed to correct our concept of God, we would have fallen into all types of shirk. When we say, “Holy are You, O Allah, and by praising You I declare Your holiness,” it is a statement of humility. We say that we can only do true *Tasbīh* because of the *Tahmīd* that we have been taught. It is by means of the praise

Allah Almighty taught us that we are able to do something so basic as declaring His holiness.

Also, in some cases, the *و* can be interpreted to add emphasis to the phrase that follows.

or, accord. to Aboo-'Amr Ibn-El-'Alà, the *و* is corroborative, as in the phrase, *هُوَ لَكَ*, وَهُوَ لَكَ. (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: حمد - Entry: حَمْدٌ)



وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ

and blessed is Your name

The names of Allah Almighty are a source of blessings for us because they are the only way we have of knowing Him. For example, Allah Almighty is described as *An-Nūr* [The Light]. Our eyes cannot see light, they can only see how light reflects off of objects. We could be floating in outer space and be surrounded by intense light, but if there were nothing for it to reflect on, we would be unaware of it. Space seems dark because of its emptiness, not necessarily because of an absence of light. When we see an object reflecting light, that is a sign for us that there is light present. In the world of our

Attributes of Allah are only way we can see Him

eyesight, we live in a world of reflections. We are surrounded by light and can never see it; we spend our lives observing its reflections. Similarly, the reality is that we cannot see the Being of Allah.

Ḥaḍrat Abū Dharr^{ra}, narrated, “I asked the Messenger of Allah^{sas}: “Did you see your Lord?” He said: “(He is) Light; how could I see Him?” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 1, Chapter 78)

It is only the reflection of the Light of Allah that we see; we live in a world of reflections. Each name of Allah is a sign for a different beauty of the Being of Allah. An *Ism* is ‘The name of a thing; a sign conveying knowledge of a thing;’ (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 413) The names of Allah are signs that convey knowledge of the Being of Allah. They are the only way we have of knowing His reality. For example, it is through the attribute of The Merciful that we interact with Allah Almighty. That interaction is an object that His light reflects off of. If it weren’t for that interaction, we would never know that the Being of Allah was present. The Being of Allah surrounds us, but we can never see Him. ‘Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Imperceptible, the All-Aware’ (6:104). The names of Allah are a source of blessings for us because they are how His Beauty reaches our eyes.

The names of Allah are always reflective of a greater reality behind them. However, the names of people are often meaningless or misleading. There is usually little use in reflecting on people's names because they do not provide much insight into the reality of that person.

*Names
of Allah
reflect His
reality*

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The *ism* [name] of a thing is generally understood by people as that by which it is recognized. (*Tafsīr Ḥadīrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 1, pp. 47, 1:1)

For example, the name Bakr does not have much significance in its meaning. If we know someone named Bakr, the word just reminds us of the person because of word association. It is not descriptive of who they are. Also, the names we give to people can be the opposite of who they turn out to be. Someone could be named Sadiq but we may find him to be a liar. However, the names given by Allah are never meaningless and always give true insight into His Being.

The Promised Messiah^{as} goes on to explain,

In the view of people who are learned, the *ism* [name] of a thing is a reflection of its reality. There is no doubt that the names given by Allah to things signify their properties. (*Tafsīr Ḥadīrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 1, pp. 47, 1:1)

The names of Allah signify His reality. The more we understand those names, the more we will be able to see His beauties. That is why they are *tabārah*, which means ‘blessed’ and ‘abundant in good’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: برك, Entry: تبارك). Each name of Allah conveys knowledge of a beauty of Allah Almighty. When we say ‘blessed is Your name’ (تَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ), we say that each name of Allah is an abundant and everlasting good that always continues increasing. We remind ourselves that the names of Allah are the only way we can know Him, and the more we understand them, the more of His beauty we will be able to see.

Invoking the name of Allah *Tabāraka* also means that ‘one looks for a blessing by means of [uttering] his name’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: برك, Entry: تبارك).

When we pray to Allah Almighty by looking for blessings through the name of Allah that is relevant to that prayer, then the prayer becomes filled with blessings.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran,

Say, ‘Call upon Allah or call upon *Rahmān*; by whichever name you call Him, His are the most beautiful names.’ (17:110)

In commentary, Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau’ūd^{ra} explained that every objective has a relevant name of Allah Almighty which we should pray by means of. When we need something

related to the attribute of the grace of Allah Almighty, then we should pray by means of the attribute of The Gracious (الرَّحِيمُ). When we are in need of mercy, or provisions, or bestowal, we should pray by means of that attribute. All beautiful names belong to Allah, and we should pray using the name that is according to the situation. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 4, pp. 401)

Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

When we ask of Allah by means of the name that is relevant to our purpose, then the prayer is more blessed....If someone does not have children, and he prays, “O Creator, grant me a child,” this is a proper way to pray. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 9, pp. 269)

This approach to prayer is taught to us right from the beginning of the Holy Quran. Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau'ūd^{ra} explained that in *Sūratul Fātiḥah*, each prayer has a corresponding attribute. ‘All praise belongs to Allah’ correlates to ‘You alone do we worship.’ When man comes to know that all beauties are in Allah Almighty, he spontaneously says that he worships Him alone. The name ‘Lord of all the worlds’ correlates to the prayer, ‘You alone do we implore for help.’ When man comes to know that Allah Almighty is the creator and benefactor of everyone and every particle, he says that he only seeks help from Him. The name ‘The Gracious’ correlates to the prayer ‘guide us on the right path.’ When he

sees that Allah Almighty has provided for all of man's necessities without any effort on his part, then he spontaneously says that his greatest need is finding Allah, his spiritual necessity, and he begs to be provided with the means to achieve it. The name 'The Merciful' correlates to the prayer 'The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your blessings'. The mercy of Allah does not allow any effort of man to go to waste, and man prays to be guided along the right path until he reaches the rewards that previous people have received. The name 'Master of the Day of Judgement' correlates to the prayer, 'those who have not incurred displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.' When man knows that he will be accountable for his actions, then the fear of failure arises in his heart and he prays to be saved from the displeasure of Allah Almighty. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 47)

One wisdom of this approach is that when we reflect on the attribute relevant to our prayer, we will think of all of the ways Allah Almighty has manifested His glory through that attribute.

When the Holy Prophet^{sas} would visit someone who was sick, he would pray,

O Allah! The Lord of the people, the Remover of trouble! (Please) cure (this patient), for You are the Healer. None brings about healing but You; a healing

that will leave behind no ailment. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 76, Chapter 38)

When we are praying to be healed and appeal to Allah by means of His attribute of The Healer, we will also think of how Allah Almighty has healed countless people before from far worse illnesses. If there were any doubt in our mind about Allah's power to heal us, it would be removed. The power of Allah to accept our prayer would be present in our mind with more clarity, and our prayer would be filled with greater certainty.

If we are praying to be pardoned, then we appeal to Allah by means of His attribute of The Pardoner.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} taught that if we find *Lailatul Qadr* [The Night of Decree], we should pray,

O Allah, You are the Pardoner and You love to pardon, so pardon me. (*Tirmidhī*, Book 48, Chapter 84)

This approach fills our prayers with hope that motivates us to never give up on that prayer until it is accepted. If the thought arises in our mind that we may be too sinful to be pardoned and this prayer is pointless, then reminding ourselves that Allah Almighty is the Pardoner who loves to pardon will motivate us to keep striving towards the door of repentance.

When we say 'blessed is Your name' (تَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ), we are

reminded to seek blessings through the names of Allah for the acceptance of our prayers.

God being the source of all goodness, even the invoking of His name proves a blessing. Says the Quran (55:79), “Blessed be the name of thy Lord, the Owner of Majesty and Honour.” (*The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 8-9, 1:1)



وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ

and exalted is Your majesty

Unknown
names of
Allah

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} said,

Wa ta‘ālā jadduka - this is that Being Who is exalted above every other being. No other being can compare with Him. (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 2)

When ‘exalted is Your majesty’ (وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ) is read in juxtaposition with ‘blessed is Your name’ (تَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ), then the emphasis in ‘exalted is Your Majesty’ is on the Being of

Allah. In contrast, the emphasis in ‘blessed is Your name’ is on the attributes of Allah.

The Being of Allah Almighty is far more vast than the names we know describe to us. We only know a finite number of the names of Allah according to our finite capacities. For example, our eyes are capable of seeing only a limited number of colors in the spectrum of light. What exists outside of that spectrum is beyond our capacity, so we do not need to name those colors. All of the words we have for different colors only describe what exists within the very limited spectrum of light that we are able to see. Similarly, the names of Allah that we are taught represent only the limited knowledge that we are capable of understanding.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} prayed,

I ask of You by every name with which You have described Yourself, or which You have taught to any of Your creation, or which You have revealed in Your book, or which You have chosen to keep in the knowledge of the unseen with You, (*Musnad Ahmad*, narrated by Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, 3704)

There are countless names of Allah that we are unaware of. The Being of Allah is not confined to the number of names our species is capable of understanding. The reality of Allah is infinitely more vast than the finite spectrum of Allah that we are capable of perceiving. When we say ‘blessed is Your

name' (تَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ), we remind ourselves that the names we have been taught describe every color and beauty within the spectrum of our sight. However, when we say 'exalted is Your majesty' (تَعَالَى جَدُّكَ), we remind ourselves that the Majesty of the Being of Allah is far more broad than our spectrum of sight and far loftier than what any name can do true justice to.

Names cannot fully express reality of Allah The Being of Allah Almighty is far greater than what any name can express. However great a name of Allah may be, it is only a sign for a greater reality behind it. The Majesty of Allah is far above what any name can describe. For example, the name مَلِكُ (king) can apply to a person who is a king, and this word can encompass in its meaning the full extent of his attributes as a king. However, the name الْمَلِكُ (The King) has also been revealed as an attribute of Allah Almighty. The difference between a person being مَلِكُ (king) and Allah being الْمَلِكُ (The King) is only in the word *al* (ال). The '*al*' signifies perfection, but that '*al*' can never do justice to the infinite difference between a man being مَلِكُ (king) and Allah Almighty being الْمَلِكُ (The King). The word *Al-Malik* cannot encompass in its meaning the full extent of His attribute as The King. In fact, no words can express or encompass any revelation of Allah. This is why revelation from Allah, in general, is referred to with the word *wahī*, which means 'to convey one's intention or wish by means of quick signs' (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 820).

Ḥaḍrat Muşleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

In my opinion, the word “*wahī*” was chosen for referring to “revelation from God” because spiritual realities cannot be fully expressed in words, they can only be indicated to. Thus, in the word “*wahī*” is an indication of how lofty revelation is. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 3, pp. 14)

While every name of Allah is filled with eternal truths and blessings, but the reality of Allah behind that name is infinitely greater. The Majesty of Allah and the greatness of His being are supremely exalted and far beyond what any word or name can signify.

Jadd refers to the ‘Greatness, or majesty;’ of God. It also refers to His ‘freedom from all wants or the like; syn. *ghina*’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: جد, Entry: جَدُّ). It refers to a Majesty that is independent of us. No matter how great the majesty of an ordinary king is, he is not free of want. It is only the Majesty of Allah that includes the absence, or non-existence, of wants. The Majesty of Allah is free of needing anything from us. His Majesty is independent of our existence.

Tā’āla means, ‘Exalted, or supremely exalted, is He] in his essence and his attributes, above the created beings.’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: علو - Entry: تعالی). When we say ‘exalted is Your majesty’ (تَعَالَى جَدُّكَ), we should remember that no matter how much we advance in the knowledge of the attributes

of Allah Almighty, the Majesty of His Being is supremely exalted beyond our comprehension.



وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

and there is none worthy of worship except You

Addressing
Allah in
the second
person

In Kalimah, we say ‘there is none worthy of worship except Allah’ (لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ) and refer to Allah in the third person. However, here we say ‘there is none worthy of worship except you’ (لَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ) and refer to Him in the second person. In *Thanā’*, we address Allah Almighty five times with the word ‘you,’ as if He is in front of us. The purpose is to create the state of *ihsān*, which is a prerequisite for true *Ṣalāt*.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} was asked about *ihsān*, he^{sas} said it is,

To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion, then you must consider that He is looking at you. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 2, Chapter 37)

Allah Almighty has taught us to address Him directly to make these words more personal. When our mind says the

word ‘you’, our heart will only say it along with us if we are in a state of *ihsān*. Each time we say the word ‘you’ in *Thanā’*, it carries a personal feeling of closeness and of seeing Allah Almighty.

The purpose of *Thanā’* is to ensure that we start our prayer in the state of *ihsān*. We address Allah Almighty in the second person tense because *Thanā’* is an interaction with God. There is one moment when we realize that Allah Almighty is not distant, rather He is present in the same room as we are. There is another moment when we realize that we are not speaking to ourselves, but we are speaking directly to Allah Almighty. Allah ceases to be a distant concept; He becomes a living God who is present. By the time we finish *Thanā’*, we are in that state of *ihsān* which is necessary for proper *Ṣalāt*.

If we cannot achieve the state of seeing Allah, then the repeated use of the word ‘you’ should at least remind us that Allah Almighty is looking at us, that He is present. Whether we can see Him or not, He is still there and we should worship as if we are aware that He is seeing us. This is also *ihsān*, and a *Ṣalāt* that meets this minimum prerequisite will surely be fruitful.

The meaning of *lā ilāha illa-llāh* is,

Meaning of
Kalimah

لَا مَطْلُوبَ لِيْ وَلَا مَحْبُوبَ لِيْ وَلَا مَعْبُودَ لِيْ وَلَا مُطَاعَ لِيْ وَلَا مَقْصُودَ
لِيْ إِلَّا اللهُ

I have no desire, and I have no beloved, and I have none I worship, and I have none I obey, and I have no purpose except Allah. (*Rūḥānī Khazāin*, vol. 9, pp. 419 / vol. 15, pp. 618)

When we do not see the beauties of Allah in front of us, we may struggle to sincerely say that, ‘in this moment, I have no desire except Allah.’ Although we believe in the Kalimah in concept, our practical reality may conflict with it. However, after having observed *Thanā’*, we have now reached the state of *iḥsān* and we can see Allah in front of us. Having reflected on His names, we now see reflections of Him around us. Having seen His beauty, now hearing the name ‘Allah’ brings a familiar Being to mind. Now, our heart no longer hesitates to reaffirm that, ‘there is none I worship and obey except Allah.’ When we say that, ‘in this moment, I have no desire, no beloved, and no purpose except for Allah,’ our heart is also saying these words because we are seeing Allah. When we say, ‘there is none worthy of worship except you,’ it is now a statement of the obvious. When we have seen the beauty of Allah Almighty, the beauty of everything else becomes meaningless.

The level of clarity we have in *Ṣalāt* is hard to maintain afterward, so what do we do when we go back into the world? Our priorities can again become conflicted, but that is why we observe *Ṣalāt* daily. It is through repeated reminders that

we develop clarity in our priorities. That clarity gradually becomes a part of our lives in between prayers.

(Since word by word commentaries of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah are available in the English language, it will not be covered in this book. The reader is encouraged to study the Promised Messiah's^{as} commentary on Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, titled Commentary on the Holy Quran, vol. 1—Surah Fatihah, and Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau'ūd's^{na} commentary on Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, available in At-Tafsīr-ul-Kabīr: The Grand Exegesis. A brief introduction to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is provided below.)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ○ أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ○ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ○
 مُلْكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ○ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ○ أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ○
 صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ○

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.
 All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,
 The Gracious, the Merciful, Master of the Day of
 Judgment. Thee alone do we worship and Thee
 alone do we implore for help. Guide us in the
 right path—The path of those on whom Thou
 hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not
 incurred displeasure, and those who have not gone
 astray.

Explaining the qualities of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

It should be clear that if a discourse fully resembles something from among the things that have proceeded from God and are the handiwork of His power of creation—that is to say, it combines in it the external and internal wonders in the same way that they exist in something that has been created by God—it can then be said that such a discourse possesses the rank that is beyond the human capabilities to produce its like. For, if it is admitted and approved by all and sundry—without any disagreement or controversy—that something is incomparable and has proceeded from God, then anything that is proven to fully share its criteria of incomparability would also be considered incomparable. For instance, if one object conforms in all aspects to another object which measures ten yards, then it would be established, with absolute certainty and beyond any doubt, that it also measures ten yards.

Now, out of the things created by Allah, I shall, for purpose of comparison, select one lovely creation—namely, the rose—and describe the external and internal wonders which make it admittedly of such excellent quality that human capacities fall utterly short of reproducing its like. I shall then prove

that the wonders and excellences of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* are in all respects of the same measure—and indeed, far superior—as the wonders and excellences of the rose.

The reason for selecting this illustration is that on one occasion, in a state of vision, my humble self saw that I was holding in my hand *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* inscribed on a leaf and it was so beautiful and attractive that it appeared as if the paper on which *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* was written was laden with soft red rose petals to the extent that it was beyond count. As my humble self recited any verse of this sūrah many of these roses flew upwards, producing a sweet sound. The flowers were very delicate, large, beautiful, fresh, and full of fragrance. As they ascended, my heart and mind were perfumed with their fragrance and they created such a state of intoxication that, due to the attraction of their incomparable pleasure, they created a strong aversion from the world and all that is in it.

This vision indicates that the rose has a spiritual affinity with *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*. Due to this affinity, I chose it for the purpose of illustration. Therefore, it seems pertinent to delineate first, for illustration, the external and internal wonders found in the rose and then set out the external and internal wonders of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, so that the honest readers should

know that the external and internal beauties of the rose, which put reproduction of its like beyond human reach, are present in *Sūrah al-Fāṭiḥah* in the same way—indeed, with much greater beauty. And also [I chose it] so that, through this illustration, what was signified in the vision is carried out.

Therefore, bear in mind that every sensible person would readily consider it to be a proven fact beyond any doubt that a rose, like other creations of God, has such excellent beauties within it, the like of which man is unable to reproduce. These beauties are of two types. First, those that are found in its external form, namely, its colour is beautiful and lovely, its fragrance is delightful and pleasing, and in its visible form, it is characterized by extreme delicacy, freshness, softness, tenderness, and purity. Second, there are beauties that the All-Wise God has granted it internally; namely, the qualities which are hidden within its essence, and these are that it is refreshing, strengthens the heart, alleviates the bile, and invigorates all faculties and spirits. It is a laxative for yellow bile and watery phlegm. Similarly, it strengthens the stomach, liver, kidneys, intestines, womb, and lungs. Moreover, it is very beneficial for severe palpitation, fainting, and weakness of the heart. Similarly, it is beneficial for a variety of other ailments of the body. On account of these two types of qualities, it is

believed that it is at such a level of perfection that it is utterly impossible for any human being to produce such a flower by himself which is attractive in colour, lovely in fragrance, and fresh, soft, delicate, and clear like the rose in its texture, and, in addition, possesses internally all of those qualities that are possessed by the rose.

If it is asked why it is believed about the rose that human powers are unable to create its match and why it is impermissible for any man to be able to produce its like and create, in an artificial flower, all of the external and internal qualities that are found in the rose, then the answer to this question is: The possibility of producing such a flower has been refuted in practice, and until today no physician or philosopher has been able to discover through the use of any device, any kinds of medicines, which, by their mixing or compounding, result in producing, externally and internally, the like of the rose in appearance and essence.

It must be realized that the same aspects of incomparability are not only found in *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, but also in every brief passage of the Noble Quran, even one comprising less than four verses. First, observe its external form to see the perfect manifestation of elegance of diction, beautiful exposition, excellent choice of words, perfectly smooth style,

softness and fluidity, glamour, loveliness, and other qualities that are essential for a good composition—a manifestation that cannot possibly be exceeded and which is entirely secure and free from every kind of crude expression and complicated composition. Every phrase is the utmost in lucidity and eloquence, every form of expression is employed at its proper place, and everything that is necessary to enhance the beauty and bring out the loveliness of its composition is found in it. The highest grade of eloquence and beauty of articulation that can be imagined is found and seen in perfection and all of the beauty of expression that is needed to make its meaning clear and pleasing is available and present therein. With all of the qualities of clarity of expression and conformity with the perfect beauty of diction, it is filled with the fragrance of truth and rectitude. In it there is no exaggeration having the slightest adulteration of falsehood, nor is there any figurative expression which, like that of the poets, is aided by the filth of falsehood, vain talk, or idle boasts. Whereas the composition of poets is laden with the stench of falsehood, idle boasts, and vain verbiage, this composition is full of the delicate fragrance of truth and rectitude. Furthermore, this fragrance is accompanied by a beauty of exposition, propriety of diction, figurativeness, and clarity of expression; and, as in the

rose, its fragrance is accompanied by the beauty of its colour and purity. These are its external qualities.

As for internal properties, it—that is, *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*—has the following qualities. It encompasses remedies for grave spiritual ailments and it contains a vast provision for the perfection of the faculties for theoretical and practical activities. It sets straight many serious disorders. It sets forth vistas of wisdom, deep subtleties, and fine points which remained hidden from the eyes of sages and philosophers. Its perusal fortifies the power of conviction in the heart of a spiritual pilgrim, and heals the ailment of doubts, misgivings, and misguidance. Its blessed text is replete with countless supreme truths and very subtle verities which are essential for the perfect development of the human being. Obviously, these excellences are such that—like the perfect qualities of the rose—it is impossible for them to be combined in the composition of any human being. This impossibility is not mere speculation, but an established fact, because God Almighty has expounded the subtleties and splendid points of wisdom in His eloquent and lucid Word precisely in the hour of their true need, displaying perfection in both external and internal qualities, and, thus achieved perfection with profound fine details in both external and internal aspects.

In other words, it first lays down the essential, lofty divine insights, the traces of which had been lost and obliterated from earlier teachings, and no sage or philosopher had so much as hinted at them. Moreover, these divine insights have not been expounded in an unnecessary and redundant manner, but have been set forth at a time and in an age when such remedial measures were direly needed for the reformation of that time. Had they not been stated, the ruin and destruction of the age was inevitable. Again, these lofty divine insights have not been stated in a deficient and incomplete manner; rather, they are situated at the point of perfection, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The intellect of no wise man can alight upon a religious verity that has been left out of them, nor is there any doubt of a follower of falsehood that has not been dispelled in this Word.

To expound all of these truths and sublime verities, which nevertheless fully conform with the true needs, and to do so with such unsurpassable excellence of eloquence and elegance, is indeed a grand task—evidently beyond the reach of human capacity. But man is so inept that if he wants to describe even the insignificant and trivial affairs—that have nothing to do with sublime truths—in an elegant and eloquent composition, with strict regard to truthfulness

and veracity, it would not be possible for him. This is very obvious to any wise person. For example, take the case of a storekeeper who possesses great mastery of language both in poetry and prose and wishes to maintain in his converse—which he has to make with all types of customers and clients—the highest standards of eloquence and figurative language, adapting his conversation with due regard to each occasion and situation, being brief when brevity is appropriate, and speaking in detail when argumentation is required; and if a dispute arises between him and a customer, adopting a way of speech that directs the argument towards his own benefit. Take next the case of a judge whose duty is to write most accurately the statements of both parties and witnesses and then to duly analyse and criticize each statement—limiting himself to what is really needed—with reference to the point at issue, as required for the examination of the case and appropriate for the investigation of the matters under dispute. It is expected that he should raise appropriate questions and duly record the answers and state the relevant facts. He should, as needed, cite applicable legal provision in accordance with the intent of the law. He should systematically expound the events, where needed, in their proper sequence and accuracy and then give his verdict along with supporting arguments with the utmost

precision. With all this, his writings should be at such a high degree of lucidity and elegance that they are unsurpassable by any other man. Obviously, such elegance is not achievable in the above cases.

