

WORSHIP IN ISLAM (PART 2 OF 3): THE OUTER FORMS OF WORSHIP

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Description: The other form of worship in Islam and its completion of the inner, and the purpose and benefit of worship.

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The Outer Forms of Worship

Throughout history, certain religions, due to their tampering, have placed more emphasis on the inner format of worship, wholly or partially dismissing the importance of the outer, while others have placed more emphasis on apparent and visible acts of rituals, diminishing the value of belief. As mentioned earlier, in Islam, there is no absolute separation between the inner and outer - the inner state produces and ought to produce outer manifestations, and outer conditions and actions have inner consequences. There is certainly a correspondence between the inner and outer state, and each tends to modify the other. All inner intentions lead to equivalent postures and actions. One can often judge a person's inner state by his outer. A person in despair or fear, for instance, has a certain posture and expression on his face. Conversely, if certain activities or postures are adopted then the equivalent inner state will result.

Visible acts of worship offered to God are fruits of the Muslim's belief. For this reason, not only does Islam demand that a person believe in the ultimate truths laid out in its doctrine, but it also demands that belief in God produce visible action. It is not enough for one to maintain certain beliefs for salvation, but rather deeds are essential in order for one to be successful in this life and the next.

God has commanded that Muslims fulfill certain commandments throughout the course of their lives, exemplified in the five pillars of Islam. These have been prescribed daily, such as the prayer, and annually, such as the compulsory charity and the fast of Ramadan, or as little as once in a person's life, such as the Hajj. There are many other acts of worship prescribed in Islam other than the five pillars, some of which are obligatory and others of which are voluntary, their performance left to a Muslim's discretion.

Though there is a ritual connected with these acts of worship, they should not be mistaken for ritualism or regimentation. Acts of worship must be done with full awareness of what one is doing and awareness of the presence of God. Actions

performed mechanically or as habits produce only automatons and do not facilitate spiritual growth.

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East or the West, but righteous is he who believes in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets, and gives his beloved money to his relatives and the orphans and the needy and for the ransoming of captives and who observes prayer and pays the poor-due; and those who fulfill their promises when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and affliction and the steadfast in time of war; it is those who have proved truthful and it is those who are the God-fearing." (Quran 2:177)

The Purpose and Benefit of Worship

God is not in need of our worship. Worship has been legislated in Islam and all other previous religions for the benefit of humanity, both in the individual and societal sense. Worship is essential for the maintenance of spirituality in the life of Muslims and its growth. Formal worship trains the individual to love his Creator and to develop constant awareness of God. God says:

"O people! Worship your Lord Who has created you and those before you in order that you may be of the God-conscious." (Quran 2:21)

God also said to Moses:

"...And establish the prayer in order to remember Me." (Quran 20:14)

Acts of worship serve as a means through which one remembers God and maintains a relationship with Him. Muslims perform prayer a minimum of five times daily in order to maintain this relationship. When one supplicates, implores, praises God, recites verses from His revelation, which has been called "the Reminder"[\[1\]](#), along with other forms of worship throughout the day, they will gain the sense that the Power and Knowledge of God is present with them at all times, leading them to this sense of God-consciousness.

Worship also creates a strong sense within a Muslim to remove the evil within himself and in the community and environment and to establish the word of God throughout the world. God says:

"...Indeed the prayer prevents one from committing licentious and evil deeds..." (Quran 29:45)

Again, when a person spends his day performing specific acts of worship, they are constantly reminded of the purpose of life and their final end, and this in turn helps them to accord their lives to the Will of God, doing what He is pleased with and avoiding what He dislikes.

One can clearly see the impact worship has on a collective level. Society is merely a conglomeration of individuals, and when individuals are spiritually and morally upright, the society itself will also be upright. Ideally, the society will be one which feels that God is ever-watching over them; one to which beneficent acts of kindness will be an inseparable adjective, and sin and vice will be confined and limited.

Although it may seem to some that worship and obedience to God is similar to imprisonment and slavery, the worship of God and servitude to Him actually liberates humans from all types of subjugation. A person break frees from the chains of society, peers, and family, and liberates him to please His One True Lord. This is true freedom that brings about security and contentment. Servitude to God is the ultimate source of freedom.

Footnotes:

[1]

This may be found in many verses, such as 15:9, 36:11, and others.

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