This is the state of human eloquence; they cannot even take the first step without all sorts of vain, unnecessary, and trivial words and cannot even say a word without resorting to lies and useless talk. Even when they say something, it is incomplete; if the nose is present, as it were, the ears are not and if the ears are there the eyes are gone. Strict adherence to facts impairs the elegance of expression, and concern for elegance of expression may result in piles of falsehood and irrelevance—like an onion, layer after layer of shell, but nothing inside.

In short, when sane reason clearly dictates the impossibility of stating even insignificant and unimportant matters and simple events in an elegant and eloquent composition with strict adherence to a valid need and truthfulness, then how much easier is it to understand that stating lofty points of wisdom, pertinent to [addressing] true needs, couched in exceedingly expressive and eloquent composition, which no one can even imagine surpassing in elegance and chasteness, is altogether supernormal and beyond the range of human capacity?

Just as experience demonstrates that it is outside

the realm of possibility to manufacture a flower similar to the rose externally and internally, so is this impossible too. For, when authentic experience stands as a witness in even minor and trivial matters, and sane nature confirms that if a man wants to have an essential and straightforward conversation—whether it relates to some matter of buying and selling or judicial investigations—with the utmost accuracy in an appropriate manner, it becomes impossible for him to turn his discourse—needlessly and on all occasions—into an appropriate, balanced, lucid, and eloquent expression, and much less, to take it to the highest level of lucidity and eloquence. Then, how can the discourse of any man combine all these features to achieve the lucidity and unsurpassable eloquence in a composition that, in addition to truthfulness and rectitude, is filled with profound points of wisdom and lofty truths, descends to meet a true need, encompasses all divine verities, does not neglect anything in fulfilling its obligation for the reformation of the prevailing situation, perfectly completes the arguments, fully confutes the deniers, keeps in view all aspects of argumentation and debate, and includes all essential arguments, proofs, teachings, and questions and their answers—despite these intricate difficulties which far exceed the former case—in a manner that is not only incomparably eloquent,

but also expresses the subject in a style that cannot possibly be more fluent?

These are the properties possessed by *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* and the Holy Quran, in a manner that has complete resemblance with the incomparable properties of the rose. In addition, *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* and the Holy Quran have a magnificent attribute that is unique to this Holy Word, which is that studying it with attention and sincerity purifies the heart, dispels layers of darkness, and expands the mind, and, drawing a seeker after truth towards the Holy One, invests him with such light and manifest signs that are characteristic of those who have attained nearness to the Holy One, and which cannot be acquired by man through any other device or plan. I have also furnished evidence of this spiritual effect in this book and, if there is a sincere seeker after truth, I can satisfy him in person and I am ever prepared to furnish fresh and new evidence.

Moreover, it needs to be well remembered that the incomparable and unparalleled excellence of the language of the Holy Quran is not confined to rational arguments alone. Rather, valid experience spanning over a lengthy period of time also confirms and substantiates it. For 1,300 years the Holy Quran has been presenting its excellences by beating the drum of *هل من معارض* [‘Is there a challenger?’]

and proclaiming loudly to the whole world that it is incomparable and unparalleled in its external form and internal qualities, and that no man, small or great, has the ability to compete with it or counter it, yet no one has even dared to take up its challenge. Indeed, no one has been able to compete with even one *sūrah*, for example *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, in its external and internal qualities. Look! What could be a more self-evident and manifest miracle than this: Not only does intellect prove that this Holy Word transcends human capabilities, but experience extending over a lengthy period of time also bears witness to its status as a miracle?

Should anyone reject this twofold testimony, proven by intellect and experience extending over a lengthy period of time, and take pride in his knowledge and skill, or have faith in someone's writing ability to produce the like of the Holy Quran, I am setting out below... some of the verities and subtleties comprised in *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* by way of illustration, so that such a one may put forward his own composition in an attempt to match the external and internal qualities of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*. (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 1, pp. 7–12, *Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyya*—Part IV, pp. 168–175)

Giving a summary of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*'s subject matter, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The recitation of *Sūrah Fātiḥah* in Prayer is obligatory and it is this prayer that clearly shows that true prayer is made only in the course of the Prayer service (*Ṣalāt*). Allah has taught this in this manner:

Before supplicating the Almighty one should praise and glorify Him, so that one's spirit may be uplifted with love and adoration. The *Fātiḥah*, therefore, begins with: All worthiness of praise belongs to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all, Who bestows out of His pure grace, even before any action or prayer proceeds from His creatures, and then rewards righteous action in this world and in the hereafter also. He is the Master of Judgment. Every requital rests in His hands. Good and evil are in His power. One becomes a full and perfect believer in His Unity only when one accepts Allah, the Most High, as the Master of Judgment. Beware it is a sin to regard human authorities as all-powerful in their respective spheres of control or authority. This amounts to associating them with Allah. As God has invested them with authority, they should be obeyed. But do not set them up as gods. Render unto man his due and render unto God His due. The next stage is of supplication. Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore

for help. Guide us along the right path - the path of those whom Thou hast favoured. That is the party of the Prophets, the Faithful Ones, the Martyrs and the Righteous. In this prayer the grace and bounty bestowed on all these groups is pleaded for. The supplication proceeds: Save us from the way of those who incurred Thy wrath and who went astray. (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 1, pp. 22, *Commentary on the Holy Quran*, Vol.I—*Sūrah Fātiḥah*, pp. 22)

Giving a summary of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*'s subject matter, Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

The topics mentioned in *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, as is apparent from its name, serve as an introduction to the Holy Qur'an. The subjects of the Holy Qur'an have been covered in a concise manner within this chapter. From the very outset of the Qur'an, the reader is able to understand the summary of its topics that are to be covered in the subsequent chapters. The Holy Qur'an begins with *bismillāh* [in the name of Allah], which clearly shows that a Muslim:

1. Possesses firm faith in God Almighty as the words used are *bismillāh*
2. Possesses firm faith that God Almighty is not only the First Cause of the universe, as is

believed by some philosophers, but He is also the One through Whose command and orders the universe continues to function. It is for this reason that His help and succour is of immense benefit to man. This is also inferred by the words *bismillāh*.

3. Believes that God is not merely a subconscious being; rather, He is eternal and has the everlasting name Allah. He possesses various attributes such as the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.
4. Believes that Allah is the source of all progress, and He controls all means through which the world can make progress as manifested by the attribute of the Most Gracious.
5. Believes that Allah has created man to attain the highest stages of progress. When man correctly uses the means that Allah has created, his efforts bring about the best results, which in turn make him deserving of ever more divine bounties. This is evident from the attribute of the Ever-Merciful.
6. Believes that there is comprehensiveness and perfection in all the works of Allah, and that He possesses all forms of beauty. He also believes that God alone is deserving of all praise as all that exists besides Him is created by Him. This is

expressed through the words, 'All praise belongs to Allah alone, Lord of all the worlds'.

7. Believes that, besides Allah, everything which has been created has continuously evolved. All creation began from an inferior being and developed gradually to reach perfection. Thus, Allah the Almighty is the Creator of all things, and except Him, nothing else is self-existing. This alludes in the words, 'Lord of all the worlds'.
8. Believes that the world, which is diverse, has thousands of species of varying dispositions. Hence, to understand the individual species, one must investigate that species alone as opposed to comparing different species to one another. Allah the Almighty deals with every species according to their nature. Therefore, we should not be misled if we find any difference in the dealing of Allah between His creations, as such difference is due to the diversity between species and not due to injustice and lack of attention on God's part. This notion can be understood from the words, 'Lord of all the worlds'.
9. Believes that as Allah the Almighty is the Creator of all means, He is also the creator of those that utilise these means. Thus, all things at all times, stand in need of His Help. This alludes to the attribute of 'The Most Gracious'.

10. Believes that just as God Almighty is the Creator of all means, and is also the creator of all those that utilise these means, similarly, He also governs the outcome of those means that have been utilised. For example, He has created man and also created the sustenance that is necessary for his survival. Furthermore, the healthy and unhealthy blood which is produced in man's body as a result of the sustenance is also owing to His divine command. This is expressed through God's attribute of 'The Ever Merciful'.
11. Moreover, God Almighty has also established the system of reward and punishment. A day comes when everything, in accordance with its circumstances, witnesses the full consequences of its good or evil actions. In other words, the consequences of actions are of two types: firstly, those intermediary consequences which follow all actions to some extent, and secondly, the final consequence which is the cumulative effect of them all. Hence, Allah the Almighty has not only ordained that every action should have a reaction, which God's attribute 'The Ever Merciful' indicates, but He has also ordained that all actions lead to a cumulative consequence. This is why He is called 'The Master of the Day of Judgement'.

12. Hence, only such a Being is worthy to be worshipped and deserving of one's love. This is expressed in the words 'Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help'.
13. Further, it is mentioned that human progress depends upon two factors: actions of the body and actions of the heart (the latter signifying contemplation, thought, belief and intention etcetera). It is necessary to reform both the actions of the body and the heart. However, this reformation cannot come to be without the guidance of Allah. Hence the words used are, 'Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help'.
14. Then, it is said that God Almighty Himself desires that He should meet with His servants and reform them. The only condition is that the servant should incline towards Him, and beg to have communion with Him. This is alluded to in the words, 'Guide us on the right path'.
15. Furthermore, it is said that there are many apparent paths which lead to God. However, it is not sufficient to merely have knowledge of this path. Rather, it is also necessary that firstly, the path ought to be the shortest, so that man should not perish during his struggle to find 'the right way' [i.e., God]. Secondly, this path

should be well-known that the past servants that had tread upon this could testify that they had encountered God. As a result of this, the servant may be apprised of the dangers that lay ahead on their journey and be acquainted with the remedies to these hurdles. In this manner, the heart will remain content and will not lose hope, benefiting from the company of these virtuous servants. Thus, such a path ought to be sought from Allah Almighty in the following words, ‘The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings’.

16. When man progresses in any field, his heart can be tainted with arrogance and egotism, resulting in his downfall. Hence, one ought to safeguard themselves against these evils. One’s progress should not lead them to oppression and disorder, rather, it should be a means of establishing peace and serving humanity. One should also continuously supplicate to Allah the Almighty for safeguarding against the evil of arrogance. This is alluded to in the words, ‘Those who have not incurred Thy displeasure’.
17. Just as man can use his position of higher authority to commit injustices, so can he, on account of sympathy and excessive love, unjustly attribute greater status to inferior beings. This should not

just be avoided, instead one should supplicate to Allah Almighty to achieve the exalted status of those who He has rewarded. This is to be found in the words, 'Those who have not gone astray'. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 9-10, English from *At-Tafsīr-ul-Kabīr: The Grand Exegesis*)

At the end of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, the worshippers say *Amin* which means 'O Allah! Accept our Supplications.' ...Thereafter, the Imam recites a portion of the Holy Quran....The Imam may choose any portion of the Quran to recite after the *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*. When the Imam is reciting a portion of the Holy Quran, the worshippers are required to listen to it silently. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 37,40)

RUKŪ'

2

Then Rukū' is also respect, which is greater than the standing posture. (Malfūzāt (10 vol edition), vol. 9, pp. 110)

The bowing down of the spirit before God means that, by renouncing all other love and relationships, it has turned to God and belongs to Him alone. (Lecture Sialkot, pp. 33)

It is a matter of principle that when someone accepts the greatness of another, they bow in their presence. A person must bow in the face of greatness. Hence, with the tongue a person states: "Holy is my Lord the most Great" and through their outwardly state, they demonstrate this by bowing. This statement is expressed visually through the bowing position. (Malfūzāt (English), vol. 2, pp. 148)

The bowing position, which is the second posture in Prayer, demonstrates that one submits themselves by lowering their head in preparation to fulfil any command that may be given to them, as it were.

(Malfūzāt (English), vol. 1, pp. 161)

At the end of the recitation, the Imam goes from the Standing position to the Bowing position, *Rukūʿ*, by calling out *Allāhu Akbar*....In this posture, the right hand of the worshipper should press the right knee and the left hand the left knee, and the upper half of the body from the waist to the head is kept level and horizontal to the ground. In the Bowing posture the following *Tasbīḥ* is recited silently three times or more in odd numbers: (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 41)

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ

Holy is My Lord, the Most Great



سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ

Holy is my Lord

signification on “bringing a thing to a state of completion by degrees.” (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 306)

The meaning of *Rabb* is especially relevant because many failures related to *Ṣalāt* are because of our own impatience and going to extremes. Satan puts it in our mind that either we advance quickly or it's not worth it at all. Misguided spiritual ambition is the cause of many failures. The antidote to falling in these extremes is an appreciation of Allah as *Rabb*. Allah causes us to progress gradually, and satan does the opposite. We should examine our hearts to see if our ambition for spiritual progress is according to the way of Allah or according to the way of satan.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Ma'ūd^{ra} explained a difference between how angels inspire us to do something good and how satan inspires us to do something good.

When an angel inspires us, there is an order in it and it advances stage by stage. For example, a mother first carries her child, then holds his hand and helps him walk, and then the child slowly learns to walk....Or, an example of the difference between an angelic and satanic motivation is like a teacher who wishes well for his student. First, he teaches him the basics, and slowly he has the student advance. However, if the teacher is the student's enemy, then he will initially

teach such a difficult lesson that the student will tire and won't come back. An angelic motivation will be progressive, stage by stage. It will not suddenly overburden him, and he will not be hurried in anything. But when we find ourselves suddenly overburdened and are motivated to hurry, we should understand that this motivation is not angelic; rather, it is a satanic motivation. For example, satan will motivate us to become a saint today and to observe prayer all day and to fast all year. However, if one acts on this motivation, then the result will be that he will tire and become frustrated and will completely leave prayer and fasting. (*Anwārul 'Ulūm*, vol. 5, pp. 549, *Malāikatullāh*)

The first obstacle that we face when improving our *Ṣalāt* is ignoring common sense. When we want to achieve anything in the world, we use our common sense and understand that we progress gradually. Many of us lose this common sense when we approach spirituality. We start observing *Ṣalāt* with childish expectations of seeing immediate results after a week. As a result, we fail to gather the resolve needed to see this journey through the years of effort it will take. Then we fall prey to impatience and become frustrated. Allah's lordship (رُبُوبِيَّة) means that no one can become a saint without a long stage by stage process.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

It is a pity, however, that many of those who pay heed and wish to gain the nearness of God Almighty seek immediate results. They know not the degree of patience and ambition that is required in matters of religion. It is surprising that they wait years on end for the acquisition of worldly objectives, for which they strive day in and day out, and for which they exert their best efforts. A farmer plants a seed and waits for quite some time, yet when it comes to matters of faith, they would like to be transformed into saints in a heartbeat. On the very first day, they expect to reach the throne of Allah, without undergoing any toil and hardship on this path, and without being subjected to trial. Remember well, this is not the law and practice of God Almighty. Even in religious matters, every form of progress is gradual (*Rūḥānī Khazāin*, vol. 20, pp. 484, *Advent of the Promised Messiah*, pp. 38-39).

The only result that can come of this impatience is despair. Many of us fall into despair in improving our *Ṣalāt*, and there are two causes of it.

One is that when we set such unreasonable expectations for what we expect to achieve, we will feel disappointed when we fail to achieve it. Although our dream of completely changing ourselves within a week is a delusion, it feels very real. If it feels real to us, then when we fail to achieve

that dream, the feeling of disappointment will also be very real and crushing. For example, many people go into marriage with unrealistically high expectations. Their infatuation makes them blind to each other's reality. When that infatuation wears off, then their disappointment with each other often ends up causing the deterioration of the relationship. Whether our expectation was a delusion or not is irrelevant. When we set ourselves up in a delusion, then we suffer the consequences of everything in our reality. The more unreasonable our expectations about *Şalāt*, the more of a disappointment we set ourselves up for. That feeling of disappointment can be so devastating that some people never recover and spend the rest of their lives in despair of trying to find Allah. Being mature in setting our expectations is critical. It may be surprising that satan uses *Şalāt* to misguide believers, but this is exactly what the Holy Quran has described. It quotes satan as saying to Allah Almighty,

I will assuredly lie in wait for them on Your straight path. (7:17)

The second cause of despair is that when we overextend ourselves, we get tired of *Şalāt* itself. For example, if someone never exercises and then starts going to the gym every day for two hours, everybody at the gym can see that he's going to begin to hate exercising, and then he'll never be seen from again. It is obvious to our common sense that this approach

will end in failure, but sometimes we don't use this common sense in spirituality. We have to build a liking for physical exercise gradually, and the same process is needed for the spiritual exercise of *Ṣalāt*. If we ignore this process, we won't just fail at *Ṣalāt*, we may start hating it as well. It is Allah's lordship (رُبُوبِيَّة) that brings things to a state of completion by degrees. It is satan who acts opposite to lordship and convinces us that we can change overnight.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

Satan will motivate someone to think that he has to find God today. Then, he will create despair in that person's heart when he fails. Many people observe *Ṣalāt* for a week and then say that they didn't find God. Many people observe *Ṣalāt* for a few days and desire that the Holy Prophet^{sas} meet with them, however, these are all satanic whispers. When man becomes worthy of seeing God Almighty and the Holy Prophet^{sas}, then he can see them, otherwise, how can he? This type of hastiness is from satan. Its result is that when he fails to achieve what he desired, he despairs and then leaves everything. (*Anwārul 'Ulūm*, vol. 5, pp. 550, *Malāikatullāh*)

So many failures in *Ṣalāt* are because of falling into extremes. The importance of managing our motivation cannot be

understated. Fluctuating from being overly motivated to having no motivation is a recipe for disaster.

The bare minimum we can all start with is the obligatory five daily *Şalāt*. Some people say that five daily prayers is too many to start with and that one prayer is an easier starting point.

However, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Some prayers take less than fifteen minutes to offer. It is surprising that time in prayer is considered a waste of time when it has so many benefits. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 2, pp. 153)

If we cannot even make the resolve to observe the five daily prayers, then our own actions demonstrate that seeking communion with Allah is not a priority for us. The discipline and effort with which we pursue our worldly ambitions stand as a testimony against us. Even if at first we have no concentration in any *Şalāt*, it is necessary to maintain this minimum discipline of five prayers. For example, if we fall ill and lose our appetite, we will keep taking medicine regularly until we are restored to health. We don't care how bitter that medicine is; we won't stop taking it until we have regained our health and appetite.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

As he derives pleasure from delicious food, he will

begin to derive pleasure from his weeping and crying in *Ṣalāt*. Before he experiences that condition in his *Ṣalāt*, he must persist in *Ṣalāt* as he swallows bitter medicine to restore his health. In the same way, he must persist in *Ṣalāt* and in making his supplications while he derives no pleasure from them. In such a condition, seeking pleasure and delight in *Ṣalāt*, he should supplicate: "Allah! You know how blind and sightless I am, and at the moment, I am like the dead. I know that in a little while, I will be called and will present myself before You and no one will be able to stop me. But my heart is blind and unenlightened. Do cause to descend upon it such a flame of light that thereby it may be inspired with Your love and devotion to You! Do bestow upon me such grace that I will not be raised up sightless nor join the blind!" When he supplicates in this manner and persists in the supplication, he will see that a time will come when something will descend upon him while he is engaged in this type of prayer that will melt his heart. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 4, pp. 321-322)

If we have no concentration in *Ṣalāt*, then our *Ṣalāt* becomes a bitter medicine. Although it is bitter, it is a medicine that has to be taken regularly. We cannot deviate from the minimum prescription of five daily prayers and still expect to regain our health and appetite. We should resist the black

and white thinking that if our *Ṣalāt* is not perfect, it is not worth observing at all.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

Observe moderation (in doing deeds), and if you fail to observe it perfectly, try to do as much as you can do and be happy for none would be able to get into Paradise because of his deeds alone. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 52, Chapter 17)

We should analyze whether our motivation for *Ṣalāt* comes from the lordship (رُبُوبِيَّة) of Allah Almighty or if it goes against it. If we find ourselves overly motivated, we should ask ourselves if we will be able to sustain this level of discipline when our motivation goes down. We should remind ourselves that no matter how much *Ṣalāt* we observe in a day, the lordship of Allah Almighty will only give us gradual progress. If I do a thousand push-ups today, I'm not going to become stronger, I'll probably only hurt myself. Similarly, if we do a thousand *Nawāfil* in one day, we will not make a thousand times more spiritual progress; instead, we will probably end up falling back. On the other hand, if we find ourselves with no motivation, we should remind ourselves that Allah Almighty is still just as present to accept our prayers now as he was when we were feeling motivated. The blessings of the lordship (رُبُوبِيَّة) of Allah Almighty are there

now more than ever for those who continue to strive when they are faced with a trial.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

The acts most pleasing to Allah are those which are done continuously, even if they are small. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 6, Chapter 30)

It is a sign of spiritual immaturity to get carried away by extremes in pursuit of short term goals. It is a sign of spiritual maturity to be able to manage our motivation according to our long term goals.

The word *Rabb* means a lord, master or chief, ruler, fosterer, and nourisher. (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 306) Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} explained that when we say 'my Lord' (رَبِّي), everyone else disappears who we may have believed to be our master, ruler, or nourisher. We remind ourselves that our Lord is only Allah. (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 34-35)

*Leaning on
Allah*

It takes a leap of faith to say that we will not rely on anyone else as our nourisher, fosterer, and ruler. Some people would worry about what they will do when they are desperate.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

When worldly support is taken away from a person, naturally he will need some other support because

man is extremely weak. If a person is weak and ill, he needs crutches or a chair. At times of weakness or illness, man needs support. In the spiritual world, man is extremely weak, and thousands of hidden obstacles arise that prevent his progress. That is why in that world, he needs some support or another. A worldly person saves himself by lying, cheating, and fraud. However, Allah Almighty tells believers never to lie, cheat, or resort to fraud. Now, when the *Shari'ah* has taken all support away from a weak person, what should he do?...Allah Almighty has replied in the words “bow down” (ازكعوا), meaning you should lean on Us and find support in Us. This is similar to someone taking away an older person’s cane but giving him his shoulder to lean on. Similarly, when Allah Almighty has forbidden us from using illegitimate supports, and since we need one support or another, He tells us to lean on Him and take support in Him. Thus, the words “bow down” (ازكعوا) speak of trust in Allah. (*Tafsir-e-Kabir*, vol. 6, pp. 101-102)

When we go into the posture of *Rukū'* in *Ṣalāt*, it is after having seen through the glorification in *Qiyām* that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. The *Rukū'* is a symbol of breaking away from every reliance on worldly supports and leaning on Allah alone. It is a symbol of *Tauhīd* and *Tawakkul* (trust). The words ‘رَكَعَ إِلَى اللَّهِ’ mean, ‘he completely turned

towards God and worshipped Him alone.' (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 341) When we take the posture of *Rukū'* and say that Allah is 'My Lord' (رَبِّي), we remove every other crutch or support we could lean on and take only Allah as our Lord. With both our words and action, we take Allah as our support. Once we are in *Rukū'*, the glorification of Allah becomes a reassurance that the Lord we have taken for support will never let us fall and is free of all imperfections.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} explained that when we refer to Allah as 'my' Lord, then it means that we should have a personal affinity with Allah; the attributes of Allah should be found in us. When we say 'Holy is my Lord the Most Great/Lofty,' we should ask ourselves if we are also trying to become holy, and great, and lofty. If not, then we cannot truly call Allah 'my' Lord because the word 'my' implies personal affinity. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 494, 498) (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 35)

*Affinity
with Allah*

When we say that Allah is holy and He is 'my' Lord, if we are not holy ourselves, then we would be disgracing the name of God by attributing ourselves to Him. To claim that Allah is 'my' Lord is a great responsibility. For example, most people would feel some shame in being caught lying. But if someone knew us personally as an Ahmadi Muslim and they had great respect for Ahmadi Muslims as honest people, then we would feel a greater aversion to lying because it could disgrace the Jamā'at. Rather than being a sign that

brings people to Allah, our example could make people turn away from Allah. If someone graduates from Harvard, he feels responsible for being successful and living up to the name of the institution he attributes himself to. If he succeeds in school only to end up failing in life, then every mention of Harvard would make him feel ashamed rather than proud. His academic accomplishments could be used to mock him, and Harvard, rather than to praise him. When we say that Allah is ‘my’ Lord, we attribute ourselves to Him. A servant of Allah is an ambassador of Allah; it carries great responsibility. If we then cheat someone out of their money, he would not just mock us, in his anger, he could also mock the God we claim to attribute ourselves to. Whenever we see a weakness in ourselves, we should worry as to how it reflects on Allah.

Expressing this sentiment, Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh I^{ra} quoted a prayer found in poetry.

I fear that an enemy, seeing my needy and desperate condition, may mock You, saying, “This is a servant of the God who they claim is Benevolent!” (Ḥayāt-e-Nūr, pp. 37)

The words ‘Holy is my Lord’ also carry hope. While we are burdened with the responsibility of creating within us the attributes of Allah, we also seek help from the Lord who created us from nothing. By saying ‘holy is my Lord’ (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي),

we say that only He can remove our imperfections, only He can make us worthy of being His servant.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ᵗᵗᵃ} said,

When we say “my Lord,” it becomes a hope, not just a responsibility. It is a prayer to a Being who helps us. Holy is my Lord (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي), my Lord is free of every imperfection, and thankfully He is my Lord, and He is the one Who reforms me. (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 35-36)

With the words “my Lord” (رَبِّي), we address Allah Almighty in a uniquely personal way that we have not yet used in *Ṣalāt*. Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ᵗᵗᵃ} explained that when we addressed Allah Almighty as “Lord of all the worlds” (رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ) in *Sūratul Fātiḥah*, we referred to Him in the third person. We have not yet expressed a personal connection with Him because so far, He is the Lord of not just “me” but of all creation. In the words “you alone do we worship and you alone do we implore for help,” we address Allah Almighty in the second person, and a personal connection is expressed. However, since we speak in the plural and say “we worship,” the expression is collective and not as personal as “me.” In the words of *Thanā’* when we said “holy are you O Allah,” we addressed Allah Almighty in the second person as well, but we have not yet referred to Him as “my” Allah. We are not worthy of calling Allah as “my” Allah so long as

From “our Lord” to “my Lord”

we have praised Him with words alone. When we go into the posture of *Rukūʿ*, we put our praise of Allah into action and we offer a symbol of obedience. When we act on our words, only then we become worthy of referring to Allah as “my” Lord. When we bow down and obey Allah, then Allah becomes “my” Lord. (*Dhauqe ʿIbādat*, pp. 493) (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 32)

Also, Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} explained that we only earn the right to refer to Allah as ‘my Lord’ after we have accepted Allah as Lord of all the worlds. In *Sūratul Fātiḥah*, we seek to become a representative of the Lord of all the worlds by seeking mercy for the entire world. When we say, ‘You alone do we worship and You alone do we implore for help,’ we seek mercy with the word ‘we’ for the whole world, or for everyone under our care. As a reward for seeking mercy for everyone collectively, we are rewarded by Allah Almighty manifesting Himself to us personally. Allah Almighty can only become ‘my’ Lord after we have accepted Him as ‘our’ Lord. (*Dhauqe ʿIbādat*, pp. 90-91)



العَظِيم

The Most Great

Lane quotes, 'عَظِيمٌ signifies esteemed great...by another or others; differing from كَبِيرٌ, which signifies "great...in itself:" ...or the former is the contr. of حَقِيرٌ; [i. e. it signifies of great account or estimation;] and as حَقِيرٌ is inferior to صَغِيرٌ, so عَظِيمٌ is superior to كَبِيرٌ;' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: عَظَم, Entry: عَظِيمٌ).

*Difference
between
Kabir and
Azim*

When compared with one another, the word *Kabir* describes the greatness of a thing objectively, whereas *Azim* describes the greatness of a thing subjectively. This can more easily be understood by knowing the antonym of each word. The antonym of *Kabir* is the word *Ṣaghīr* [small], whereas the antonym of *Azim* is the word *Ḥaqīr* [despicable, worthless]. For example, if we say a *Tafsīr* [book of commentary] is *Kabir*, it means it is large in its size; this is a simple observation. If we say a *Tafsīr* is *Ṣaghīr* [small], it means that it is small in its size. We are not necessarily criticizing it; we are just making an observation. If we say that a *Tafsīr* [commentary] is *Azim*, now we are speaking from our experience and we are praising its grandeur, we are saying that it is esteemed as great. If we were to say that a *Tafsīr* is *Ḥaqīr*, we would have to be criticizing it. The word *Ḥaqīr* is more sharp in its criticism, whereas the word *Ṣaghīr* is far more broad. Similarly, the word *Azim* is more specific in its describing the manifestation of greatness, whereas the word *Kabir* is more broad.

When we say ‘Allah is the greatest’ (اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ), we describe how great Allah Almighty is in and of Himself, whether we see that greatness or not. We speak in more of a matter of fact way, saying that He is greater than everything in every way. When we say that Allah Almighty is ‘My Lord, the Most Great’ (رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ), we speak more based on our experience of the magnitude of that greatness. We describe how enormous the manifestation His grandeur is.

When we compare *Al-‘Azīm* to the rest of the attributes of Allah Almighty, a unique quality of this attribute appears. Whenever we experience the manifestation of any attribute, we see its *‘Azmat* [greatness]. The attribute of *Al-‘Azīm* expresses our living experience with every name of Allah Almighty.

Ḥadrāt Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} explained that the attribute of *Al-‘Azīm* is unique in that it is the only attribute that can be applied to all other attributes. We would generally not say that Allah Almighty is the Gracious Avenger or the Forgiving Avenger. But we can say that Allah is the *‘Azīm Ghafūr* [the Great Forgiver], or the *‘Azīm Muntaqim* [the Great Avenger], or the *‘Azīm Zāhir* [the Great Manifest], or the *‘Azīm Awwal* [the Great First]. This cannot be done in the same way with any other attribute. The word of *‘Azīm* manifests each attribute of Allah in a new glory. For example, if a person is seeking the forgiveness of Allah Almighty for His sins, then when he says ‘my Lord, the Most Great’ (رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ), he can be reminded of the grandeur of the forgiveness

of his Lord. We can link every attribute to *'Azīm*. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 4, pp. 996-7, 20 Dec 1985)

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ᵣᵗᵃ} said,

*Greatness is
felt from up
close*

'Azīm [great] has an awe and a manifestation in it. Its manifestation of awe is seen from up close. When you consider something as great (*'Azīm*), one way to know that it is great (*'Azīm*) is by observing it from a distance. Your ears hear of it, or your eyes see it from a distance. However, its *'Azmat* cannot be felt without coming close to it. Until you reach the foot of a mountain, you cannot understand what it means for a mountain to be great (*'Azīm*). We heard about the *'Azmat* of the Himalayan mountains, but when we traveled, reached the foot of the mountain, and saw the mountain tops from up close, we understood what the *'Azmat* of a mountain is. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 491)

The *'Azmat* of every attribute of Allah can be felt from up close. For example, when we say that Allah is Master of the Day of Judgement in *Sūratul Fāṭiḥah*, we think about the concept of the day of judgment. We observe it comfortably from a distance. We generally think about how deeds will be weighed and how Allah will decide everyone's fate. Thinking about the day of judgment as a concept does not create awe

in our hearts; it merely fascinates the mind. However, when we now picture ourselves standing before Allah Almighty with all of our deeds in front of us, when we picture that moment when there will be no turning back and nobody can save us, now we see the Master of the Day of Judgement from up close. Now the *ʿAzmat* of this attribute creates an awe in our heart. There is a difference between understanding Allah's attributes as a concept and feeling their presence as a reality. We ease into the remembrance of Allah by starting in a world of concepts, of thinking about the day of judgment as a concept. But then when our eyes refocus in *Ṣalāt* and we come back to the here and now, we realize we are standing right in front of the Master of the Day of Judgement, similar to how we will be standing in front of Him on the day of judgment. This realization causes a sudden shift from seeing with our minds to seeing with our hearts. Reflecting on Allah Almighty changes from creating a fascination in our mind to now bringing an awe to our hearts. When we feel the presence of Allah up close, that moment is the manifestation of the *ʿAzmat* of Allah Almighty upon us.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

When someone's *ʿAzmat* is manifested by his nearness and is felt, only then can changes happen in people as a result. Thus, after understanding the meaning of "holy is my Lord, the Most Great" (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ), we understand the manifestation of the *ʿAzmat* of

God that we saw in *Sūratul Fātiḥah*. We have come very close to Him, so close that we have bowed down to Him and have accepted obedience of Him. A distant God is not enough to inspire obedience. True obedience of God can only happen when His *Aẓmat* is felt, and *Aẓmat* requires nearness. Thus, *Rukū'* has completed this subject. *Rukū'* is a state of obedience. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat aur Aadab-e-Dua*, pp. 491-492)

Our purpose in reflecting on Allah in our minds is to feel the awe of His presence in our hearts. The mind is not our destination; it is a necessary step in our journey towards our heart. 'Believers are only those whose hearts are smitten with awe when Allah's name is mentioned' (8:3). The remembrance of Allah achieves its purpose if it reaches our hearts. When it reaches our hearts, then it moves us to action.

Greatness
inspires
action

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said, 'Remembrance of Allah has a great reward.' A Companion asked, 'O Prophet of Allah, is it higher in reward than striving in the cause of Allah?' He said, 'Yes, because it is the remembrance of Allah which encourages you to undertake the striving.' (*Remembrance of Allah*, pp. 5)

True remembrance of Allah moves us to act. Moving to the posture of *Rukū'* is a symbol of our heart moving us to action. The awe of Allah Almighty makes us want to spontaneously go into the posture of *Rukū'*. The purpose of *Qiyām* is to create the desire for *Rukū'*. If by the end of *Qiyām*, the

glorification of Allah has made us restless to go into *Rukūʿ*, then we have observed *Qiyām* correctly. If our *dhikr* [remembrance of Allah] remained confined only to our mind, then it cannot move us to action or purify our lives. The *Rukūʿ* we do would only be done out of habit; it would not be a result of the remembrance of Allah.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

As a result of seeing the *ʿAzmat* of God up close that *Sūratul Fātiḥah* described to us, our soul spontaneously goes into *Rukūʿ*. The *Rukūʿ* of the body is subservient to the *Rukūʿ* of the soul. Our body does *Rukūʿ* after the soul, not before it. Thus, when you understand the subjects in *Qiyām* and recite them well, your heart should enter a state that causes your soul to bow down. As a result, your body should also be restless to bow down along with it. This state is called *Rukūʿ*. After this, when you reflect on the subject of *ʿAzmat* in a state of *Rukūʿ*, then to observe the words “holy is my Lord, the Most Great” (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ) three times will seem very brief. (*Dhauqe ʿIbādat*, pp. 492)

Before going into each posture of *Ṣalāt*, we should create in our hearts the sentiment that the posture expresses. We will find pleasure in going to a posture only when the body follows the heart, not the other way around. If our heart follows

our body, that pleasure won't be there. For example, if we go into *Rukū'* without thinking about the sentiment behind *Rukū'*, then we will only adopt the posture out of routine, not out of enthusiasm. Once in *Rukū'*, we will try to find the sentiment that *Rukū'* symbolizes, but since we did not prepare for it in *Qiyām*, we will likely feel frustrated. However, when our heart feels the *'Aẓmat* of Allah Almighty in *Qiyām*, we will be restless to bow down in obedience to Allah before we go into *Rukū'*. When the body follows the heart, we find pleasure in going to each posture because our body is anxious to express the sentiment that is in our heart. Then we find pleasure without even having to say anything. Imagine doing an entire *Ṣalāt* where we do not recite any words, where we express ourselves only with our body language, where our heart expresses the sentiment of each posture. We stand before Allah Almighty in *Qiyām* and express with our heart all the sentiments this posture symbolizes. We prostrate to our Allah and declare all of the sentiments of submission with only our body. That *Ṣalāt* may have no words, but it would not be silent. That *Ṣalāt* would be filled with eloquent expressions of our body language. Just bowing down before our Allah without any words is a worship and a pleasure in and of itself.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Bear in mind that anything physical in nature that is empty of spirit cannot prove beneficial. For example,

just as the meat of sacrifices does not reach God, your bows and prostrations do not reach Him either, until they are performed with a true spirit. God desires the essence. (*Malfūẓāt* (English), vol. 2, pp. 109)

QAUMAH

3

My understanding is that as far as the appropriateness of apparent actions goes, Sajdah is the next step after Rukū‘. However, if we go directly from Rukū‘ into Sajdah, the clearness of the distinction between standing and Sajdah is not created. The splendor of humility in Sajdah cannot be created until a person falls into prostration from the standing posture. Thus, in reality, this (Qaumah) is an interlude. When we stand for a second time after saying, “Allah hears him who praises Him” (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمَدَهُ), it is a pause between Rukū‘ and Sajdah. The purpose is to make the splendor of Sajdah distinct. (Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir, vol. 4, pp. 994, 20 Sept 1985)

The Imam then straightens up and stands with his arms by his sides. When he initiates this movement, he recites *Tasmī‘* loudly which is an indication for the congregation to change the posture from Bowing to

Standing. The *Tasmī‘* is recited as follows: (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 42)

سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ

Allah hears him who praises Him.

In response the congregation follows the Imam and changes posture as well, and then recite the following which is called *Tahmīd*: (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 42)

رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ

Our Lord! and Yours is the praise, praise which is plenty, pure, and blessed



سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ

Allah hears him who praises Him.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ᵣᵗᵃ} said,

*Allah
accepts our
praise of
Him*

Why have these words been placed after *Rukū‘*? The reason is that for praise to be heard, the praise of the tongue only is not enough. God does not hear praise

of the tongue until it creates the spirit of obedience, until that obedience takes the form of action.

Thus, that praise, which does not rise from the heart and does not carry deep truth, is not heard by God. When praise results in our having started obeying, when man has started offering sacrifices, when he has started creating pure changes within himself, then his praise is worthy of being heard. It is this subject that the Holy Quran describes when it says that good words are exalted by righteous conduct. Until good actions are combined with good words, those words are not elevated and they do not reach the throne of God; they do not reach their destination. Thus, *Rukū'* has taught us that if we wish to praise Allah in a way that is heard by Him, then we must obey Him and bow down before Him. Then we will hear these words, "Allah accepts that praise which is true praise" (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ). Now God says, "Yes, I hear that praise, I hear that person who praises me with a true heart." (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 494, 495)

Allah Almighty has not placed the words 'Allah hears' (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ) at the end of *Qiyām* because we had not yet come under the full definition of 'him who praises Him' (مَنْ حَمِدَهُ). We had spent *Qiyām* praising Allah with the most perfect of praise in *Sūratul Fātiḥah*, but we still were not worthy of being called 'him who praises Him' (مَنْ حَمِدَهُ). The reason is

that no matter how perfect our words may be, they are only words. They do not carry weight until they are supported by a spirit that moves us to action.

Allah hears all of our praise, but he does not accept all of it. The words ‘Allah hears’ after *Rukū‘* have the meaning of acceptance. ‘سَمِعَهُ’ also means, he accepted it, answered it. سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ God has accepted the praise of him who has praised Him.’ (*Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, pp. 410) It is a great glad tidings to be told that Allah has accepted our praise, but it has to be earned. When we put our praise into action by bowing down before Allah in obedience, and when the praise of Allah leads us to happily cut off every worldly support and lean on Allah alone, then is the praise of our *Rukū‘* exalted to the point of acceptance. Now we rise from *Rukū‘* having attained something we did not have before. Our words are only exalted by the action of lowering ourselves in *Rukū‘*.

In commentary of 35:11 of the Holy Quran, Ḥaḍrat Khalifatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

“Unto Him ascend good words, and righteous conduct exalts them.” (35:11) No matter how good and pure our words appear, if righteous conduct is not working behind it like a motor that keeps lifting it, it is impossible that those words be acceptable to Allah. In a very beautiful way, it has been explained that mere words will not be of any use, it is righteous

conduct that will exalt it. The more a person does righteous conduct, the more exaltation his words will achieve. (*Tarjumatul Quran Class*, 4 Feb 98, 35:5-24, @18:50)

One meaning of ‘Allah hears him who praises Him’ (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ) is in application to prayer, meaning Allah only hears our prayers when the praise of Allah precedes them.

*Allah
accepts our
prayers to
Him*

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ᵗᵃ} said,

Praise has a deep connection with the acceptance of prayer. The words we say when rising from *Rukūʿ* describe this subject, “Allah hears him who praises Him.” (*Dhauqe ʿIbādat*, pp. 39)

To immediately go into our own personal prayer without praising Allah first is against the etiquette of prayer. The Holy Prophet^{sas} taught that praise of Allah should precede prayer.

“The Messenger of Allah^{sas} heard a man supplicating during the prayer without glorifying Allah nor sending *Salah* upon the Prophet^{sas}. The Messenger of Allah^{sas} said: “You are in a hurry, O worshipper.” Then the Messenger of Allah^{sas} taught them. And the Messenger of Allah^{sas} heard a man praying; he glorified and praised Allah and sent *Salah*

upon the Prophet^{sas}. The Messenger of Allah^{sas} said: “Supplicate, you will be answered; ask, you will be given.” (*Nasāī*, Book 13, Chapter 48)

The wisdom of this etiquette is that the praise of Allah corrects our priorities. For example, we may be praying for a job because we desperately want to be rich and have status. Our heart is filled with praise of the beauty of money, not praise of the beauty of Allah. That prayer is not motivated by spirituality; it is motivated by materialism. Allah is not the objective of our prayer; He is just a means to an end. He is a stepping stone that we step on to get money. When we go directly into prayer without glorifying Allah, our prayer may come from a heart that is filled with glorification of money. When we weep in prayer with humility and beg Allah for that job, our weeping is not out of a desperation to be near to Allah Almighty. That weeping is out of our desperation for money and status.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} said,

Praise is only attributed to God in words, whereas in reality, it is other things in God’s world that are truly worthy of praise in man’s eyes. When he cries before God, he does not cry because of praise of God. He cries because his desire is not being fulfilled. When a sick person screams, he does so because of some pain. His screams are not going to cure his illness; he will

be cured through the knowledge of medicine. There is also a science in worship. There is a science to prayer. Only those prayers are accepted that are worthy of being accepted. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 11-12)

When our heart is filled with praise for the world, then as soon as we get that job, we will forget about Allah because we never really saw Him as praiseworthy or beautiful. Since our heart is filled with the praise of money, then obviously when we get that money we will be engrossed in it. The only thing that may bring us back to God is a fear of loss of that money. Sometimes we rationalize to ourselves that we will be righteous after we get the money and status we want. We are fooling ourselves similar to how the brothers of Ḥaḍrat Yūsuf^{as} said, 'you can thereafter become a righteous people.' (12:10) If our heart does not praise the beauty of Allah, then we will forget Him as soon as we have used Him to get what we want. That job will take us away from Allah, not bring us closer to Him. That prayer is not a blessing or a means of nearness to God; that prayer may be a curse.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

For prayer, man should examine his thoughts and his heart as to whether his inclination is to the world or to religion. Are the frequency of his prayers for worldly comfort, or for service of religion? If he finds that, whatever he is doing, it is worldly concerns that

occupy his mind and religion is not his objective, then he should weep at his condition. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 7, pp. 117)

The purpose of praising Allah before our prayer is to remove every materialistic priority from our mind and only make Allah our objective. We reflect on how perfect and infinite our Beloved is and how temporary and flawed everything is that distracts us from Him. Such praise changes the priorities in our prayer. After praising Allah, the prayer that seemed urgent and important before now seems small. The object of our prayer is no longer the thing we want; it is Allah. If we pray for a job after praising Allah, we now only want the job as a gift from Allah and as a sign of the acceptance of prayer so that it brings us closer to Allah. The thought of that job taking us away from Allah makes it repulsive in our eyes; we want nothing to do with it. We now only want that job if it increases us in the greater praise of Allah and nearness to Him.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

When Allah Almighty does a favor to a believer, then he will say *Alḥamdulillāh*, but he will also say, “All praise belongs to Allah for this favor, but my destination is still far.” When he receives another favor, he will say, “All praise belongs to Allah for this favor, but I want to attain You, these small things are not my

purpose.” He continues advancing step by step, and ultimately he attains God Almighty. (*Tā’luq Billāh*, pp. 54)

When a person’s heart is filled with praise for Allah, then his prayers will never take him away from Allah. His prayers will never be for an objective that opposes the laws of Allah. By praising Allah in *Qiyām* and putting our praise into action in *Rukū’*, we have followed the etiquette of prayer. We have acted according to the science of prayer. For such people, Allah Almighty gives glad tidings that He accepts the prayers of those who praise Him. This glad tidings is particularly relevant at this portion of *Ṣalāt* because here the worshipper is about to go into *Sajdah*, which is a special opportunity for prayer. We are given a glad tidings of the acceptance of the prayers we have asked in *Qiyām* and *Rukū’*, and the special prayers we plan to ask in *Sajdah*.

Ḥaḍrat Zainul ‘Ābidīn Waliyullāh Shāh^{ra} said,

“Allah hears him who praises Him” (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ) (حَمِيدُهُ). These words of the Imam are a motivational announcement for the followers that they should not hold back in their prayers in *Sajdah*. This is what our attention is drawn to with the words “Allah hears” (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ). In a state of *Sajdah*, there is greater opportunity for prayer, as the Holy Prophet^{sas} said, “while prostrating yourselves be earnest in supplication, for it

is fitting that your supplications should be answered.”
 (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book 4, Chapter 41) (Commentary
 Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, vol. 2, pp. 193-194)



رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ

Our Lord! and Yours is the Praise

<sup>“Our
Lord!” is
a complete
prayer</sup> Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ IV^{rta} said,

In reality, “Our Lord!” (رَبَّنَا) in itself is a complete prayer. When we say “Allah hears him who praises Him” (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ), then we pray, “Our Lord! and Yours is the Praise” (رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ). Why does the “and” (وَ) come in between? If the “and” (وَ) were not here, then the translation would be, “O our Lord, Yours is the praise.” But the “and” (وَ) has broken the connection between “Our Lord!” (رَبَّنَا) and the sentence that comes after. The reason for this is that “Our Lord!” (رَبَّنَا) is a complete prayer in itself...There is a narration that Hasan^{ra} said that once the Holy Prophet^{sas} continuously recited only “Our Lord!”

(رَبَّنَا), repeating it again and again. (*Darsul Quran*, Feb 28, 1995, @34:50)

The prayers we recite are only words that convey the sentiment of prayer behind them. It is the sentiment that is of real value, not the words. A prayer can be a prayer even if it is not a prayer in its words. Some prayers are only an expression of a sentiment.

For example, the Holy Quran teaches us the prayer,

Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if You forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we will surely be of the lost. (7:24)

This prayer, which we observe often, is not a prayer at all in its wording. There is nothing that we ask for in its words. However, we cannot say that it is not a prayer because its sentiment conveys a powerful prayer. We express the reality of our condition and the vulnerability of our position. That expression itself is a prayer. Whether we ask for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah with our words or not is irrelevant. With the sentiment behind these words, the prayer is conveyed clearly without any words of prayer.

Similarly, there are times when we do not even say any words; our circumstances and the state of our heart becomes the most powerful prayer in and of itself.

For example, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

When the disbelievers threw Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} into the fire, the angels came to him and asked him if he needed anything. He replied, “Yes I am in need, but I am in no need of putting my needs before you.” The angels said, “Then at least pray to God Almighty.” Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} replied, “He is so aware of my condition that I am in no need of asking.” (*Malfūzāt* (10 volume edition), vol. 2, pp. 209-210)

The reality of every prayer is not in its words but in its sentiment. The words are optional; they are only an attempt to convey the sentiment of that prayer. When we say the words ‘Our Lord!’ (رَبَّنَا) after coming up from *Rukū’*, we should ask ourselves what our sentiment is. We stand before our Lord and present our condition to Him. When we say ‘Our Lord!’ (رَبَّنَا), we use our condition as the words of our prayer. It is our state that begs our Lord for His mercy, not our words. Summarizing this sentiment, Ḥaḍrat Nawāb Mubārakah Begum^{ra} wrote in a couplet, ‘What prayer can I ask, I am an embodied prayer. I am not a person who prays, from head to toe I am a prayer.’ (*Durre ‘Adan*, pp. 86)

The same use of ‘Our Lord!’ (رَبَّنَا) is also found in one of the prayers we offer at the end of *Ṣalāt*,

My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children
too. Our Lord! and accept my prayer. (14:41)

The words 'Our Lord' (رَبَّنَا) can be an expression of repentance.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The truth of the matter is that there is a subtle indication towards repentance in the word *Rabbana* [our Lord]. The word *Rabbana* requires [and implies that] a person has left other gods which he had previously adopted, and turned towards this Lord. Furthermore, this word can only be uttered from the heart of a person with true anguish and fervour. (*Tafsīr Ḥadrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 370, 2:202)

The fact of the matter is that a person creates multiple gods for himself. He has the utmost faith in his schemes and deceptions, as if those are his gods. If he is proud of his knowledge or power, then that is his god. If he is proud of his beauty or wealth, then that is his god. In short, there are thousands of such gods that are attached to him. Until he does not forsake them all, bow his head before the One True Lord and fall at His threshold, supplicating the words of *Rabbana* with true heart-wrenching emotions, he will not be able to understand the nature of the True Lord. When one accepts his sins and supplicates with true pain and fervour, then (he) addresses his Lord, '*Rabbana* i.e. O our Lord! You were in fact the True

"Our Lord!" as an expression of repentance and of gratitude

God! Yet in my error, I wandered away from You, but now I have abandoned those false gods and I sincerely proclaim your Providence and I come to Your threshold. (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 371, 2:202)

The words 'Our Lord!' (لَبَّيْكَ) can also be an expression of gratitude.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

When we hear the words, "Allah has accepted," then spontaneously, the words rise from our heart, "Our Lord!" saying, "how lovely is the Lord who has accepted our praise." Our Lord! is the reply; we say, "How lovely it is, here we praised You and right away you accepted it."...Just now in *Ṣalāt* we were saying, "Holy is my Lord, the Most Great," and we heard the words, "Allah has accepted the praise of him who has praised Him." On receiving an immediate reward, the heart spontaneously says, "Our Lord!" If we only said "Our Lord!", then everything we want to express is included therein. But by saying "Our Lord!", we are told how great our Lord is, we say, "Our Lord! and yours is the praise," in reality praise is only for You and for no one else. (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 34)

When we say, "Our Lord! and Yours is the praise",

then it becomes praise of gratitude. It is after *Rukū'* that the glad tidings of the acceptance of the first praise we offered in *Sūratul Fātiḥah* are given. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 495)

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

*Spontaneous
praise of
Allah*

When the Imam, during the prayer, says, “Allah hears him who praises Him”, say: “O Allah! Our Lord! All the praises are for You,” for if the saying of anyone of you coincides with the saying of the angels, his past sins will be forgiven. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 59, Chapter 7)

In commentary of this Hadith, Ḥaḍrat Zainul 'Ābidīn Waliyullāh Shāh^{ra} said,

In his elementary stages of spirituality, a person's claim that he praises Allah does not carry any true meaning. However, when the angels claim that, “we glorify You with Your praise” (2:31), then it is a true claim. When the Holy Prophet^{sas} said, “if the saying of anyone of you coincides with the saying of the angels”, the meaning of this Hadith is that a person gradually progresses to the stage of spiritual understanding where his praise of Allah becomes like the praise of the angels for Allah. The purpose

of the Creator becomes his purpose. His actions are not from the desire of his lower self, rather he is as the angels are described, “who disobey not Allah in what He commands them and do as they are commanded” (66:7). Allah hears him who praises Him (سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ). When a person reaches this stage of praising Allah, Allah Almighty hears his call and responds to him and speaks to him and says, “Fear not; for I am with you both. I hear and I see. (20:47). (*Commentary Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 2, pp. 193-194)

When a believer hears that Allah accepts him who praises Him, he immediately seeks this acceptance from Allah. The praise done at this point is out of a believer’s apprehension of missing a window of opportunity. Any mention of the acceptance of Allah moves a believer to try to achieve it. When he praises Allah Almighty in this spirit of spontaneous action, his obedience coincides with the obedience of the angels. The angels spontaneously obey without any delay or disobedience. Such people are given glad tidings of acceptance from Allah and forgiveness.



حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ

Praise which is plenty, pure, and blessed

Three characteristics of praise (حَمْد) of Allah are described: its quantity, its quality, and the results it produces. We should analyze our praise of Allah to see if it carries these qualities.

The first characteristic is that it is numerous. *Kathīr* describes something being of high quantity. When we love someone and find their beauty to be praiseworthy, naturally we will mention them frequently. When someone buys a new car, he can't stop thinking about it because its beauty is always on his mind. The first and most basic quality of praise that is acceptable to Allah is that it is numerous (كثِير). 'O ye who believe! remember Allah with much remembrance; And glorify Him morning and evening.' (33:42-43).

Also, our praise being numerous (كثِير) is the basic sustenance for our relationship with our Creator. If we have a friend who we never think about or see, then with each passing day and week, our connection with them weakens and we lose touch. When they're out of sight then they're out of mind. It doesn't matter how much we claim we love them; when we don't think about them, our connection with them withers away. If the beauties of the world are all that we observe, Allah Almighty will disappear from our sight and mind. If our praise of the beauties of Allah is not numerous

(كثير), then it will automatically be replaced with numerous praise of materialistic beauties.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Why are we told to recite “holy is my Lord, the Most High” (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى) and “holy is my Lord, the Most Great” (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ) repeatedly? Wasn’t once sufficient? No. The secret is that numerous repetition leaves an effect, creating alertness in even our most neglected senses. That is why Allah Almighty says, “and remember Allah much that you may prosper.” (8:46) As repetition is connected with the mind and helps in memorization, similarly, it is connected with the soul and is needed. Without repetition, that spiritual connection cannot be sustained. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 8, pp. 124)

Quality The second characteristic is its quality. Praise that is accepted by Allah is pure. If we know that Allah is praiseworthy because He is All-Powerful, then when we feel weak, we would never turn away from Allah Almighty, we would only run towards Him. But if, when we suddenly feel vulnerable and weak, we find that we are ready to disobey Allah to save ourselves, then those words of praise of Allah were not true, they were false. When a calamity suddenly shakes us, if we find security in turning away from Allah and towards

someone else, our words of praise were not pure, but they were flattery.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

Those who praise Allah with empty words, it is as if Allah did not hear them. People have similar experiences daily. In some regions where people are in the habit of giving false praise, they will always flatter you when they meet you. Sometimes they praise to the extremes of exaggeration. If you are not false within yourself, rather than feeling love developing for them, you will feel aversion. If you are false within yourself, then you will always be pleased with false praise. Your truthfulness within will tell you the extent to which you are true. A person who is true within can never be pleased with false praise; he does not even listen to it. It is as if he never heard it. Rather, he hates it and is irritated by it. He wishes that the conversation would end quickly. Thus, that praise which does not rise from the heart and does not carry deep truth is not heard by God. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 494-495)

When we recite the word 'pure' (طَيِّب) in *Ṣalāt*, we should try to analyze the purity of our praise (حَمْد) of Allah. If our heart is at conflict with our words, then that praise is not pure. We should find what our heart believes is worthy of more praise than Allah because that is what taints the purity

of our praise. Our claim that all praise belongs to Allah may end up being nothing more than flattery. If an ordinary person would not like hearing flattery, Allah Almighty would not be pleased with it either. If we know that a cup of milk has a drop of urine mixed into it, we would never drink it because we wouldn't consider it pure. For our praise of Allah to be pure (طَيِّب), we should strive to remove every drop of idolatry from our praise. Then our praise (حَمْد) will be not only numerous (كَثِيرٌ) but also pure (طَيِّب).

Results The third characteristic is the results it produces. Praise that is blessed (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ) is praise that continuously increases in quantity and quality.

Barakah is, 'A blessing; any good that is bestowed by God; and particularly such as continues and increases and abounds' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: برك, Entry: بَرَكَةٌ).

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} said,

A Beloved whose beauties are deeper than your initial impression is worthy of praise. When you see Him from up close and praise Him, then you find greater beauty and depth. Each time you express your love to Him, you return with more love; you don't come back tired. Those people whose beloveds are empty and shallow, their love ends very quickly because their beauty does not have depth. Their praise remains devoid of *Barkat* [blessings]. Thus, God Almighty

has taught us that true praise has *Barkat* and is always increasing, and new aspects of praise continue coming to mind. The truth is that there is no being other than God whose praise has never-ending *Barkat*. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 496)

When our praise of God has quantity, it is like many seeds scattered across the ground. When our praise has quality, it is those seeds that grow into plants. When our praise produces results, it is those plants that produce fruits; they multiply the number of seeds we had. If we find ourselves growing bored and tired of praising Allah, then we can know that our praise is not blessed (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ) because our praise will eventually decrease in quantity and quality. However, if we see that our pleasure in praising Allah is growing, our praise is becoming more meaningful, and our desire to do so more frequently is increasing, then we can know that our praise (حَمْد) is blessed (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ). Then we can know that our efforts are bearing fruit and our seeds are multiplying.

The meaning of *Barakah*, as mentioned above, is, 'A blessing; any good that is bestowed by God.' We are powerless to attain this. There is nothing we can do to force Allah to bestow blessings on us. When we say 'blessed' (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ), we reach the point at which we have no choice but to adopt humility because we have lost control here. We do have a degree of control over making our praise numerous (كَثِيرًا). If we discipline ourselves, we can increase the quantity of our

praise (حَمْد) and make it more numerous. We also have some degree of control over making our praise pure (طَيِّب). By striving in self-purification and meditation, we can remove many unwanted desires from our hearts. However, what action can we possibly do that would directly result in Allah Almighty being compelled to bless our praise? 'Blessed' (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ) is a response from Allah Almighty as an acceptance of our humble offerings.

When we say 'blessed' (مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ), it can be said as a prayer where we beg Allah Almighty to bless our praise of Him. This sentiment of prayer will gradually work its way back to the words of 'pure' (طَيِّب) where we will find ourselves asking Allah Almighty to purify our praise of Him. Then this sentiment will work its way back to the word 'numerous' (كَثِيرًا) where we will find ourselves asking Allah to enable us to praise Him more frequently. Thus, the words 'plenty, pure, and blessed' describe the characteristics of true praise of Allah, and it can also be a prayer where we ask Allah Almighty to bring our praise (حَمْد) up to the standard of quantity and quality that will produce results.

SAJDAH

4

Prostration is the furthest stage of respect. When a person places himself in the state of non-existence, then he falls into prostration. (Malfūzāt (10 vol edition), vol. 9, pp. 110)

Its prostration is that it falls on the threshold of God and, forsaking all personal thoughts, loses the very identity of its existence. (Lecture Sialkot, pp. 33)

The prostration expresses, through action, the greatest possible reverence, utmost humility and lowliness, which are the objectives of Prayer. (Malfūzāt (English), vol. 1, pp. 161)

Then the Imam says *Allāhu Akbar* loudly again and leads the congregation into the Prostration position called *Sajdah*, knees on the ground, then the head. In this posture, the knees, hands, nose and the forehead

of the worshipper should be touching the ground. The head should be placed on the ground between the two hands. The arms should be away from the ground and away from one's sides....The fingers are held together pointing towards the Ka'bah. The feet should be planted on the ground so that the toes are bent in the direction of the Ka'bah. In this posture the *Tasbīḥ* given below should be recited silently three times at least. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 43, 44)

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

Holy is my Lord, the Most High



سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

Holy is my Lord, the Most High

Difference between Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} said,

Al-'Azīm and Al-'Alā

What is the difference between *'Azīm* and *A'lā*? *'Azīm* [Most Great] encompasses the entire universe, *'Azīm* is not distant from you, it is close to you. You have come close to His *'Azmat* [Greatness], seen His

manifestation, and come in awe of it. However, *A'lā* [Most High] has such a loftiness that you feel you cannot be on the same level despite coming close to it. He is Most High, and however close you come, your awareness of His loftiness increases....When you stand at the foot of a skyscraper, then you feel how high it is. However, there are some heights whose foundation does not start from where you are; they are most high. For example, the loftiness of the sky is beyond your reach. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 497)

The starting point of the *'Azmat* [Greatness] of Allah Almighty begins at our level. It is like a mountain, at the foot of which we can stand. We can move towards His *'Azmat* and see it from up close. That is why when we do *Rukū'*, we incline towards the *'Azmat* of Allah. We make a symbol of moving towards Allah. However, we cannot incline towards 'the Most High' (الأعلى) because His loftiness does not start at our level. If we wanted to admire a mountain from up close, we would move towards it. But if we want to admire the sky's loftiness from up close, there is nowhere we can go. The more we try to move towards it, the more distant it feels. With 'the Most High' (الأعلى), there is nowhere for us to go to, we are completely helpless. The spontaneous reaction to 'the Most Great' (العظيم) is to incline towards it with *Rukū'*. The spontaneous reaction to 'the Most High' (الأعلى) is to fall helplessly into *Sajdah*.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Holy is my Lord the most High. The word a'lā (the most high) is in the grammatical form that expresses the superlative degree. This naturally calls for prostration. Therefore, along with these words, the image that one shows in practice is that of prostration. (*Malḡūzāt* (English), vol. 2, pp. 148)

‘The Most Great’ (الأَعْظِيمُ) refers to the power of Allah Almighty that exists within the realm of our capacity of comprehension. As far as our eyes can see and as far as our mind can take us, there we will find the awe-inspiring power of ‘the Most Great’ (الأَعْظِيمُ). But ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى) refers to the power of Allah that exists beyond the realm of our capacity of comprehension. However far our mind is capable of taking us, just beyond that point is where ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى) begins. It takes sight to see ‘the Most Great’ (الأَعْظِيمُ), but it takes insight to see ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى). We recognize ‘the Most Great’ (الأَعْظِيمُ) through what we know, but we recognize ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى) by realizing how much we don’t know.

It takes a level of knowledge to know that we know nothing, and that is the journey from *Rukū‘* to *Sajdah*. In *Rukū‘*, we reflect on everything we know about Allah Almighty, and we incline to Him and then express gratitude for having found Him. That knowledge leads us to realize how much we

do not know of the reality of Allah Almighty, and it moves us towards *Sajdah*. For example, you and I may have a vague idea of how vast the universe is, but our comprehension of the unknown is very limited. On the other hand, an astronomer or an astronaut has a much better grasp of how vast the unknown is. Their better understanding of everything we know about the universe is directly proportional to how better their awareness is of how much we do not know about the universe. You and I look up at the sky and an astronomer looks up at the same sky, but they feel a greater awe of how much is unknown. This is because of their greater knowledge of the known. Similarly, the more our knowledge about Allah Almighty is, the greater our realization is of how much is unknown to us. We go into *Rukū'* out of a realization of how close our Lord is to us, and we go into *Sajdah* out of a realization of how distant our Lord is from us. That feeling of overwhelming distance creates the desire to express our helplessness with prostration. Our heart goes into *Sajdah* first, and then our body follows. We fall in humility, we feel awe at how beyond us 'the Most High' (الأعلى) is, and we then helplessly beg our Lord for His nearness.

That moment, when we feel helpless, is the perfect time for prayer. Even without words, that moment of humility in itself is a prayer. That is why we are encouraged to pray in *Sajdah*.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

Glorify your Lord in *Rukū‘* and exert yourself in supplication in *Sajdah*. Thus your supplications are liable to be accepted. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 4, Chapter 41)

*How we rise
by lowering
ourselves* The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

Make frequent prostrations before Allah, for every prostration that you perform before Allah will raise (رَفَعَ) you one degree and will remit one of your sins. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 4, Chapter 43)

The concept of being raised (رَفَعَ) is connected directly with lowering ourselves in prostration. This is why the prayer of ‘raise me up’ (ارْفَعْنِي) comes right before we go into our second prostration. When we say ‘raise me up’ (ارْفَعْنِي), we beg Allah Almighty to exalt us in acceptance of our having lowered ourselves before Him.

We experience one aspect of gaining heights by lowering ourselves in the secular world. For example, when a person thinks that he knows everything, then he feels less of a need to learn. His arrogance becomes an obstacle in his ability to reach the heights of learning. But when a person is aware of how much he does not know, he feels more of a need to learn. His humility opens his mind and enables him to reach the heights of learning. That is why Socrates said that he was wiser because he knew that he knew nothing. The higher we

think our ego can take us, the lower we end. The lower we take ourselves in humility, the greater the heights we achieve in wisdom.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

An ignorant and unintelligent person thinks that loftiness and vastness can be gained by raising his head. However, a person who is familiar with and has learned the secrets of human nature from the Holy Quran is well aware that loftiness is in humility and vastness is in humility. These two subjects are told to us by every *Rak'at* of the five daily prayers....We have bowed down towards loftiness because we have bowed towards the Most Lofty Lord. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Tābir*, vol. 4, pp. 755, 6 Sept 1985)

The principle of exaltation through humility is very limited in its secular application. It is nothing more than a mental exercise entirely within ourselves. In spirituality, it takes on the form of a living relationship between our Creator and us; it is an interaction. We don't just acknowledge our insignificance to ourselves, that is easy, and that is a mental exercise. Rather, we acknowledge our insignificance to our Lord. That acknowledgment is an interaction with Allah Almighty.

Narrating his first experience of this, Malcolm X said,

Picking a lock to rob someone's house was the only

way my knees had ever been bent before. I had to force myself to bend my knees. And waves of shame and embarrassment would force me back up. For evil to bend its knees, admitting its guilt, to implore the forgiveness of God, is the hardest thing in the world. It's easy for me to see and to say that now. But then, when I was the personification of evil, I was going through it. Again, again, I would force myself back down into the praying-to-Allah posture. When finally I was able to make myself stay down -- I didn't know what to say to Allah. (Autobiography of Malcolm X, Chapter 11)

Just lowering ourselves gives us an ability to rise that we did not have before. Our ego always refuses to prostrate. We may do *Sajdah* every day out of habit, but our ego will not let us think about what we are doing because of its embarrassment in that posture. When we truly prostrate before Allah, it is only after having overcome our ego. That prostration in itself is a glorification of Allah. The act of acknowledging our insignificance to our Lord in itself raises us. We acknowledge how low we are in front of the One who is the Most High.

When we reflect on the loftiness of Allah Almighty as only a concept, it can be a passive and detached glorification. But when we reflect on that loftiness while lowering ourselves to our most humble state, that has to become an active glorification of Allah.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masih IV^{ᵗᵗᵃ} said,

There is no contradiction between humility and exaltation (رفعت); rather, they depend on one another. That is why prostration is connected with exaltation....The exaltation (رفعت) that is bestowed to man is deeply connected with humility. In prostration, we are taught the prayer of 'my Lord is the Most High.' This means that when you have bowed your head before Him as far down as you can, now remember the Most Lofty Lord. Then you will receive His favor. A person who receives exaltation (رفعت) continues to bow down further accordingly. These two subjects are inseparable. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhīr*, vol. 15, pp. 904, 22 Nov 1996)

The more we seek exaltation from Allah, the more we prostrate to Him. As a result, we are raised. However, when we seek exaltation from the world, in reality, we prostrate to the world. It is most disgraceful for a believer to do *Sajdah* to anyone other than Allah Almighty. Prostration does not have value if we prostrate to the world and to Allah, it has value when we prostrate to Allah alone. When we fall before Allah Almighty and say that our Lord is the Most High, it means that we do not prostrate to anyone else, and we do not seek exaltation from anyone else.

Allah Almighty says,

This is the Home of the Hereafter! We give it to those who desire not self-exaltation in the earth (28:84).

Our reality is in prostration

When we place our face on the ground in prostration before Allah, to understand its gravity, we must remember how unparalleled this expression is. Our face has such dignity in Islam that it is described as being like an image of God in creation. Even in a fight, we are taught to respect the face of our opponent.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

When any one of you fights with his brother, he should avoid his face for Allah created Adam in His own image. (*Şahīḥ Muslim*, Book 45, Chapter 32)

A Muslim carries himself with great dignity. The dignity with which he carries himself is what adds gravity to his act of humbling himself before Allah Almighty. The significance in the act of placing our face on the ground is immense. This is the highest expression of humility, and it is the only way we can express what our reality is before Allah Almighty.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ IV^{rta} said,

Every *Sajdah* in our *Şalāt* is a reminder. When we are in a state that our head is on the ground and cannot go any lower, we are commanded to say, ‘Holy is my

Lord the Most High.’ We are rubbing our forehead on the ground, and we have made ourselves most dishonored and insignificant. However, our Lord is free of all imperfections and is Most High, and we can become lofty only by our connection with Him, not without Him. However much a person humbly bows down before God through remembrance of Allah, that is how much exaltation (رَفَعَتْ) is bestowed on him by Allah Almighty. This exaltation is the grace of God. Otherwise, the true station of man is in his state of prostration, in his being nothing more than dirt in front of God. Outside of this, man has no station or rank. Whatever exaltation (رَفَعَتْ) he receives is by the grace of God. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Tāhir*, vol. 13, pp. 63, 28 Jan 1994)

The purpose of *Sajdah* is to come to terms with our reality. As long as we think we are strong, we are not living in reality because we think we are god; we won’t feel any need to seek strength from God. We cannot pray to God if we have no need for God. We’ll comfortably make plans for the day without realizing that many of the people who died this morning had every hour of today planned out. Before we can start to pray, we have to accept the reality that we have no power and Allah Almighty is All-Powerful. Then we realize how fragile we are. Then we come to terms with how brutal reality is. We now have a need for prayer, and now we

have no choice but to fall before Allah Almighty and beg for His help. *Sajdah* is simply coming to terms with reality; its beauty is in its simplicity.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself, so increase supplications while prostrating. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 4, Chapter 42)

Prostration and prayer are inseparably linked to each other because humility is a necessary prerequisite for any prayer. Without it, there is no prayer. Any prayer offered without humility is just a formality because it is not born of necessity.

With each progressive stage of understanding our fragility, we take a step down and come closer to our reality. With each progressive stage of understanding Allah Almighty, we take a step up and come closer to His reality. When we are in the posture of our greatest lowliness, we are also at our closest to the loftiness of Allah. On the surface, it seems like a contradiction to pray ‘raise me up’ (ارْفَعْنِي) right before we go down into our second *Sajdah*. However, the lower we go in humility, the nearer we come to the loftiness of Allah Almighty. We bow towards loftiness because we have bowed to the one who is the Most High.

Looking for
pleasure in
prayer

One difficulty many of us face is finding pleasure in *Ṣalāt*. The mistake we make is that we directly look for pleasure in

prayer. If we think about every time we have found pleasure in prayer, it was a result of pain. For example, we faced a crisis where we thought we might lose a loved one. It was that anxiety that made us turn to Allah Almighty so completely. We prayed to Allah in desperation. We were not looking for pleasure in prayer; pleasure was the last thing on our mind. It would be a disrespect to our love for a loved one if they were in a crisis and we were concerned with whether we were finding pleasure in praying for them or not. At that time of crisis, we were absorbed in the pain with which we were begging for the mercy of Allah Almighty. When we found the mercy of our Lord, then we automatically experienced pleasure. The mistake we make is how we try to recapture that feeling of pleasure afterward. When we come back to *Ṣalāt* looking for pleasure, it is long after that pain has left us. We come to *Ṣalāt* and remember that pleasure we felt when we prayed to Allah Almighty, but we have forgotten the pain we went through to get there. We keep trying to find pleasure in prayer directly without going down the necessary path of pain. As a result, our search for pleasure will only end in frustration because pleasure in prayer can only come from pain.

A similar principle applies to looking for pleasure in the remembrance of Allah. When we reflect on the attributes of Allah Almighty, we only think of the beauty of our Lord and completely forget ourselves. When we find Him and see Him, then our heart is filled with love and awe. At that moment, thinking about finding pleasure is the last thing on

our mind. For example, when a mother gives birth and sees her child and hears it cry, she doesn't wonder whether she is feeling pleasure yet or not, the way we sometimes wonder in *Şalāt* whether we are feeling pleasure yet or not. She is overwhelmed by love from seeing her child for the first time. The question of pleasure is the last thing on her mind; in fact, she even forgets the pain she is in. It is an insult to the beauty of motherhood to imagine that she would think in this way. Similarly, to observe the beauty of Allah Almighty is an experience in and of itself. The pleasure that results from that experience is completely secondary.

Pleasure in *Şalāt* can be experienced in two ways; the first is the remembrance of Allah, and the second is prayer. In both cases, the path to pleasure is through hardship.

As for pleasure in the remembrance of Allah, we can only experience the pleasure of seeing Allah Almighty after making ourselves blind to the world. We have to bear the hardship of striving against our lower self to the point where we cease to exist, and the only being left is Allah Almighty. When we lose our selves, then we find our Allah.

As for pleasure in prayer, we can only experience pleasure after facing our helplessness and embracing that pain. This pain causes us to melt before our Creator, which automatically brings a feeling of euphoria. Pleasure in prayer comes only after we let go of any control we think we have in prayer. There is no direct path to pleasure.

Our purpose in *Şalāt* is not to find pleasure. That would

reduce *Ṣalāt* to a spiritual pastime and amusement. The purpose of *Ṣalāt* is to find Allah Almighty, and the moment we find Him, the question of pleasure disappears from our mind. If we look directly for pleasure in *Ṣalāt*, then we will only find pain, but if we face our pain in *Ṣalāt*, then pleasure will inevitably find us.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

It must also be remembered that this pleasure cannot be likened to the pleasure that an impulsive evil-doer feels in fornication, or to the enjoyment that an admirer of good voices experiences on hearing a melodious person sing —not in the least; one must not be deceived. The soul experiences pleasure when a human being melts and begins to flow towards God in the likeness of water, due to fear and awe of Him.

(*Malfūẓāt* (English), vol. 2, pp. 121)

The posture of *Sajdah* expresses the sentiment needed to correct our mistake of looking directly for pleasure. Sometimes, Allah Almighty tires us out in our pursuit of pleasure in *Ṣalāt* until we finally break. Our frustration pushes us to the point where we give up on doing things our way. Then we fall before Allah Almighty and admit that we are lost and have no idea how to observe *Ṣalāt*. That moment of helplessness is the first time we let go of pursuing pleasure, and we finally embrace our pain. That is the first time that pleasure

finds us in *Ṣalāt*. Ironically, our pursuit of pleasure ends up causing us the pain needed to reach that point of pleasure we were looking for. Whenever we find ourselves making the mistake of looking directly for pleasure in *Ṣalāt*, the posture of *Sajdah* should remind us that success is only in letting go of what we want and then submitting to Allah Almighty in helplessness. Then, what we wanted will find its way back to us in a better way.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Be not content with thinking that you pray every day and that the whole of *Ṣalāt* is prayer, for the prayer which issues after understanding and through grace is of a different type altogether. It is something that destroys; it is a fire that melts; it is a magnetic power that draws mercy and it is a death which in the end revives. It is a raging flood which finally becomes an ark. Every frustration is remedied by it and every poison becomes an antidote through it. (*Rūḥānī Khazāin*, vol. 20, pp. 222, *Lecture Sialkot*, pp. 31)

JILSAH

5

The Imam then says *Allāhu Akbar* again, at which he and the congregation raise their heads and then their hands from the ground and go into the Sitting position called Jilsah. When sitting in this position, the worshipper spreads his left foot horizontally on the ground and rests on it while his right foot is placed on the ground in a perpendicular position, with the toes facing the Ka‘bah. The hands are placed on the thighs with the fingers pointing towards the Ka‘bah, very close to the knees. In this position, the following supplication is recited silently: (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 45)

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَاهْدِنِي وَعَافِنِي وَأَجِبْزَنِي وَأَرْزُقْنِي وَأَرْفَعْنِي

My Lord, forgive me, and have mercy on me, and guide me, and grant me health, and make good for me my shortcomings, and provide for me, and raise me up.

After Jilsah, the Imam leads the congregation into a second Prostration by saying *Allāhu Akbar* and, again *Subhāna Rabbiyal A'lā* is done three times or, if more, in odd number. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 46)



رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي

My Lord, forgive me

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The root of *Istighfār* is *ghafara*, which means to cover up. Thus, the meaning of *Istighfār* is that God should cover up the natural weakness of the supplicant with His power. This meaning is then enlarged to include the covering up of a sin that has been committed, but the true meaning is that God should safeguard the supplicant against his natural weakness and should bestow upon him power from His power, and knowledge from His knowledge, and light from His light. (*Essence of Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 241-242)

One aspect of *istighfār* is to save us from loss, but its primary

application is to prevent us from missing what we can gain. If someone earns \$100, but because of a mistake he made, he loses \$50, then that loss is an example of a sin that causes spiritual harm. In this context, *istighfār* is seeking forgiveness for our sins. However, if a person earns \$100, but he didn't realize that he missed the opportunity to earn \$500, then that loss is an example of a natural weakness that deprived him of spiritual good. If he spends all of his time making sure he doesn't make the mistake that cost him \$50, he'll end up missing hundreds of dollars in opportunities. If our *istighfār* is only about seeking forgiveness for our past sins, then we are missing the true meaning of *istighfār*. Our *istighfār* would then be focussed on the past and on negativity. This can have the effect of closing our minds; we would start dwelling on the past. Our regret over past mistakes may motivate us not to make the same mistakes again, but it won't motivate us to open our minds to the opportunities we are missing. When we say 'My Lord, forgive me' [رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي], we should primarily pray that we not miss any opportunities for spiritual progress because of our natural weaknesses. Observing *istighfār* with this intention will open our mind to seeing opportunities that are in front of us that we may not have noticed. It will give us a more positive and forward-thinking mindset. Rather than living in the past and having guilt as our driving force, we will instead focus on the future, and hope will become our driving force.

When we say 'My Lord, forgive me' [رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي], we should

primarily pray that future shortcomings be covered, and secondarily that the negative effects of our past mistakes be covered. For example, we can think of the *Sajdah* we just did and realize its shortcomings. We say ‘My Lord, forgive me’ [رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي], and pray that those shortcomings be covered. Then, we can think of the *Sajdah* we are about to do, and realize it can be the most blessed *Sajdah* we have ever done before; all doors of progress are open to us if we would only walk through them. We say ‘My Lord, forgive me’ [رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي] and pray that we not miss any opportunities in the next *Sajdah*.



وَأَرْحَمَنِي

and have mercy on me

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau‘ūd^{ra} said,

“Gracious” (رَحْمَن) means one who helps in such a vast way that there is no thought of sectarian differences....However, the word “Merciful” (رَحِيم) tells us that this help will continue forever. Length is found in “Merciful” (رَحِيم), whereas width is found in “Gracious” (رَحْمَن). “Gracious” (رَحْمَن) stands in the

place of “holy is my Lord, the Most Great” (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ), and “Merciful” (الرَّحِيمِ) stands in the place of “holy is my Lord, the Most High” (سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى). (*Khuṭbāte Mahmūd*, vol. 39, pp. 283, Dec 5, 1958)

‘The Gracious’ (الرَّحْمَنُ) embraces all forms of life, but it does not take them to spiritual heights. ‘The Merciful’ (الرَّحِيمِ) applies to only one form of life and, within that, to a small number of people. But it carries those few to limitless spiritual heights. These are the two broad applications of the mercy of Allah. These two applications of the mercy of Allah are connected with the two applications of the power of Allah mentioned in ‘the Most Great’ (الْعَظِيمِ) and ‘the Most High’ (الْأَعْلَى). When we think about how everything in the world is a manifestation of the power of ‘the Most Great’ (الْعَظِيمِ), it is fitting to also reflect on how everything in the world is a descent of His mercy through ‘the Gracious’ (الرَّحْمَنُ). When we think about how ‘the Most High’ (الْأَعْلَى) is lofty beyond our comprehension, it is fitting to also reflect on the unimaginable spiritual heights that Allah’s mercy can take us to through ‘the Merciful’ (الرَّحِيمِ). Our understanding of the power of Allah gives us insight to the mercy of Allah, and vice versa.

When we say ‘have mercy on me’ (ارْحَمْنِي) between our prostrations, we should have in our mind those heights of ‘the Merciful’ (الرَّحِيمِ) that are shown to us through ‘the Most High’ (الْأَعْلَى). When we see the sky, a childlike curiosity in us

wants to fly toward its beauty and explore all those places we feel we will never be able to go to. The mystery and curiosity are in how impossibly distant it is.

Ḥaḍrat Maulawī ‘Abdul Karīm^{ra} narrates,

I happened to wake up once in the middle of the night to hear Mahmūd crying and the Promised Messiah^{as} talking to him gently to divert his mind. The Promised Messiah^{as} seemed to be carrying him in his arms, and pacing about to soothe him, but the child continued to cry. After some time the Promised Messiah^{as} said: ‘Look how brightly that star shines Mahmūd!’ This arrested the child’s attention evidently, for he quietened down for a moment but started crying again with a new basis for his petulance. ‘I wish to go to that star!’ he now wailed over and over again. (*Fazl-e-Umar*, pp. 17-18)

This is the same childlike curiosity that we should have. The attribute of ‘the Most High’ (الأعلى) shows us the stars, and the attribute of ‘the Merciful’ (الرحيم) takes us towards them. In *Sajdah*, when we were told of the inconceivable power of Allah Almighty that exists beyond our comprehension, then we naturally wanted to see it. We want to see exactly that beauty of Allah Almighty which is beyond our reach. Its mystery is in how impossibly distant it is. However, despite how distant ‘the Most High’ (الأعلى) is,

Allah Almighty gives us hope and tells us that through His attribute of ‘the Merciful’ (الرَّحِيمُ), He has taken people to heights that we cannot imagine. While we may not be able to reach ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى), we can reach heights that we never thought were possible. In this way, the attribute of ‘the Most High’ (الأَعْلَى) raises our ambitions, and the attribute of ‘the Merciful’ (الرَّحِيمُ) is how we can achieve those ambitions. When we say ‘have mercy on me’ (ارْحَمْنِي) between our prostrations, we should beg our Lord to favor us with those spiritual heights that are so lofty that they can never be reached except through His special mercy.



وَاهِدْنِي

and guide me

If we have already been guided to Islam, then what need is there to ask for guidance? We still need to ask because guidance has three meanings, all of which are relevant to us. It means to be shown the right path, to be taken to the right path, and to be led on the right path. (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 32, 34)

Firstly, the fact that we have accepted Islam does not mean that we no longer need to be shown the countless ways of attaining nearness to Allah within Islam. Allah Almighty says, ‘And as for those who strive in Our path—We will surely guide them in Our ways.’ (29:70). We should do many actions, but we fail to practice them because we are unaware of them. We are also always in need of being shown what we have forgotten. At times we re-learn something and it feels like we are learning it for the first time. We are also always in need of being shown the true wisdom behind a guidance we already know. Allah Almighty says, ‘And remember your Lord when you forget, and say, “I hope my Lord will guide me to what is even nearer than this to the right path.”’ (18:25). Take *Ṣalāt* for example. Although we have memorized the *Ṣalāt*, we need to be shown its meanings to benefit from it. When we say ‘guide me’ (اهدني), we can pray that Allah Almighty show us all the ways of attaining His nearness that we do not know. The first meaning of ‘guide me’ (اهدني) is to be shown the guidance.

Secondly, the fact that we have been shown a path does not mean that we have reached it. Allah Almighty uses the word ‘guide’ (هدى) in the Holy Quran with the meaning of leading people up to a path (37:24). At times, people know where they have to go, but they have a reluctance to go there. For example, someone may know that Islam has commanded the observance of *Ṣalāt*, however, he fails to observe *Ṣalāt* and walk on that path because of his laziness or lack of

discipline. When we say ‘guide me’ (اهْدِنِي), we can pray that after being shown the right path, that we be taken to it, and we act on it. The second meaning of ‘guide me’ (اهْدِنِي) is to be taken to the guidance.

Thirdly, the fact that we have been taken to the right path does not mean that we will stay on it. That is why we have been taught the prayer, “Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after You have guided (هَدَى) us;” (3:9). Being shown and taken to the right path does not guarantee that we will stay on it and reach our destination. If we became observant of *Ṣalāt* but then ended up giving up on it, then we failed to truly benefit from it and ended up falling off the path of guidance. When we say ‘guide me’ (اهْدِنِي), we can pray that Allah Almighty keep us on the right path and lead us to our destination. The third meaning of ‘guide me’ (اهْدِنِي) is to be led along the path of guidance.



وَعَافِي

and grant me health

The word *‘Āfiyah* means, ‘health, or soundness, and safety, or security...[or, as it may be best rendered, health and safety,

considered as proceeding from God; i.e.] God's defence of a man...from diseases and from trial: ...or freedom from evil." (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: عَفَو, Entry: عَافِيَةٌ)

The Holy Prophet^{sas} would pray for health in the words 'āfinī, specifying different parts of his^{sas} body, saying,

O Allah! Grant me health (عَافِيِي) in my body. O Allah! Grant me health (عَافِيِي) in my hearing. O Allah! Grant me health (عَافِيِي) in my eyesight. (*Abū Dāwūd*, Book 43, Chapter 110)

When we say 'grant me health' (عَافِيِي), our physical health is not our purpose in and of itself. Rather, we seek health so that we can use our capacities to achieve a greater purpose.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

'Āfinī - Grant me health so that I can follow your guidance. (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 40)

To be able to benefit from the physical acts of worship Islam has taught, we need to be healthy. For example, if a person is unable to observe fasting, he can try to participate in Ramadan as much as he can, but he will still be deprived of many blessings. The only way to make up for this loss is to pray with the pain of what he is deprived of.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

If a person remains deprived of fasting, but his heart is filled with pain and wishes that he were healthy so that he could observe fasting, and his heart weeps for this, then angels will observe fasts on his behalf. (*Fiqah Ahmadiyya*, pp. 294)

We can only make up for the loss of fasting if we know what we are being deprived of. Similarly, if our health does not allow us to perform *Sajdah*, then we will be deprived of the blessings in this posture. There is a unique blessing in placing our head on the ground and prostrating our body for Allah Almighty. The special experience of observing this posture cannot be replaced. The feeling that it creates in the heart cannot be found in any other posture. If a person observes prayers while sitting in a chair, then he offers a symbol of prostration while sitting, but he cannot benefit from performing this posture. The only way to make up for this loss is to pray with the awareness and pain of what he is deprived of.

When we say ‘grant me health’ (عافيني), we should pray that Allah Almighty grant us health so that we are not deprived of the blessings in the physical acts of worship that Islam has taught.



وَأَجْبُرْنِي

and make good for me my shortcomings

The word *Jabara* means, 'he set a bone; reduced it from a fractured state;' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: جبر, *Entry*: جبر). When we break a bone, the way it has to be forced back into place is a unique metaphor on the way certain spiritual illnesses have to be treated. There is a parallel between the categories of physical illnesses and spiritual illnesses. Different spiritual illnesses require treatment with different spiritual medicines.

An example of this is homeopathic and allopathic medicine. With homeopathic medicines, the body's own capacities are used to overcome an illness. With allopathic medicines, a new substance has to be introduced into the body to combat the illness. However, if a person breaks a bone, no quantity of medicine will fix his fracture. The bone has to be physically forced back into place and then held there for weeks until it heals. These same realities exist in spirituality.

For example, some people just need to be reminded to observe *Ṣalāt* and they will become regular in it. They had the inclination within themselves and only needed a homeopathic remedy to bring that inner quality out. Then there are some who only observe *Ṣalāt* if they do it in congregation with people; otherwise, they miss their prayers. They need an external influence to combat their own disinclination to *Ṣalāt*. The spiritual medicine they need is an allopathic

medicine. Then there are some people who have become so stubborn that they never observe prayers, and no amount of reminders or good company changes that. They are similar to the one who breaks a bone and lets it heal on its own and harden in a crooked position. The fracture would continuously bother them, but they were too afraid of the pain of having it rebroken and realigned, so they learned to live with the discomfort. Only after a tragedy happens that turns their lives upside down do they suddenly realize that they need to become aligned. Since the awareness of their spiritual health is still alive, the calamity makes them run towards *Ṣalāt*. Their illness could not have been cured with medicine. They learned to live with the pain of being separated from Allah, and they knew that only a life-changing experience could bring them back, but they were afraid to face it.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rtā} said,

Wajburnī - Do make me spiritually and physically well, do reform me. If something becomes crooked, like a broken bone, then *jabara* is done. *Wajburnī* means, “Do straighten those bones that have become crooked, whether spiritual or physical.” (*Tadrīs Namāz*, pp. 40)

When we say ‘make good for me my shortcomings’ (الاجبُرْنِي), we express a willingness to face whatever treatment is needed for our spiritual health. If we care about our physical health,

we will readily undergo whatever treatment is needed, no matter how painful it is. We don't leave a broken bone as it is, we brace ourselves for what we know needs to be done. We don't go to the doctor and say that we will only accept a treatment that does not involve pain. We go with a willingness to accept whatever he says. Similarly, when we go to our Lord seeking to save our spiritual life, we have to summon the courage to bear whatever treatment is needed. There is a science to spiritual illnesses. When we say 'make good for me my shortcomings' (اجْبُرْنِي), we accept that reality, and we put ourselves in the hands of our Lord, ready for any procedure that is needed to preserve our spiritual life. To ask this prayer requires great courage and trust. This prayer is between two prostrations, which are symbols of submission to Allah Almighty. It is fitting that the prayer of 'make good for me my shortcomings' (اجْبُرْنِي) also be said in that spirit of complete submission to the wisdom of Allah Almighty.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

There are two types of ordeals in the path of religion. One type is the ordeal suffered as a result of following the *Shari'ah* [religious law], such as the performance of worship, fasting, the Pilgrimage, and Zakat... These are all *Shari'ah* related ordeals, and they carry a reward with them. They make a person move towards God, but there is within them a freedom for the person. In performing these duties, he can find a way

that is of greatest comfort to him. For instance, in cold weather, he can heat water for his ablutions. If he is ill and cannot offer his prayers standing upright, he may offer them in a sitting position. In the month of Ramadan, he can eat well before dawn. Some people spend even more than usual on their food during the month of fasting. In short, in these *Shari'ah* related ordeals, a person seeks out a way of most comfort for himself. For this reason, it does not achieve a complete cleansing and initiation to the different stages of spiritual development quickly. However, the tribulations that come from the heavens have to be borne as man has no discretion over them. It is for this reason that through them a person attains nearness to God. (*Mal'ūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 10, pp. 82-83)

The calamities that come upon a person by Divine decree happen unexpectedly, and when they come, one has to bear them one way or another. This becomes a means of the purification of his soul. Look at martyrs, when they are killed during battle, God considers them deserving of great rewards. The status of nearness to God is given to them by Divine decree. Otherwise, if they were commanded to slit their own throats by themselves, then perhaps very few people would turn out to be martyrs. (*Tafsīr Ḥadhrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 276-277, 2:156)

These stages of reformation do not just apply to removing sins, but to progressing in goodness as well. For example, many people enlist in the Marines because they want to develop a military-like discipline in their lives. Technically, they could achieve the same standard of discipline at home that is enforced in boot camp. But they know that no amount of medicine can create in them the willpower needed to achieve that. What they need is a cast that will hold them in place for weeks until they form the habits they want. They put themselves into boot camp where a standard of discipline is forced on them for a period of time. Their drill instructors do not deprive them of their free will because they voluntarily chose to have their choices taken away. One meaning of *Jabara* is, ‘He compelled him, against his will, to do the thing...inducing, another to restore a thing to a sound, right, or good, state’ (*Lane’s Lexicon, Root: جبر, Entry: جبر*). When we say ‘make good for me my shortcomings’ (اجْبُرْنِي), we beg Allah Almighty to force those reforms onto us that we so badly desire, but we haven’t been able to find the willpower needed. We beg Allah Almighty to cure our illnesses by whatever treatments are necessary.

No matter which level we find ourselves in, we can all benefit from being pushed to higher levels of excellence.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

My nature is so inclined that it desires hardships

so that perfection can be achieved. (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 274, 2:156)



وَأَرْزُقْنِي

and provide for me

While most of the prayers in *Jilsah* apply to our spiritual needs, the prayers of ‘grant me health’ (عَافِنِي) and ‘provide for me’ (أَرْزُقْنِي) apply primarily to our worldly needs.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} advised someone to pray,

“O Allah, forgive me (اغْفِرْ لِي), have mercy upon me (ارْحَمْنِي), grant me health (عَافِنِي), and provide for me (أَرْزُقْنِي),” and he collected his fingers together except his thumb and said: “It is in these words (that there is supplication) which sums up for you (the good) of this world and that of the Hereafter. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 48, Chapter 10)

Our prayers for our worldly good are always to achieve a higher purpose. If our prayers are only confined to the world, then that prayer will not be a source of blessings. Our

material blessings are only a source of goodness if they are a source of good in the hereafter as well.

Allah Almighty says,

There are some who keep supplicating: Lord, grant us of the bounties of this world; these have no portion of the Hereafter. There are others who pray: Lord, grant us the best in this world as well as the best in the world to come and safeguard us against the torment of the Fire. It is these for whom there will be a goodly recompense because of that which they have earned. (2:201-202)

In *Jilsah*, the two worldly needs we pray for are health and provisions. These two are necessary for our ability to perform outward acts of worship. In *Qāḍah*, we will say that ‘All verbal worship is due to Allah and all physical acts of worship and financial sacrifices.’ To perform physical acts of worship, like *Sajdah*, or fasting, or the rites of Hajj, we need to be healthy. To make financial sacrifices, like Zakat or *Sadaqah*, we need provisions.

If a person does not have health, he will be deprived of certain physical acts of worship. Similarly, if a person does not have provisions, he will be deprived of the opportunity to offer certain sacrifices. It is narrated in the Holy Quran that there were people who wished to go for Jihad along with the Holy Prophet^{sas} but could not because of poor health, and

others who were healthy, but they initially had to be turned away because they could not provide their own transport.

No blame lies on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who find nothing to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger....Nor against those to whom, when they came to you that you should mount them, you did say, 'I cannot find whereon I can mount you;' they turned back, their eyes overflowing with tears, out of grief that they could not find what they might spend. (9:90-91)

If we do not have the material provisions for offering sacrifices during a time of need, then although there is no blame on us, we will be deprived of an opportunity. It is a loss that can only be made up for with sincere prayers offered in the pain of that loss. In *Jilsah*, we preemptively pray that we not suffer any loss and that we not be deprived of any opportunity to offer sacrifices for Allah Almighty.

When we say 'grant me health' (عَافِيَتِي) and 'provide for me' (اِزْزُقْنِي), we pray for the ability by which we will be able to perform physical acts of worship and offer financial sacrifices.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

It is wrong when people say that there is no need to ask for good in this world and that we should only ask for good in the world to come. Physical health

and other things are how a person finds relief in this world, and it is by means of it that he can do something for the hereafter. That is why this world is referred to as a farm for the hereafter. (*Tafsīr Ḥadīrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 370, 2:202)



وَأَرْفَعْنِي

and raise me up

(The connection of exaltation [رَفَعْتَ] with prostration, and the wisdom of observing the prayer 'raise me up' [أَرْفَعْنِي] just before Sajdah, has been covered under the chapter on Sajdah. Please refer to that chapter for commentary on this prayer.)

QA'DAH

6

In the very end is the Qa'dah, which is a state of tranquility after the Sajdah, in which, after passing through the stages of devotion and humility, an individual enters the content servants of God the Almighty. (Sīrat Khātamun Nabiyyīn, pp. 211, Seal of the Prophets, vol. 1, pp. 286)

After the second Prostration, he sits down in the same manner as he sat in the position called Jilsah. This Sitting Position, at the end of the second *Rak'at* is called Qa'dah. During this position *Tashahhud* is recited silently, which is as follows: (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 46)

التَّحِيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
وَبَرَكَاتُهُ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

All verbal worship is due to Allah and all physical

acts of worship and financial sacrifices, peace be on you, O prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings, peace be on us, and on the righteous servants of Allah.

I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

After reciting Tashahhud, the invocation of blessings on the Holy Prophet^{sas} called *Durūd* (Aṣṣalātu-‘alanabī) and some other prayers are recited silently. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 48)

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا
بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

O Allah, bless Muhammad and his people, as You did bless Ibrāhīm and his people. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious. O Allah, prosper Muhammad and his people, as You did prosper Ibrāhīm and his people. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

After *Durūd*, we can observe any of several different prayers that the Holy Prophet^{sas} is narrated to have observed at the end of *Ṣalāt*, including 2:202 and 14:41-42 of the Holy Quran.

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ ۝ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ۝

My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children too. Our Lord! Do accept my prayer. Our Lord, grant forgiveness to me and to my parents and to the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place.

After reciting one or more of these prayers, the Imam turns his face towards the right and says *Assalāmu 'Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh*, i.e. peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah, and then turns his face towards the left and repeats *Assalāmu 'Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh*, to mark the end of the Prayer. (*Ṣalāt-The Muslim Prayer Book*, pp. 52)

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah.



التَّحِيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ

All verbal worship is due to Allah and all physical acts of worship and financial sacrifices

The word *Taḥiyyah* means, “Continuance, or endurance; or endless, or everlasting, existence.” (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: حى, Entry: تَحِيَّةٌ)

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} explained that when we say *at-taḥiyyātu lillāh* in *Ṣalāt*, we say, “O Allah, endless life is yours, and we attain life from that life.” (*Darsul Quran, Al Nisā*: 85-89, @ 1:01:15, 26 Dec 1998)

Also, *at-taḥiyyātu lillāh* means that all worships and pious intentions are exclusively for Allah and they are means of establishing a relationship with Allah the Almighty.

When the words *at-taḥiyyāt*, *aṣ-ṣalawāt* and *aṭ-ṭayyibāt* are read together, then in this context, the words take the meaning of verbal and physical worship and financial sacrifice.

Ḥaḍrat Zainul ‘Ābidīn Waliyullāh Shāh^{ra} explained,

Taḥiyyah are those words of reverence by which kings used to be addressed. This *taḥiyyah* did not just have titles of praise, it also included prayers for the protection of these kings. Because of this, the word *taḥiyyah* was adopted, which is derived from *ḥayāt* (life). The meaning of *at-taḥiyyāt* is that all of the

titles of reverence and words of praise and prayers by which worldly kings and deities are addressed are only the right of Allah, meaning all worship of the tongue is only for Allah. (*Bukhārī Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 231)

Very early on, the Companions^{ra} used to pray for Allah in the way that subjects pray for a king. However, the Holy Prophet^{sas} corrected them and taught that they cannot pray for Allah the way they used to pray for kings. Also, he taught them that only Allah is deserving of the type of praise that subjects would wrongly give to their kings.

Ḥaḍrat Abdullāh ibn Masud^{ra} narrated,

When we prayed with the Prophet^{sas} we used to say, “Peace (*as-Salām*) be on Allah from His slaves and peace be on so and so.” The Prophet^{sas} said, “Don’t say peace be on Allah, for He Himself is The Source of Peace (*As-Salām*), but say, *at-taḥiyyātu lillāhi wa-ṣalawātu waṭ-ṭayyibātu...*” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 10, Chapter 150)

Explaining these words, Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh I^{ra} said,

“*At-taḥiyyātu lillāh* means that all praise and gratitude that can be expressed by the tongue are only for God and should be only for God.” Explaining *aṣ-ṣalawāt*,

he^{ra} said, “Gratitude expressed by the body and worship done by the body, like *Sajdah*, Hajj, fasting, and *Ṣalāt*, is also only for Allah.” Explaining *aṭ-ṭayyibāt*, he^{ra} said, “All worship through financial sacrifice is also only for Allah....Gratitude expressed by financial sacrifice should only be for Allah.” (*Khuṭbāt-e-Nūr*, pp. 462)

All three of these expressions have an emphasis on gratitude. *Qa’dah* is a posture of tranquillity and contentment after *Sajdah*; it is fitting that we express in it our gratitude. After having experienced the favours of Allah Almighty in *Sajdah*, we say that now everything should be an expression of gratitude for the favours Allah Almighty has given us. We say that even if all our verbal and physical acts of worship and financial sacrifice were expressions of gratitude, they would be insufficient.

The order in these words describe the natural progression from faith expressed through words, then through actions, and then through financial sacrifice. This process is described in the Holy Quran as well, where it mentions, ‘those who recite the Book of Allah and observe Prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them’ (35:30).

Ḥaḍrat Nūruddīn^{ra}, explaining *Qa’dah* in a sermon before *Khilāfat*, said,

By reflecting on the beauty and favours of God Almighty, our heart and mind create an excitement

because of the greatness of God. Then, the effect of that excitement shows itself on the tongue when it starts expressing words of praise. Then, it affects our limbs, and we stand in respect, bow down, prostrate, and perform acts of reverence. This effect does not remain confined here, rather, it affects a person's wealth, and he spends his beloved and pure wealth without hesitation for the pleasure of God. He includes his wealth in the worship of God done by his mind, tongue, and body, and this is called *aṭ-ṭayyibāt*, which has been expressed with the words "financial sacrifice," and it is the right of only Allah Almighty. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Nūr*, pp. 300)

These three stages describe a progression in difficulty. Verbal worship comes easiest, physical acts of worship require greater sacrifice, and the most difficult is financial sacrifice.

We present our worship to Allah Almighty as a gift.

Firstly, our worship is not a tax, it is a gift. When we give a tax, we do so because we are forced to. However, a gift is given willingly and with happiness. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 4, pp. 1003, 20 Dec 1985) Also, in a tax, people try to give as little as possible. If they have to give part of their property or possessions, they find the worst portion they can to give. However, with a gift, we try to find the best thing we can give. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 3, pp. 209, 13 April 1984) In the

*All gifts are
for Allah*

initial stages of spirituality, we do have to force ourselves to establish a basic discipline in worship. Sometimes, we try to do the bare minimum in fulfilling our spiritual obligations. In these stages, offering our worship as a tax is acceptable because it is better than offering nothing at all. This kind of behaviour is tolerable from someone in spiritual childhood who is just learning the ways of expressing love, but it is not acceptable from an adult. If a husband finds the cheapest thing he can get away with, and he gives it to his wife like an obligation he is trying to get rid of, we can call that a tax, but we cannot call it a gift. When we present any sacrifice to Allah Almighty, we should find in our heart a willingness to offer the best that we can. For it to be a gift, we should not feel regret that we could have given less, if anything, we should feel regret that perhaps we could have given more. Only then can it be considered a gift.

Secondly, our worship is not a sale, it is a gift. If a person gives a gift as if he is buying something and expects a gift in return, then this mentality is so disgraceful that it ruins the concept of gifts. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhīr*, vol. 10, pp. 631-633, 2 Aug 1991) In the initial stages of spirituality, some are motivated when they hear stories of how people miraculously received financial rewards after their worship. Some people need materialistic incentives to move towards spirituality, but this approach is only tolerable as an initial stage of spirituality. Sacrificing with that intention can be called an attempt at a sale, but it cannot be called a gift. A gift is

given without any expectation; rather, it is given with hope. When we buy something, we expect to receive something in return. We can force someone to give us what we purchased because that is our right. But we can never force someone to give us a gift in response to our gift. We give a gift in the hope that it will be accepted as a token of our love, hoping that we will receive a reciprocation of love. Love is given voluntarily. If a person expresses his love and then feels entitled to receive love in return, the idea of loving that person becomes repugnant. A sale is a transaction with guarantees in it. A gift can never be a sale because there are no guarantees in it. It is based on hope, not expectation.



السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Peace be on you, O prophet, and the mercy of Allah
and His blessings

Three points were just recited, 1. verbal, 2. physical, and 3. financial. Three prayers now follow them, 1. peace, 2. mercy, and 3. blessings. These three points and three prayers are correlated.

*Sacrificing
our reward*

1. Verbal worship (الْتَحِيَّاتُ) correlates with peace (السَّلَامُ).
2. Physical acts of worship (الصَّلَوَاتُ) correlate with mercy (رَحْمَةٌ).
3. Financial sacrifices (الطَّيِّبَاتُ) correlate with blessings (بَرَكَاتُ).

(*Risālah Durūd Sharīf* by Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Ismaīl Halālpurī^{ra}, pp. 219-220)

This style of correlation (لف و نشر) is also found in many places in the Holy Quran.

When we say ‘peace be on you, O prophet’ (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ), we pray that any reward we receive for our verbal worship (الْتَحِيَّاتُ) descend on the Holy Prophet^{sas} in the form of peace (السَّلَامُ). When we say ‘and the mercy of Allah’ (وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ), we pray that any reward we receive for our physical acts of worship (الصَّلَوَاتُ) descend on the Holy Prophet^{sas} in the form of mercy (رَحْمَةٌ). When we say ‘and His blessings’ (وَبَرَكَاتُهُ), we pray that any reward we receive for our financial sacrifices (الطَّيِّبَاتُ) descend on the Holy Prophet^{sas} in the form of blessings (بَرَكَاتُ). This sentiment of prayer is in line with a *Durūd* of the Promised Messiah^{as} where he^{as} prayed,

My Lord, whatever you intend to give me of rewards, give it to the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Then, forgive me by Your favour. (*Rūḥānī Khazāin*, vol. 18, pp. 204)

At first, this prayer may seem difficult because of how great a sacrifice it is. It is easier for us to sacrifice our time or our wealth in the hope of reward from Allah, but the thought of sacrificing the reward itself may have never crossed our mind. However, the highest point of love is where we find a willingness to sacrifice everything for someone we love. For example, many times, when people make major financial contributions, they want to make that sacrifice on behalf of their late parents. They think of how they only have wealth because of how much their parents sacrificed for their education and upbringing. They think of all the hardships their parents went through to raise them, and they wish their parents could have enjoyed the same comforts they now can. When they finally have the chance to make a major financial contribution for the sake of Allah Almighty, the only desire they have in their hearts is that the reward of that sacrifice somehow go to their parents. They remember that it was their parents who instilled the spirit of sacrifice in them, so this sacrifice actually belongs to them. They remember that it was their parents who raised them with the education needed to earn wealth, so this wealth actually belongs to them. Their desire to give their reward has no reservations in it. Their greatest happiness would be in knowing their sacrifice was accepted, and all of the reward went to their parents.

A man said to Allah's Messenger^{sas}, "My mother died, will it benefit her if I give in charity on her behalf?"

The Prophet^{sas} replied in the affirmative. The man said, “I have a garden, and I make you a witness that I give it in charity on her behalf.” (*Şahīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 55, Chapter 26)

As our love for someone grows, so does our desire to sacrifice for them. We are willing to sacrifice our time, our wealth, even our life for someone we love. But the most valuable thing we have is the reward we hope to receive from Allah Almighty for our actions. We may find a willingness to sacrifice our life for many people because we hope for a reward from Allah Almighty for that sacrifice. However, if we look in our heart, we will not find a willingness to sacrifice our reward for anyone. Only when our heart is filled with an overwhelming anguish to somehow express our love for someone, only in the most extreme expression of that love, there we find a willingness, and in fact a desire, to sacrifice our reward for them.

When we think of how much we have gained through the Holy Prophet^{sas}, we realize that it is only through him^{sas} that we have learned the ways of loving Allah Almighty. Ḥaḍrat Muşleḥ Mau‘ūd^{ra} explained that some people are so exalted in their nearness to Allah Almighty that we cannot truly recognize them until we have recognized Allah Almighty. However, there is a stage higher than that. That stage is where we cannot truly recognize Allah Almighty unless we recognize that person. Rejection of that person

results in disbelief in God. (*Anwārul ‘Ulūm*, vol. 4, pp. 628-629, *Taqdīre Ilāhi*)

That person is the Holy Prophet^{sas}. We have recognized our Allah by following the example of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. When we recognize the Holy Prophet^{sas} as our spiritual father and realize the blessings we have received through him^{sas}, then a love for him^{sas} is born that is greater than we could ever have for our parents. Every reward from Allah Almighty is a reminder that He gave this to us through our following the example of the Holy Prophet^{sas}, and if we had rejected him^{sas}, we would never have received it.

When we recite the prayers in *Qāḍah*, we should remember the stages of verbal worship, physical worship, and financial sacrifice that we have gone through. First, our heart is moved to express itself through verbal worship. When we say, ‘Peace be on you, O prophet,’ we think of the effort we have made to make all of our verbal worship only for Allah, and then we pray that any reward of that effort descend as peace (السَّلَام) on the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Second, our heart is moved to express itself through physical acts of worship, and this is more difficult. When we say, ‘and the mercy of Allah,’ we think of the greater effort we have made to make all of our physical worship only for Allah, and then we pray that any reward of that effort descend as mercy (رَحْمَةٌ) on the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Third, our heart is moved to express itself through financial sacrifice, and this is more difficult. When we say, ‘and His blessings,’ we think of the even greater

effort we have made to make all our financial sacrifices only for Allah, and then we pray that any reward of that effort descend as blessings (بَرَكَاتٌ) on the Holy Prophet^{sas}.

These prayers are not a sacrifice; they are a pleasure that can only be felt by a person who loves the Holy Prophet^{sas} more than he loves himself.

*Addressing
the Holy
Prophet^{sas}
directly?*

When we say, ‘Peace be on you, O prophet,’ we speak in the second person, but that does not mean that we address the Holy Prophet^{sas} directly. To understand the wisdom in this style of expression, we can look at how we pray for people when we visit the graveyard.

When the Holy Prophet^{sas} visited a graveyard, he prayed,

Peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the grave!
(*Tirmidhī*, Book 10, Chapter 59)

For this reason, whenever we visit a graveyard, we also say, ‘Peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the grave!’ We say this because the remains of the people buried there remind us of them in such a way that we feel as if they are in front of us. This feeling does not mean that they are really present or that they can hear us. It is simply a natural expression of how we feel at that time and place.

Ṣalāt is also a reminder of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Every word we say and every action we perform is in meticulous following of the example of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. We strive

to observe *Ṣalāt* in the same spirit with which the Seal of the Prophets^{sas} would recite it. Our *Ṣalāt* is blessed if it carries the impression of his^{sas} seal. We pray in the second person because *Ṣalāt* reminds us of him^{sas} in such a way that we feel as if he^{sas} is in front of us. In *Qa'dah*, when we sit in a posture of tranquillity and contentment because of what we have gained from Allah Almighty in prostration, we express our happiness and gratitude to Allah. Then, we express our gratitude and love for the Holy Prophet^{sas} by praying for him in a uniquely personal way, in the second person.

In one way, the general *Durūd* [O Allah, bless Muhammad and his people] is more personal because we refer to the Holy Prophet^{sas} by his name, but it is less personal because we refer to him in the third person. This specific *Durūd* in *Qa'dah* is less personal because we refer to the Holy Prophet^{sas} by his status of Prophet, but it is more personal because we refer to him in the second person.

Ḥaḍrat Ghulām Rasūl Rājikī^{ra} explained that there is a reason for using the words 'O prophet' rather than 'O Muhammad', and for having it in the second person. When a believer reaches the final part of *Ṣalāt*, he has reached that lofty status of spirituality for which prayer has been called the ascension of the believer. Now he does not just see the person of Muhammad^{sas}, he sees Muhammad^{sas} in the glory of prophethood. Witnessing the light of prophethood, he sees the truth of the secret of prophethood as if it is in front of him, and he expresses this state by speaking in the second

person and saying, ‘Peace be on you, O prophet.’ (*Ḥayāte Qudsī*, pp. 614-615)



السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا

Peace be on us

One of the etiquettes of prayer is to observe *Durūd* before we pray for ourselves. Whether we pray for ourselves in *Qiyām*, *Rukūʿ*, *Sajdah*, or any other time, we should always follow the pattern of prayer that *Qaʿdah* has taught us. That pattern is that we should first glorify Allah Almighty, then we should observe *Durūd*, then we should pray for ourselves.

The Messenger of Allah^{sas} heard a person supplicating during prayer. He did not mention the greatness of Allah, nor did he invoke blessings on the Prophet^{sas}. The Messenger of Allah^{sas} said: “He made haste.” He then called him and said, “If any of you prays, he should mention the exaltation of his Lord in the beginning and praise Him; he should then invoke blessings on the Prophet^{sas}; thereafter he should supplicate Allah for anything he wishes.” (*Abū Dāwūd*, Book 8, Chapter 509)

It is a natural expression of submission to Allah Almighty that if we find that Allah loves someone more than He loves us, then we also love that person more than we love ourselves. The purpose of worship is to lose ourselves in the Being of Allah Almighty and become a reflection of Him. This is why the Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 2, Chapter 8)

Since Allah Almighty loved the Holy Prophet^{sas} most in all mankind, we also do the same. Since Allah Almighty sends blessings on the Holy Prophet^{sas}, we also do the same.

Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet.
O ye who believe! you also should invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace.
(33:57)

The meaning of Islam is submission, and *Ṣalāt* is an exercise in submission. When we develop the quality of submission to Allah Almighty, then preferring the Holy Prophet^{sas} over ourselves comes naturally. To act against this urge is to act against submission to Allah. That is why prayers are only truly accepted when they carry an expression of submission by being accompanied by *Durūd*.

Ḥaḍrat ‘Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb^{ra} narrated, ‘Indeed the supplication stops between the heavens and the earth. Nothing of it is raised up until you send *Ṣalāt* upon your Prophet.’ (*Tirmidhī*, Book 3, Chapter 21)

When a prayer for ourselves is accompanied by an even more fervent prayer for blessings on the Holy Prophet^{sas}, then that prayer becomes an expression of submission to Allah Almighty.

‘Peace be on us’ or ‘peace be on you’ is a prayer that we commonly observe. However, in *Qaḍāb*, it becomes an extraordinary prayer because of its placement. Earlier, the intensity of our love had made us want to sacrifice our rewards for the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Here, we see that our love makes us want to sacrifice our prayers for the Holy Prophet^{sas}. We pray for peace on ourselves only after we have prayed for peace on the Holy Prophet^{sas}. In fact, we offer a more comprehensive prayer for the Holy Prophet^{sas} than we do for ourselves by not just praying for peace, but also that the mercy and the blessings of Allah be upon him^{sas}

This prayer teaches us to make all of our prayers extraordinary. Whenever we need to pray for ourselves, no matter how desperate we are, we should forget about ourselves for a moment and pray first for the Holy Prophet^{sas} with greater fervency than the prayer we offer for ourselves. Imagine how beautiful that prayer is in the sight of Allah Almighty. He sees how anxious we are and how urgently we need something, but just out of our love for Allah, we forget about our

need for a moment and first pray with greater sincerity for that person who was the most beloved to our Allah. This approach makes our prayer an expression of love for Allah Almighty.



وَعَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ

and on the righteous servants of Allah

In a discourse before *Khilāfat*, Ḥaḍrat Nūruddīn^{ra} mentioned the following story from the poetry in the *Masnavi* of Rūmī^{ra},

There (once) was a merchant. And he had a parrot, imprisoned in a cage-- a beautiful parrot. (Now) when the merchant prepared for a journey (and) was about to travel to India, ...he said to the parrot, “What present from the journey do you want, so that I may bring it to you from the region of India.” The parrot answered him, “When you see the parrots there, explain my situation (and) say, “The parrot so-and-so, who is yearning to see you, is in my prison by the decree of the heavens. She sends you

greetings of peace and wants justice, and desires a remedy and the path of right guidance. She said, “Is it proper that I, in (such a state of) yearning, should give (up my) life here (and) die in separation? Is it right that I (should be) in (such) strict bondage, while you (are) sometimes on the green grass (and) sometimes on the trees? Is the faithfulness of (true) friends like this, (that) I (am) in prison and you (are) in the rose garden?”...The man of trade accepted this message (and agreed) that he would deliver the greeting from her to (her own) kind. When he reached the farthest regions of India, he saw some parrots in a wilderness. ...he delivered the greeting and returned that (which he had been given in) trust. Among those parrots, one parrot trembled greatly, fell, died, and stopped breathing... The merchant finished his trading (and) returned to (his) home... The parrot said, “Where is (this) slave’s present? Tell what you saw and said!”...He replied, “I told your complaints to a group of your fellow parrots. “That one parrot—her heart broke from getting wind of your pain, and she trembled and died”...When she heard about what that parrot did, she then trembled, fell, and became cold. When the master saw her fallen like this,...he threw her out of the cage. The little parrot flew to a high branch... The merchant ...said, “O nightingale, share a portion (of wisdom) with us in explanation of

the situation. What did (that parrot) do so that you learned (something), prepared a trick, and burned us (with sorrow)?” The parrot answered, “She gave me advice by her (very) action, meaning, “Escape from (attachment to) elegance of voice and joyful expansion [of your breast in song]. Because your voice is keeping you in shackles.” She herself acted dead for the sake of (sending me) this advice, Meaning, “O (you who) have become a singer to (both) commoners and the elite: become ‘dead’ like me so that you may find deliverance!” (*Masnavi*, Book 1, The Merchant and the Parrot, translation from dar-al-masnavi.org)

After mentioning this story, Ḥaḍrat Nūruddīn^{ra} said,

Similarly, when we send peace and salutations on the prophets and on “the righteous servants of Allah” (عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ), its purport is, “O souls that have attained salvation! O holy and chosen people of God! You have attained salvation and, having come in accordance with the verse, “Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him” (5:120), you have attained the nearness of God. Please, somehow tell us a way by which we can be saved from the bitterness and sins of this world and, becoming chosen, we can also come under the shade of the pleasure

of God. (*Irshādāte Nūr*, vol. 1, pp. 377, *Ḥayāt-e-Nūr*, pp. 317)

When we pray for peace on the righteous servants of Allah, we can picture ourselves as the bird in the cage sending greetings of peace to the birds in the garden.



أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant/worshipper and Messenger

Giving testimony

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ṛta} explained that when we bear witness, we should ask ourselves what personal knowledge we have of Allah Almighty based on which we are in a position to give testimony. What new knowledge have we gained about Allah Almighty that we are justified to again give testimony in *Ṣalāt* that there is none worthy of worship except Allah? (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 15, pp. 577-581, 7/26/1996)

In *Thanā'*, we said that 'there is none worthy of worship except You,' but here we say that we 'bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah.' Our bearing witness

here means that we have seen something from that time up until now. *Thanā'* brought us to the point of *iḥsān*, where we worship Allah as if we are seeing Him. The testimony here is a culmination of what we have witnessed in that state of *iḥsān*. When we say 'I bear witness', we can think of what we saw of Allah Almighty in the glorifications of *Qiyām*. We can think of the *'Azmat* [Greatness] of Allah Almighty that we saw in *Rukū'*. We can think of the heights of *Al-A'lā* [the Most High] that we saw in *Sajdah*. When we give testimony based on what we witnessed in *Ṣalāt*, that testimony carries weight.

Similarly, we 'bear witness that Muhammad is His worshipper and Messenger.' In *Ṣalāt*, we experience so many blessings of obedience of the Holy Prophet^{sas} that when we reach *Qa'dah*, we pray for him as if he^{sas} is in front of us. Just before this *Shahādah*, we prayed for the Holy Prophet^{sas} in the second person. When we bear witness to his^{sas} truth, our testimony carries weight because it is based on what we have witnessed in front of us. When we say, 'I bear witness that Muhammad is His worshipper and messenger,' we declare that we have experienced such blessings in the words of worship in *Ṣalāt* that they could only have been taught to us by a true worshipper of Allah.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said that this testimony in *Qa'dah* is not theoretical, it is based on experience. (*Dhauqe 'Ibādat*, pp. 512)

Our experience of the blessings in *Ṣalāt* bear witness to the unity of Allah and the truth of His messenger.

This testimony can also serve as a self-analysis on the quality of the *Rak'at* we just completed. The statement 'I bear witness' is subjective; it can only be as true as our experience is. If our *Ṣalāt* was a means of experiencing the presence of Allah Almighty, then the words 'I bear witness' will be a true and heartfelt testimony. If our *Ṣalāt* went by in distraction, then 'I bear witness' will be an empty testimony. The words 'I bear witness' are entirely a reflection on ourselves. In that reflection, we can see with clarity the reality of our *Ṣalāt*.

*Raising
our index
finger*

When we say that 'there is none worthy of worship except Allah,' we are saying that we are a worshipper of only Allah Almighty. Immediately after this, we say that 'Muhammad is His worshipper [عَبْدٌ]'. We say that we are a worshipper of Allah, but then we are told what a true worshipper is, and we are reminded that the greatest worshipper of Allah Almighty was the Holy Prophet^{sas}. Thus, the spirit with which the Holy Prophet^{sas} worshipped Allah Almighty is the standard of excellence for our worship. So what is the difference between our worship and the worship of the Holy Prophet^{sas}?

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{rta} said,

The Holy Prophet^{sas} did not say, "O Allah, besides You and besides me, everyone else in the world is nothing." Generally when people say, "there is none

worthy of worship except Allah,” in reality, they are saying, “O Allah, there is only Your Being and my being, nothing else.” But the Holy Prophet^{sas} showed with his^{sas} entire life that, “I am also nothing, there nothing except Allah.” (*Dhauqe Ibādat*, pp. 499)

When we bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, then we negate everything other than Allah Almighty. Not only should the world become nothing, but we should also become nothing ourselves. It is easier to let go of the world than it is to let go of ourselves. When we say, ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is His worshipper [عَبْدُ],’ we should ask ourselves if our statement of *Shahādah* as a worshipper [عَبْدُ] was like the *Shahādah* of the greatest worshipper^{sas} of Allah.

We raise our index finger when giving testimony to the unity of Allah. We thus give a physical symbol of that unity along with our words. This symbol adds emphasis to the expression and reminds us that everything except Allah Almighty is nothing.

When only Allah is left, and His Unity is established in our hearts, there is no room for love for anyone else. The world disappears, and the desire to impress people also starts to disappear. We disappear, and our arrogance also starts to disappear. If we still see any importance in ourselves as we sit in front of Allah Almighty, then we should have raised two fingers instead of one: one for Allah Almighty and one for

ourselves. When we ‘bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah,’ we should look in our heart to see if our existence has any importance in that moment. If it does not, then our index finger gives true testimony that indeed there is only The One and no one else.

The Holy Prophet^ṣ said,

It (the index finger) is harder on Satan than (being beaten with) iron. (*Musnad Aḥmad*, narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, 5964)



اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ

O Allah, bless Muhammad and his people, as You did bless Ibrāhīm and his people. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious. O Allah, prosper Muhammad and his people, as You did

prosper Ibrāhīm and his people. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

If we don't have a personal attachment with the Holy Prophet^{sas}, then the name Muhammad will not mean much to us. *Durūd* will feel like a formality because we're praying for someone we don't really know. When we see people become emotional at a *Sīratun Nabī Jalsah* or when they're talking about the Holy Prophet^{sas}, we'll feel awkward, like we're missing out on something. We want to develop this attachment with the Holy Prophet^{sas}, but sometimes we don't know how. The solution is simple; it is reading the biography of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. This method of developing an attachment is so simple that if we read the biography of any historical figure, by the time we finish, we will feel like we know them personally.

*Reading
biography
of the Holy
Prophet^{sas}*

This method is so effective that it can be seen in the lasting influence that even fictional characters have on us. When we read a novel or watch a movie that immerses us in its world, we feel like we live in that world. Sometimes when we're daydreaming, we imagine that world, or even ourselves as being in that world. A good story follows a method for taking us on its journey. We begin our journey by identifying with the main character in the exposition. We live through all of their struggles in the rising action. In the climax, we feel their victory as if it is our victory. By the end of the story, we feel as if we have been on an epic journey with people who

we now know. If the story is a tragedy and it is told well, then we are so saddened when the main character dies that we cry. We feel as if we lost someone we knew personally. We know that this character does not exist, we know this is fiction and that every character is imaginary, but knowing all of this, we still cry. This is the power of narrative. When we follow a character through the journey of their life, we develop such a strong personal attachment with them that it can stay with us for years.

If this is the effect that a fictional story can have on us, a nonfiction story can have a far more significant impact. When we read a well-written biography of any historical figure, it immerses us in their era, and we feel like we lived their life with them. If we see the legacy of that person in the world today, it takes on a more personal value. If, as a minimum, we take this simple approach to our reading of the biography of the Holy Prophet^{sas}, it will be of immense spiritual benefit. When we read about his birth and childhood, we should immerse ourselves in the culture and society of Arabia in that century. As we read about his^{sas} youth, we should imagine navigating the streets of Mecca. We should become an ordinary person living day to day life in Arabia. As we read about his^{sas} prophethood and all of the trials he^{sas} went through, we should imagine that we were there at every step ready to offer any sacrifice, that we experienced each event as if it were an event in our own lives. When we read about his^{sas} demise, we should feel the loss personally and mourn his^{sas} passing.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭafā Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

There are many people who are called Muslims and who express faith in the Holy Prophet^{sas}, their entire lives go by, but they never realize that a very great calamity came upon them with the demise of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. This is because they did not see the era of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. They do not see him^{sas} in the way that the Companions^{ra} saw him^{sas}. As far as loss goes, those who came afterwards suffered the same loss that the Companions suffered. However, the Companions felt it because they saw with their own eyes what was accomplished by the coming of the Holy Prophet^{sas}, and they saw with their own eyes the danger that existed if he^{sas} had not come. Since those who came afterwards did not see this with their own eyes, so although they believe in the Holy Prophet^{sas} and there is sincerity in them, but the demise of the Holy Prophet^{sas} does not seem to them to be an occurrence in their life, except what Allah wills. There are some servants of Allah Almighty who did not see the Holy Prophet^{sas}, but they consider his^{sas} demise to be an occurrence in their life. His^{sas} demise seems to them to be an occurrence in their life, just as it was felt by the Companions in whose presence he^{sas} was. This is what, in reality, is a sign of perfect faith. I do not boast, but it is the favour of

Allah Almighty on me that, with regard to love for the Holy Prophet^{sas}, I have always felt his^{sas} demise as if he^{sas} was alive in my lifetime and he^{sas} passed away in my lifetime. (*Khuṭbāte Nikāḥ*, pp. 611-612)

When we pray for a family member who has passed away, it can make us emotional because the prayer itself reminds us of the pain of loss that we suffered. Similarly, *Durūd* itself can be emotional if it becomes a reminder of the loss we suffered in our own lives. When we say the name Muhammad^{sas}, it reminds us of all the experiences that we had with him^{sas}, and the experience of his passing. Praying for him^{sas} becomes an expression of our mourning his^{sas} loss. That becomes a very personal *Durūd*. When we say the name Muhammad in *Durūd*, it should remind us of a person who we know personally.

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr Aḥmad^{ra} narrates that on one occasion the Promised Messiah^{as} was pacing in *Masjid* Mubārak alone. He was quietly humming something while tears were streaming from his eyes. A companion was able to hear that he^{as} was reading the couplet that Ḥaḍrat Hassān ibn Thābit^{ra} wrote at the demise of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. The couplet was: ‘You were the pupil of my eye, now that you have died my eye has become blind. I care not who dies now, for I feared only your death.’ When a person enquired as to why he^{as} was so perturbed, the Promised Messiah^{as} said, ‘While reading

this couplet, I wished in my heart that it was I who had composed this couplet.' (*Sirate Tayyibah*, pp. 22-23)

Allāhumma ṣalli 'alā Muḥammad means, 'O God, magnify Mohammad in the present world by exalting his renown and manifesting his invitation [to El-Islām] and rendering permanent his law, and in the world to come by accepting his intercession for his people and multiplying his reward' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: *صلو*, Entry: *صَلَّى*).

Meaning of
Ṣalli and
Bārik

We pray that the Holy Prophet^{sas} be magnified in this world and the next. Magnification in this world is through the people of the world accepting the truth of his^{sas} prophethood. Magnification in the hereafter is by his^{sas} intercession being accepted by Allah Almighty.

Allāhumma bārik 'alā Muḥammadin wa 'alā āli Muḥammad means, 'Continue Thou, or perpetuate Thou, (O God,) to Mohammad and to the family of Mohammad the eminence and honour which Thou hast given them: ... or continue to bless or beatify' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: *برك*, Entry: *بَارَكَ*).

We pray that the blessings on the Holy Prophet^{sas} never decline, whether in this world or the next. We pray that they continue forever and that they always continue increasing.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh V^{aba} said,

In summary, in *Allāhumma ṣalli 'alā Muḥammad*, we pray for the prevalence of his^{sas} *Sharī'ah*, and that

it remain established forever, and that the *ummat* be favoured by his^{sas} intercession. In *Allāhumma bārik*, we pray that his^{sas} honour, greatness, splendour, and eminence be established forever. (Friday Sermon, Jan 16 2015)

The emphasis of our prayers in *Durūd* is for the success of the mission of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. The objective of *Durūd* is that our prayers be devoted to the purpose that the Holy Prophet^{sas} spent his^{sas} life in prayer for. In this day and age, when we observe how the mission and the honour of the Holy Prophet^{sas} are under attack from every direction, our hearts should be filled with pain that people are attacking the person who spent his life praying for their salvation; they are reviling the person who is more beloved to us than our own parents. Our *Durūd* should be filled with this restlessness, and this should be our driving force to bring the world to love the Holy Prophet^{sas}.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

I wish to ask a question of those people who have a pain in their hearts for Islam, those in whose hearts is its honour. Has any worse era passed in which such abusive language and insults were used against the Holy Prophet^{sas}, and such defamation was done against the Holy Quran? I am then filled with great sorrow and heartfelt anguish at the condition of

Muslims, and sometimes I become restless in this pain, that they do not even have the sense left to feel this disgrace. Did Allah Almighty accept that there be no honour for the Holy Prophet^{sas}? In response to this much abusive language, would He still not establish any heavenly movement by which the mouths of opponents be closed and the grandeur and purity of the Holy Prophet^{sas} be established? When Allah Almighty Himself, and His angels, send *Durūd* on the Holy Prophet^{sas}, then at the time of such defamiation, imagine how important the expression of that blessing is. Allah Almighty has manifested that blessing through this Movement. (*Malḥūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 5, pp. 13)

The *Durūd* of the Promised Messiah^{as} during dark nights created a clamour in the world which brought about a revival among Muslims. He was granted the greatest status among the followers of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. His example taught us that after the glorification of Allah, the best way of earning the pleasure of Allah Almighty is through *Durūd*.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

It was by means of *Durūd*, and because of observing it abundantly, that God granted me these statuses. (*Al-Hakam*, vol. 7, no. 8, pp. 7, 28 Feb 1903)

The Promised Messiah^{as} devoted his life to the mission of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. When we observe *Durūd*, it should be how the Promised Messiah^{as} taught us to observe *Durūd*. It should be out of our personal love for the Holy Prophet^{sas}, and to spread a love for him^{sas} throughout the world. We should pray that the Holy Prophet^{sas} be magnified in this world and the next, and that the blessings of Allah Almighty on him^{sas} continue to increase forever.

As (كَمَا)
You did
bless
Ibrāhīm^{as}
and his
people

For insight into the use of the word as/like [كَمَا], we can see how it has been used in another prayer we are familiar with. The Holy Quran teaches us to pray for our parents in the words,

My Lord, have mercy on them both as [كَمَا] they had mercy on me in my childhood by raising me. (17:25, translation from *Rūḥānī Khazāin*, vol. 23, pp. 210)

In this prayer, we do not pray that Allah Almighty limit His infinite mercy to only be equivalent to the mercy that a parent has on their child. But then the question arises, why do we make this comparison in the first place? Why do we pray that Allah Almighty have mercy on our parents as [كَمَا] they had mercy on us? The reason is so that we have a clear idea in our own mind of what the concept of mercy is. Before we pray for mercy, we have to know what mercy is. The best example of mercy in this world is the love parents show to

their children. This is why the attributes of Allah Almighty for mercy, *Rahmān* and *Rahīm*, come from the same root as the word for the womb of a mother [رَحْمٌ]. By reminding ourselves of the mercy our parents had on us in raising us, our heart is moved by how great that mercy is. As a result, we think of how much greater the mercy of Allah Almighty is.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

Allah created one hundred units of mercy on the Day He created the heavens and the earth. Each one of them can contain all that is between the heaven and the earth. Of them, he put one on earth, through which a mother has compassion for her children and animals and birds have compassion for one another. On the Day of Resurrection, Allah would make full use of mercy. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 50, Chapter 4)

If we hadn't been reminded of the mercy that parents have in their hearts for their children, we wouldn't have had a point of reference to visualize so clearly how much greater the mercy of Allah Almighty is. When we pray for our parents, all we need to say is 'My Lord, have mercy on them both.' With these words, the prayer is complete and we have asked for everything. The addition of 'as [كَمَا] they had mercy on me in my childhood by raising me' is for us; these words are there to help us in our prayer.

In *Durūd*, all we need to say is 'O Allah, bless Muhammad

and his people,' and we have asked for everything. When we say 'as You did bless Ibrāhīm and his people,' these words are to help us in our prayer. Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} is referred to by Allah Almighty as an excellent model [أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ], and the Holy Quran has honoured him and his people by mentioning them as examples of how the mercy of Allah Almighty has descended in the past. Through our daily recitation of the Holy Quran, these examples are always present in our minds. The mention of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} and his people in *Durūd* connects what we have gained from our daily recitation of the Holy Quran to what we pray for in *Durūd*.

We do not pray that Allah Almighty limit His mercy to only be equivalent to the mercy that He showed to Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm^{as} and his people. We are reminded of their blessings as a point of reference for how much greater the blessings of Allah Almighty will be on the Holy Prophet^{sas} and his^{sas} people. The Holy Prophet^{sas} is the greatest of all prophets, and Allah Almighty has addressed his^{sas} people with the words, 'You are the best people raised for the good of mankind' (3:111). The words 'Ibrāhīm^{as} and his people' are a point of reference for praying for far greater blessings on 'Muhammad^{sas} and his people'.

Relevance of attributes of Ḥamid and Majid As mentioned in commentary of 'and blessed is Your name' (وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ) under the chapter on *Thanā'*, one approach to prayer is to mention the attribute of Allah Almighty that is relevant to the acceptance of that prayer. At times,

the relevant attribute is mentioned at the beginning of the prayer. In other cases, the relevant attribute is mentioned at the end of the prayer. For example,

Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after
You have guided us; and bestow on us mercy from
Yourself; surely, You alone are the Bestower. (3:9)

My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the
Best of those who show mercy. (23:119)

In *Durūd*, the attributes mentioned at the end are each relevant to the prayers we offer. The attribute of *Hamīd* is connected with our prayer for Ḥaḍrat Muhammad^{sas}, and the attribute of *Majīd* is connected with our prayer for his^{sas} people.

The name Muhammad (مُحَمَّدٌ) and the attribute of 'the Praiseworthy' (حَمِيدٌ) are connected, and they come from the same root of *ḥamd* (حمد), which means 'praise'. The word Muhammad means 'A man praised much, or repeatedly, or time after time: ...endowed with many praiseworthy qualities.' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: حمد, Entry: مُحَمَّدٌ) The attribute of *Al-Ḥamīd* means 'He who is praised, or praiseworthy' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: حمد, Entry: حَمِيدٌ). It is Allah Almighty, as 'the Praiseworthy' (حَمِيدٌ), who endowed the Holy Prophet^{sas} with many praiseworthy qualities. In *Durūd*, when we pray that Allah Almighty magnify those praiseworthy qualities for

the world and exalt the renown and honour of the Holy Prophet^{sas}, we seek blessing through the attribute of ‘the Praiseworthy’ (حَمِيدٌ).

The ‘people of Muhammad^{sas}’ (آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ) and the attribute of ‘the Glorious’ (مَجِيدٌ) are connected. The meaning of the word *majd* (مَجْدٌ), when used about people, is, ‘glory, honour, dignity, or nobility, transmitted by one’s ancestors’, مَجْدٌ and كَرَمٌ are [transmitted] by one’s ancestors; but حَسَبٌ ...and كَرَمٌ may belong to a man without ancestors who possessed these qualities’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: مجد, Entry: مَجْدٌ). Our honour and nobility (مَجْدٌ) are transmitted to us by our spiritual father, the Holy Prophet^{sas}. The words *āli Muḥammad* indicate to this because our identity in this prayer is as the ‘people of Muhammad.’ We don’t have any identity separate from our being his^{sas} children. In *Durūd*, when we pray that Allah Almighty exalt the renown and honour of the people of Muhammad, we are only speaking of that honour that was transmitted to us by our spiritual father. Any other honour we have that is separate from him^{sas} is not lasting and is not worth being exalted. The words ‘people of Muhammad’ (آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ) remind us that our honour is *majd* (مَجْدٌ): it is transmitted to us by our spiritual father^{sas}. Mention of the attribute of ‘the Glorious’ (مَجِيدٌ) reminds us that it is Allah Almighty who is the true source of all honour and dignity. The attribute of *Al-Majīd* means, ‘The Glorious, or Great, or Great in dignity, who gives liberally, or bountifully: or the Bountiful and beneficent’ (*Lane’s Lexicon*, Root: مجد, Entry: مَجِيدٌ). As

'the Glorious' (مَجِيدٌ), Allah Almighty has given us the honour and nobility (مَجْدٌ) that comes with being the spiritual children of the Holy Prophet^{sas}. In *Durūd*, when we pray that Allah Almighty exalt the renown and honour of the 'people of Muhammad' (آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ), we seek the exaltation of only that honour (مَجْدٌ) which was transmitted to us by Ḥaḍrat Muhammad^{sas}. When we pray for the exaltation of that honour (مَجْدٌ), we seek blessings through the attribute of 'the Glorious' (مَجِيدٌ).

(After Durūd, we can observe any of several different prayers that the Holy Prophet^{sas} is narrated to have observed at the end of Ṣalāt, including 2:202 and 14:41-42 of the Holy Quran.)



رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً

Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as
good in the world to come

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Such people, who solely rely on and trust their own sources of earning a livelihood, what need do they

have to pray and seek help from God Almighty? One only is in need of prayer when all other means are not available except His alone; only such a person supplicates from his heart. Thus, the prayer: “Our Lord, grant us good in this world” is only recited by those who consider God as their True Lord, and they have firm belief that all other false gods are completely worthless before Him. (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau’ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 371, 2:202)

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

one must turn the world and all that belongs to it into a means of serving the Faith. No one must think that the aforementioned implies that an individual should have no relation whatsoever with worldly affairs. This is not what I mean, nor does Allah Almighty forbid a man to engage in worldly matters. In fact, what Islam does forbid, is asceticism. This is the way of cowards. The more diverse a believer’s worldly associations, the more they advance in higher ranks, because their prime objective is religion, and the world along with its wealth and honour serves the Faith.

Hence, the fundamental point is that the world must not be one’s ultimate objective. As a matter of fact, in pursuing worldly affairs, the primary purpose must be religion, and the world ought to be pursued

in a manner that serves the Faith. For example, when a person travels from one place to another, they will take a mount and pack their provisions. They do this because their actual purpose is to reach their final destination, not because they seek the mount itself or the provisions for the journey. In the same manner, one ought to strive in the world, but only so that this may serve the Faith.

Allah the Exalted has taught us the following prayer:

“Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.”

In this prayer, the world has been given precedence, but what ‘world’ exactly? It is the good of this world (*hasanatud-dunya*) which becomes a means by which to reap good in the hereafter. The fact that we have been taught this prayer clearly demonstrates that in attaining the world, a believer ought to have in view the good of the hereafter. The words *hasanatud-dunya* as mentioned here encompass all the best means by which a Muslim believer ought to pursue the world. Pursue the world in every such way that leads to benefit and goodness, not in a manner that causes pain to another human being, nor in a manner that is disgraceful or ignoble amongst the people. Engaging in the world in such a manner would

definitely enable one to reap the good of the hereafter (*hasanatul-akhirah*). (*Tafsīr Ḥaḍrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 369, 2:202, *Malfūzāt* (English), vol. 2, pp. 264-265)



وَقِنَّا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

and protect us from the torment of the Fire

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The hellfire does not only refer to the fire that will burn on the Day of Judgment. Rather, one who lives a long life is able to witness that there are thousands of fires in this world. Those who have experienced this will know that there are all kinds of different fires that exist in this world. Various forms of calamities, fear, sorrow, poverty, illnesses, failures, fear of humiliation and deprivation, numerous kinds of grief and sorrows, afflictions relating to one's wife, children, etc. and ties turning sour with near relatives all constitute as fire. Therefore, a believer prays to be saved from every kind of fire. If one has attached himself to

God Almighty, they should pray to be saved from all kinds of calamities which can cause one to experience difficulty and hardship in their life and are in a likeness to fire. (*Tafsīr Ḥadrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 2, pp. 371-372, 2:202)



رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ

My Lord, make me observe Prayer

The words *وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ* and *مُقِيمِ الصَّلَاةِ* mean setting our Salat upright after it has fallen.

Explaining this meaning, the Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Allah the Exalted states: *وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ* (*al-Baqarah*, 2:4). Meaning, he sets upright the Prayer. Here, 'to set upright' has been stated. This also alludes to the forced effort that is specific to a righteous person. When such a person begins the Prayer, he must ward off countless evil whisperings, due to which his Prayer falls repeatedly as it were, and he must hold it up. When he says *Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest] to begin the Prayer, a swarm of evil

temptations rush to dissipate his heart's concentration. These thoughts lead a person to a far off place, causing him distress, but he goes on fighting to the death in order to acquire this concentration and contentment in Prayer. With great anguish, such a person forever remains concerned about keeping erect his falling Prayer. (*Malfūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 28)

There are some who in the Prayer desire to rid themselves of evil distractions immediately, although *يَقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ* [He establishes the Prayer], indicates something quite the opposite. (*Malfūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 29)

When we say *رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ* [My Lord, make me observe Prayer], we reflect on how fallen our *Ṣalāt* is, and we beg Allah Almighty to set it upright. Praying that Allah Almighty improve our *Ṣalāt* right at the end of our *Ṣalāt* carries a special meaning. If our *Ṣalāt* went by in distraction, then we sometimes wait until after *Ṣalāt* is finished to think about how poorly it went. When we do that, those negative feelings of regret are not channelled into a positive effort, and we are left with an overall bad experience of *Ṣalāt*. Instead, we should do an analysis of the *Ṣalāt* we just observed when we say these words. If it went poorly, then now is the time to allow ourselves to feel regret over the opportunity we lost.

We should embrace that feeling of regret and channel it into prayers that Allah Almighty set our prayer upright.

The Promised Messiah^{as} taught that we should pray,

O Allah the Exalted, the Omnipotent, the Possessor of Majesty, I am a sinner, and the poison of sin has affected my veins to such an extent that I am devoid of emotion and attention in prayer. Forgive me my sins with Your blessing and grace, and forgive me my lapses, and soften my heart, and place Your greatness, Your fear, and Your love in my heart, so that my hard-heartedness may be dispelled, and I am granted attention in my prayer.

The Promised Messiah^{as} continued,

However, he should be mindful of his death. He should consider the remaining days of his life to be few and see his death as near. This is the way of attaining attention in prayer. (*Fatāwā Ḥadhrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, pp. 37, published in 1935)

If we make the prayer of *رَبِّ أَجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ* [My Lord, make me observe Prayer] an opportunity for sincere repentance, then our fallen *Ṣalāt* can become a blessing in disguise. However fallen the standard of our *Ṣalāt* was, the greater the helplessness with which we beg Allah Almighty to set our

prayer upright. If we take time to pause at these words, it is possible to make up for everything we lost right at the very end of *Şalāt*.

Conversely, if our *Şalāt* went well by the grace of Allah, then this is a prayer that is said with pleasure, not with regret. We pray that Allah Almighty make this standard of *Şalāt* into our constant reality and that we improve our *Şalāt* even more. We beg Allah Almighty never to let us lose this standard and fall back into distraction.

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said about this prayer,

As long as one is alive, he should continue with this prayer. Despite being established on worship, trials come upon worshippers and situations arise where they stumble. Some such worshippers have been mentioned in *Abadith* who worshipped their whole lives, but at some point, for some reason, they stumbled and fell far away from God. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 10, pp. 367, 26 Apr 1991)

Whether our *Şalāt* went poorly or well, these words are an opportunity to analyze the *Şalāt* we just observed before we end.



وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي

and my children too

As parents, we are spiritually raising our children; this is what makes us unique as believers.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

The philosopher Plato has written that it is the father who brings the soul from the heavens to the earth, but it is the teacher who takes it from the earth and again makes it reach the heavens. A father's relationship is only with the mortal body. But a spiritual guide, especially that spiritual guide appointed by God to give guidance, his relationship is with the soul that does not die. So when he fosters that soul and is the means of its spiritual birth, then if he is not called a father, what will he be called? (*Malfūzāt* (10 volume edition), vol. 2, pp. 364)

Anybody can be a biological parent, but not everyone is a spiritual parent for their children. When we observe this prayer of, "make me observe Prayer and my children too", we strive to foster their spirituality.

Ultimately, we have no power to make our children truly established on *Ṣalāt*. We can make our children regular in

the outward observance of *Ṣalāt*, but the journey is their own after that. We can bring them to the prayer mat, but once they are there, they alone have to find their Creator. They will only find value in *Ṣalāt* if they choose to reach out to Allah Almighty with all their heart and Allah Almighty reaches them, “Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes.” (6:104). Their hearts will only be attached to *Ṣalāt* if they experience, at least once, the pleasure of communion with their Creator.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

All I wish to say is that one ought to fervently and passionately pray to God Almighty that, just as He has granted us diverse forms of pleasure in fruits and other things, may He enable us to experience, even once, the sweet taste of Prayer and worship. One never forgets the taste of a thing. (*Malfūzāt* (English), vol. 1, pp. 159-160)

When we say, ‘and my children too,’ we have to know that we are helpless in giving them a taste of the pleasure of Salat. All we can do is beg Allah Almighty to extend to them the same and greater blessings that he has allowed us to experience.

The words ‘and my children too’ are an extension of the prayer, ‘make me observe Prayer,’ they continue the same sentiment. If our words, ‘make me observe Prayer,’ were filled with pleasure over how blessed our *Ṣalāt* was, then with that

same feeling, we beg Allah Almighty to give our children the experience of that bliss as well.

If our words, 'make me observe Prayer,' were filled with regret over how poorly our *Ṣalāt* went, that same pain is the fire behind the words, 'and my children too.' When we think of how great our own struggle is against our lower self and how many obstacles satan places on this path, then our parental instinct is to want to carry our children in our arms along this path and protect them from every trial, but we cannot. Only Allah Almighty can take them into His arms, and with the words "and my children too," we beg Allah Almighty to take them into His arms.

This prayer extends to our wife as well, because the word ذُرِّيَّةٌ can signify 'Women; [because they are the sources of offspring;]' (*Lane's Lexicon*, Root: ذرأ, Entry: ذُرِّيَّةٌ)

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

Allah Almighty has taught the prayer, أَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي
 "Make my wife and children righteous." Along with making a pure change in ourselves and praying, we should continuously pray for our children and wife as well. (*Tafsīr Ḥadrat Masīh Mau'ūd*, vol. 7, pp. 215, 46:16)



رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ

Our Lord! Do accept my prayer

(The meaning of the expression رَبَّنَا (Our Lord), when followed by وَ (and), has been covered under the chapter on رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ (Our Lord! and Yours is the Praise). Please refer to that chapter for commentary on these words.)

The word تَقَبَّلْ (accept) carries an expression of humility. With this word, we acknowledge that our prayers and sacrifices are not worthy of being accepted in and of themselves. Rather, if they are accepted, it is by the grace of Allah Almighty.

Ḥaḍrat Muṣleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

Taqabbal is from the verbal form of *Tafā'al*, and *Tafā'al* carries the meaning of forced effort. Thus, they say, (تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا) 'Do have mercy on us Yourself by accepting this sacrifice.' (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 180)

We sometimes comfort ourselves with the assumption that our prayers are accomplishing something in and of themselves. We imagine that each time we say, 'my Lord forgive me,' a few of our sins are forgiven. We imagine that the more prayers we offer for forgiveness, the more of our sins are forgiven, as if prayer is a system of action and reaction.

This assumption is false because prayers don't do anything in and of themselves; they are nothing more than a plea. Allah Almighty accepts or rejects as He wills. This assumption stifles our relationship with the living God because such prayer ceases to be an interaction; such prayer is nothing more than inputting formulas into a machine. To attribute automatic reaction to our prayers assumes that they are an independent means to an end, not the desperate plea that they are. We have to let go of the misconception that our prayers will save us; we have to give up on everything except the grace of Allah. When we stop thinking we are in control and submit to Allah Almighty, then we will be able to observe prayer with true desperation.

When we pray, *وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءَ* (Do accept my prayer), we acknowledge that our prayer is worthless in and of itself; it only has worth if it is accepted by Allah Almighty. At the end of *Ṣalāt*, we reflect on the effort that we made in offering *Ṣalāt*, and then we pray that Allah Almighty give it worth by blessing it with His acceptance.

Also, our *Ṣalāt* is not a favour that we do to Allah Almighty; it is Allah Almighty who has favoured us by teaching us *Ṣalāt*. 'They think they have done you a favour by their embracing Islam. Say, "Deem not your embracing Islam a favour unto me. On the contrary, Allah has bestowed a favour upon you in that He has guided you to the true Faith, if you are truthful.'" (49:18). When we observe *Ṣalāt*, we do not offer Allah Almighty a favour; we offer Him a gift.

The difference between a favour and a gift is that in a favour, the receiver is humbled. But in a gift, the giver is humbled. For example, when someone does us a favour, he can remind us of that favour to hurt our feelings if he later gets angry at us. When we accept a favour from someone, we make ourselves vulnerable by accepting it. However, in a gift, it is the opposite. It is the giver who is humbled. The giver of a gift is vulnerable because he offers a token of those feelings that he ordinarily does not reveal. The value of his gift is only in how effectively it conveys the love behind it. When we give a gift to someone, we offer a token of our love in the hope that it will not be rejected. A person who does not reject our gift does us a favour. Our happiness is in the happiness with which they accept it, and our sadness is in the thought that they may reject it. When we offer our prayers and our sacrifices to Allah Almighty as a gift, we don't do so with a sense of confidence in how great our gift is; anyone who offers a gift with such sentiments does not understand the etiquettes of expressing love. Rather, we do so with a sense of humility and vulnerability. If it is accepted, we are filled with happiness and a sense of gratitude because we are the one who has been favoured with acceptance.

The words *وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءَ* (Do accept my prayer) carry an expression of humility wherein we acknowledge that our *Ṣalāt* and our submission is not any favour that we do to Allah. Rather, it is nothing more than a token of our love

that we humbly offer to Him in the hope that it is worthy of being accepted.



رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīh IV^{ra} said,

Here, a balance has been created. Where we prayed for our children, we have been reminded to pray for our parents as well. In وَلِوَالِدَيَّ (and my parents), we don't pray for the establishment of *Ṣalāt* because in many cases they have passed away. This is why we won't find prayers for the establishment of their *Ṣalāt*, but we will find prayers for their forgiveness. (*Khuṭbāt-e-Ṭāhir*, vol. 10, pp. 369, 26 Apr 1991)

In both the previous and in this prayer, we first pray for ourselves, then we extend to others the prayers we offer for ourselves. The words “and my parents and the believers” are an

extension of the prayer, “forgive me,” they continue the same sentiment.

The Holy Quran has described it as a sign of maturity that we broaden our prayers and remember the generation ahead of us and behind us.

“And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain, and the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months, till, when he attains his full maturity and reaches the age of forty years, he says, ‘My Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and I may do such good works as may please You. And establish righteousness among my progeny for me. I do turn to You; and, truly, I am of those who submit to You.’” (46:16)



يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

on the day when the reckoning will take place

Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'ishah narrated that the Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

“None will be called to account on the Day of Resurrection, but will be ruined.” I said “O Allah’s Messenger^{sas}! Hasn’t Allah said: ‘Then as for him who will be given his record in his right hand, he surely will receive an easy reckoning?’ (84:8-9) Allah’s Messenger^{sas} said, “That (verse) means only the presentation of the accounts, but anybody whose account is questioned on the Day of Resurrection will surely be punished.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Book 81, Chapter 49)

Allah Almighty has repeatedly said in the Holy Quran that the believers will be given without reckoning (بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ).

Explaining the verse, ‘Allah bestows His gifts on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning,’ Ḥaḍrat Muṣṭaḥ Mau’ūd^{ra} said,

The disbelievers have been told, ‘Whatever you have been given, you will be questioned as to how you spent it. However, the believers will be given in a way that they will not be asked for any reckoning. Thus, whatever you have been given is the way employees are given, and by misappropriating it, you become the object of punishment. However, whatever the believers will be given will be as a gift is given, and it will be completely at their disposal.’ In reality, there are two

types of treatment, one is as friends and the other is as employees. In friendship, the feeling of being an outsider no longer remains, so Allah Almighty says, “We will give to the believers without reckoning and we will treat them the way a friend treats a friend.” (*Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*, vol. 2, pp. 461, 2:213)

If we offer our prayers and sacrifices to Allah Almighty as a transaction rather than a gift, we think like an employee and feel entitled to a reward for everything we give. We keep an account of everything we give, and on the day of reckoning, we can expect to be treated as an employee and required to account for everything we were given. However, if we offer our prayers and sacrifices to Allah Almighty as a gift, we become like a friend and we give without reckoning (بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ). We can then hope that no accounting will be taken from us on the day of reckoning.

When parents give to their children and children give to their parents, they give as a natural expression of love. They would consider it an insult to keep account of what they give because accounting has no place in pure expressions of love. When parents or children start keeping account of everything they give, it is a sign of some dysfunction in the relationship. The only way we can pass “on the day when the reckoning will take place” is if we pass “without reckoning.” Salvation can only happen through love. This is what we seek when we offer this prayer at the end of *Ṣalāt*, we beg to

be brought under the category of love. If we wish to receive from Allah Almighty without reckoning (بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ) in the hereafter, we have to learn to give with love and without reckoning in this world.



السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah

‘Peace be on you’ is a prayer that we commonly observe. However, when it is said here, it takes on a special symbolism because of its placement at the end of *Ṣalāt*.

The Promised Messiah^{as} said,

For connection with Allah Almighty, it is necessary that there be an immersion. I repeatedly tell my Jamā‘at to be established on this. People must cut themselves off from the world, and their hearts must turn cold to its love. An innate passion for Allah Almighty and an immersion must be born in their nature. Until this happens, they cannot achieve firmness. Some mystics have written that when the Companions^{ra} would observe *Ṣalāt*, they would be

so immersed that when they finished, they could not recognize one another. When one comes from some other place, the *Sharī'ah* has commanded that he say *Assalāmu 'alaikum*. This is the reality behind saying *Assalāmu 'alaikum* when we finish *Ṣalāt*. When a person starts prayer and says *Allāhu Akbar*, it is as if he has left this world and has entered a new world. He has reached a stage of immersion. When he returns from it, then he meets the world with *Assalāmu 'alaikum wa raḥmatullāh*. (*Malfūzāt* (10 vol edition), vol. 7, pp. 42-43)

At the beginning of prayer, we raised our hands to symbolize that we were leaving the world behind. Our greetings of *Salām* on returning to the world at the end of prayer are true if we had really left at the beginning. To understand the spiritual exercise of leaving this world, we can use the seclusion that is observed at the end of Ramadan as an example. In the same way that we leave our family and possessions behind and go into seclusion for ten days in Ramadan, we also leave the world behind each time we raise our hands and begin *Ṣalāt*.

Ibn Qayyim^{ra} explained that one purpose of *i'tikāf* [seclusion] is to prepare ourselves for the loneliness of the grave; it is to make our hearts find peace in Allah Almighty rather than in people. (*Provisions for the Hereafter*, Mukhtasar Zad al-Ma'ad, pp. 125) The solitude of the grave is not literal; it

is a metaphor for leaving the world and being alone with Allah Almighty. When we enter our tent of seclusion in the *Masjid*, it is empty and there is nothing we can distract ourselves with. Our only preoccupation is the worship of Allah Almighty. There is no friend whose company can comfort us and no activity that can entertain us. When we observe *i'tikāf* [seclusion], we imagine the loneliness of our tent to be like the loneliness of our grave. If we find that seclusion to be hopelessly boring and miserable, it is because all of our comfort and peace is in the distractions of the world. When we left the world behind, we left our peace behind. We can then imagine how we will feel when we leave the world behind forever and enter the solitude of the grave.

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said,

So increase in remembrance of death, the severer of pleasures. For indeed no day comes upon the grave except that it speaks, saying: "I am the house of the estranged, I am the house of solitude" (*Tirmidhī*, Book 37).

To achieve immersion in *Ṣalāt*, we should imagine that the rectangle of our prayer mat is the rectangle of our grave. Once we have entered it, everything outside ceases to exist. If the solitude of our *Ṣalāt* is miserable, the solitude of *i'tikāf* [seclusion] will also be miserable, and the solitude of the grave will be even more miserable. During *Ṣalāt*, we should

search for Allah Almighty with a sense of urgency, knowing that if we fail to find Him in this grave, we will be lost in that grave.

The mystics have often said, ‘die before you die’ (موتوا قبل أن تموتوا). We all eventually enter the solitude of the grave where we will have left everyone in the world behind forever. If we never experienced communion with Allah Almighty, then our grave will be filled with unbearable loneliness, and the punishment of hell begins there. Our time in our grave will be miserable, similar to how our time on our prayer mat in this life was miserable. The misery we experience in *Ṣalāt* is a taste of the misery that likely awaits us in the punishments of the hereafter. One of the purposes of *Ṣalāt* is to prepare us for that solitude of the grave. When we raise our hands and begin our prayer, we should imagine that moment of death and we should leave this world. Everything outside the rectangle of our prayer mat should be left behind, and now there is only Allah. If we can die before we die, we can achieve immersion in *Ṣalāt*. When we find our Allah in the solitude of our prayer mat, we can look forward to communion with our Allah in the solitude of the grave. The pleasure we experience in communion with Allah Almighty in *Ṣalāt* will be a taste of the pleasure that likely awaits us in the rewards of the hereafter. At the end of *Ṣalāt*, when we say ‘peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah’ (الْسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ), we should ask ourselves if we are now coming back to a world that we had left, or if we were here the whole time.

Ḥaḍrat Muşleḥ Mau'ūd^{ra} said,

When a Muslim says “*Assalāmu ‘Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh*” at the conclusion of his Prayer, he is stating that he had gone to express his obedience and servitude to God and has now returned. He is saying that he is bringing the message of peace and blessings for his fellow Muslims. Since he was always physically present at that place, the only meaning can be that his spirit was prostrating in the presence of God—he was so busy in worship that he was cut off and absent from the world. Saying “*Assalāmu ‘Alaikum...*” at the conclusion of Prayer indicates that it is essential for a Muslim to be alert in safeguarding his Prayer, because he is, at that time, present in the court of God Almighty, Who says about Muslims that: “...and they keep a watch over their Prayer.” (6:93) Satan wants to disrupt their Prayers but vigilant Muslims safeguard their Prayers from his attacks.

Everybody should, therefore, guard his Prayers. When you offer Prayer, keep in mind that you have entered in the presence of God. When you return you should give glad tidings to those to the right and those to the left that you have brought peace and blessings for them. But if someone has never gone to God’s presence, and has always remained engrossed in his own thoughts, he will be telling a big lie when

he says “*Assalāmu ‘Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh.*” He is trying to tell people that he is returning from God, whereas he never went there.

Make every effort to safeguard your Prayers. Put up a strong resistance to Satan for he is trying to keep you away from God. Remember that even if your entire Prayer is spent in a constant struggle and you do not yield to Satan, Allah will consider you present in His audience. But if you yield, He will let you go. Continue your struggle; you will succeed in the end. (*Remembrance of Allah*, pp. 53)

GLOSSARY

Ahmadi—A Muslim who believes in Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} as that Promised Messiah and Mahdi who was prophesied by the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.

‘Azīm—Great, big, or large, esteemed great by others.

‘Azmat—Greatness

Dhikr—Dhikr is an Arabic word meaning remembrance. *Dhikr-i-Ilāhī* means the remembrance of Allah.

Durūd—Invocation of blessings upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.

Ghafūr—Forgiving. An attribute of God referring to God’s covering and forgiving of His servants.

Hadith - A saying of the Holy

Prophet Muhammad^{sas}. The plural is *āḥādīth*.

Ḥaḍrat - A term of respect used to show honour and reverence for a person of established righteousness and piety. The literal meaning is: His/Her Holiness, Worship, Eminence, etc. It is also used for God in the superlative sense.

Hamīd—Praised, praiseworthy.

I’tikāf—to isolate oneself or remain attached to something. In Islamic terminology, *I’tikāf* primarily means to seclude oneself in the mosque in the last ten days of Ramadhan and is devoted to silent meditation, recitation of the Holy Quran and study of religious books, prayers and supplication.

Iḥsān—a favour, but in the context of worship, the Holy

Prophet^{sas} has expounded that *ihсан* means to worship God as though one can see Him, and if this is not possible, then at least to stand before Him in worship knowing that He can see you.

Jalsah—A sitting, a gathering.

Jamā'at—Community. Although the word *Jamā'at* may refer to any community, in this book *Jamā'at* generally refers to the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim *Jamā'at*.

Jilsah—The Sitting position which occurs in between two prostrations during Prayer.

Kabīr—Great in body, or in age, or in knowledge, or in rank or dignity.

Kalimah—The declaration of the Islamic faith: *Lā ilāha illallah Muḥammadur-Rasūlullah*, 'There is no one worthy of worship except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.'

Khalīfatul Masīh—Caliph is derived from the Arabic word *khalīfah*, which herein means 'successor'. *Khulafā'* is the plural of *Khalīfah*. In many divine revelations someone commissioned by God Almighty is

referred to as His *Khalīfah*. In Islamic terminology, the title 'Khalīfa-e-Rāshid' [righteous *Khalīfah*] is applied to each of the first four *Khulafā'* who continued the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}. Ahmadi Muslims refer to each successor of the Promised *Mesīah*^{as} as *Khalīfatul Masīh*.

Khilāfat—The institution of successorship in Islam.

Lailatul Qadr—Literally, 'Night of Destiny'. Generally understood to mean a blessed night during the last ten days of the Islamic month of Ramadan. It also denotes another time period, when the spread of darkness demands that a light should descend from heaven. Then God Almighty sends down to earth His angels of light and *Rūhul-Qudus* [the Holy Spirit] in a manner that befits the dignity of angels.

Masjid—A mosque, A place where Muslims assemble to perform congregational prayers.

Nafs—A term in Arabic that literally means 'self'.

Nawāfil—Optional or

- supererogatory as applied to types or categories of Prayer.
- Niyyah**—The formal intention which one makes in one's mind before starting a Prayer.
- Qa'dah**—Sitting position adopted towards the end of the second Rak'at in Prayer.
- Qaumah**—The posture of standing after *Rukū'*.
- Qiyām**—The standing position in Prayer.
- Rabb**—Lord, Master, Creator; One who sustains and develops; One who brings to perfection by degrees.
- Rahīm**—Merciful. An attribute of God as mentioned in *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* and throughout the Holy Quran. The verbal noun of this attribute is *Raḥīmiyyat*.
- Raḥmān**—Gracious. An attribute of God as mentioned in *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* and throughout the Holy Quran. The verbal noun of this attribute is *Raḥmāniyyat*.
- Rak'at**—a single unit in the formal Islamic Prayer, consisting of the standing and bowing positions, as well as two prostrations. Pl. *Raka'āt*.
- Rukū'**—The bowing down position in Prayer.
- Sadaqah**—Alms given to the poor for the sake of God.
- Sādiq**—Truthful
- Saghīr**—Small in body, or in age, or in rank or dignity.
- Sajdah**—The posture of prostration in Prayer.
- Ṣalāt/Salāh**—Prayer. A blessing or an invocation of God's blessing upon anyone. Prayer in the prescribed form; also known as the second pillar of Islam.
- Shahādah**—The testimony of the Islamic faith: *Ash-hadu al-Lā ilāha illāllah wa ash-ḥadu anna Muḥammadan 'Abduhu wa Rasūlullah*, 'I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah; and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah.'
- Sharī'ah**—Religious law of Islam. The term is also used in the general sense of any revealed law.

- Sūrah**—A chapter of the Holy Quran.
- Takbīr-i-Tahrīmah** - The Arabic expression *Allāhu Akbar* (God is the Greatest), proclaimed loudly by the Imam while he raises his two hands to his earlobes at the very beginning of a congregational Prayer service.
- Tasbīh**—Glorification of Allah by reciting *SubhānAllah* (Holy is Allah), or other phrases.
- Tashahhud**—A set prayer recited silently at the beginning of the *Qa'dah*, or second Sitting position, in Prayer.
- Tasmī'**—The statement of “Allah hears him who praises Him” when rising from *Rukū'*.
- Tauhīd**—The Oneness of God—the fundamental Islamic belief that there is none worthy of worship except Allah.
- Tawakkul**—Relying upon and trusting in God alone to the entire exclusion of worldly means.
- Thanā'**—The glorification and praise of God Almighty that is recited the beginning of formal Prayer.
- Ummat**—*Ummat-e-Muhammadiyah* The community or followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.
- Wahī**—Divine revelation from God, used interchangeably with *ilhām* in Islamic terminology.