

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As I said last week the daily prayers are of utmost importance to us if we care to make them not as a formality but with full sincerity with a view to fulfilling the purpose of our existence. Most people pray as a formality without making ablution properly and they pray with laziness without showing the necessary zeal and without taking the necessary time to be completely focused on Allah. We need to take the necessary care to develop our relationship with Allah and the place and time to develop this relationship is when we are praying especially on our own. The prayer in congregation is, of course most important because it shows that we are a community devoted to Allah and several times every day we need to take a break from worldly activities and spend some time to remember Allah. In this materialistic world where we are living many do not care to pray as the Holy Prophet (saw) or Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has taught us.

Our model to follow is, of course, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). When we read how he prayed especially the nawafil prayers we can only marvel at his capacity, at his devotion and why he did what he was doing. For example in a hadith we read that Hudhaifah said: "I prayed with the Messenger of Allah one night. He started reciting Sural Al Baqarah and he recited one hundred verses, then did not bow, rather he continued. I thought: 'He will complete it in two Rak'ahs, but he continued.' I thought: 'He will complete it and then bow,' but he continued, until he recited Surat *An-Nisa'*, then *Al Imran*". Then he bowed for almost as long as he had stood, saying while bowing: '*Subhana Rabbi Al Azim, Subhana Rabbi Al Azim, Subhana Rabbi Al Azim* (Glory be to my Lord Almighty, Glory be to my Lord Almighty, Glory be to my Lord Almighty).' Then he raised his head and said: '*Sami' Allaho liman hamidah* (Allah hears the one who praises Him). Then he prostrated and made his prostration lengthy, saying: "*Subhana Rabbi al-A'la, Subhana Rabbi al-A'la, Subhana Rabbi al-A'laa* (Glory be to my Lord Most High, Glory be to my Lord Most High, Glory be to my Lord Most High). And he did not come to any verse that spoke of fear or of glorifying Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, but he said something appropriate." (Nisai Nbr 1134)

Such a prayer we hear only in the Books of Hadith. Neither can we ourselves offer such prayers nor do we hear about others who are offering such prayers. There might be some people who pray like this but I am unaware of them. Anyhow we can just imagine the degree of faith and certainty and conviction of anyone who can pray like that. For him the recitation of the Holy Quran was of utmost importance and we can also see here that he

recited Al Nisa, which is the fourth chapter and then came back to Al Imran. The Ulemas takes this hadith as a proof to say that there is no need for order in recitation. By the way this hadith is also recorded in Muslim and it is authentic.

Now if we cannot raise our standard to that of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw), the least we can do is that we read some verses of the Holy Quran and we keep repeating '*Subhana Rabbi Al Azim*' in our Ruku and "*Subhana Rabbi Al Alaa*" more than the three times that we are used to while we reflect upon what we are saying. By repeating these words whilst having an idea of their meaning slowly we are filled with the Grandeur of Allah and we recognize our own nothingness in front of Him and our saying "*Iyyaka na'arbodo and iyyaka nasta'een*", that is, "Thee Alone do we worship and from Thee alone do we seek help" becomes even more relevant. In another hadith we learn that the Holy prophet (saw) said "The closest that a person can be to his Lord, the Mighty and Sublime, is when he is prostrating, so increase in supplication then". So we should spend more time in our prostration (Sijda) making supplications to Allah. Here is the time to tell Him of our needs, of our problems and beseech His Help for solutions. In another hadith a companion, Rabi'ah bin Ka'b AlAslami said: "I used to bring to the Messenger of Allah water for *Wuzu* ' and serve him. He said: 'Ask of me.' I said: 'I want to be with you in Paradise.' He said: 'Is there anything else?' I said: 'That is all.' He said: 'Help me to fulfil your wish by prostrating a great deal. '". On the one hand we see the Holy Prophet's solicitude for his companion because he used to serve him and on the other we also understand that it is not enough just to ask someone to pray for oneself. Personal effort for the achievement of the objective being prayed for should be present as well.

Making supplications to Allah is quite an important task for all of us. We all have needs. We all have problems that we wished were solved. Some amongst us are ill and some others have other needs. Allah has told us in the Holy Quran that we should address our needs to Him. He is the Best of Providers and He comes to the rescue of the person who needs His Help. Verses of the Holy Quran that come to mind are "*Oud'ouni astajib lakoum*" meaning "Call on Me and I will respond to you" or "*Wa iza sa'alak ibaadi fa inni qarib ojibo da'watad do'aai iza da'aani*" "And when my servant ask of Me , say I am Near ; I answer the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me" and many others. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has left some very good pieces of writing in prose and verse concerning supplications. I will share some extracts with you and please reflect upon them. He says:

"I say truly that if crying before God Almighty is full of utmost humility, it moves His grace and mercy and draws them (towards the supplicator). I can say out of my own experience that I have felt the grace and mercy of God,

which comes in the shape of the acceptance of prayer, coming towards me. Indeed, I rather say that I have actually seen it. If the dark-minded philosophers of this age cannot feel it or see it, this verity is not going to disappear from the world, more so because I am ready to demonstrate the acceptance of prayer at all times.” [Mafuzaaat, vol. I, p. 198]

In some verses he says:

“O prisoner of your own intellect, do not be too proud of yourself;
This wonderful celestial sphere has brought forth many like you.
One alienated from God can never find access to His court;
Secrets of that Beloved are revealed only to those who come from heaven.
To fathom the secrets of the Holy Qur’an on one’s own is a false notion;
Whoever invents meanings by himself invents only filth and carrion.”(The Blessings of Prayer)

Usually those who deny the existence of Allah are those who use their reason to advance proofs that He does not exist. Throughout history these people were known as philosophers. It is only after the enlightenment that a new breed of people who studied nature became known as scientists as we know them today. The word “philosophy” comes from the Greek and it means “the love of wisdom “. A philosopher is hence one who loves wisdom. In the Holy Quran Allah says “He grants wisdom to whom He pleases and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good (*khayran kasira*) and none would take heed except those endowed with understanding.”(2:270) Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has taught us that by praying to Allah in the proper way Allah will make Himself known to us and consequently we might come to understand the reality of things. Philosophers try to use their reasoning capacity to get to the reality of things but they are still searching. Whereas the Muslim can get to the reality things by strictly following the path of the Holy Prophet (saw). Given proper guides one might come to apprehend the reality of existence. In this endeavor much emphasis is laid on the remembrance of Allah particularly in prayer but also outside of it.

Hazrat Masih Maood (as) further says

“When a child being driven by hunger cries for milk, then milk is generated in the mother’s breasts. The child does not know what prayer is, but his cries draw the milk. This is a universal experience. Sometimes when the mother does not perceive the presence of milk in her breasts, the child’s cries help to draw it. Then can our cries before God Almighty draw nothing? They certainly draw everything. But those sightless ones, who parade themselves as scholars and philosophers, cannot see it. If a person

were to reflect on the philosophy of prayer, keeping in mind the connection and relationship which a child has with its mother, he would find it easy to understand.....”
(Malfuzaat)

He further says:

“Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is a pity that those who pray are not aware of the true manner of prayer, nor are they acquainted with the ways of the acceptance of prayer. The truth is that the very reality of prayer has become strange. There are some who deny the effectiveness of prayer altogether. There are others who do not deny it, but as their prayers are not accepted on account of their lack of knowledge of the manner of prayer and are not prayers in the true sense, their condition is worse than that of those who deny the effectiveness of prayer. Their practical condition has pushed many others to the verge of atheism. The first condition for prayer is that a supplicant should not get tired and become a prey to despair that nothing will happen. Sometimes it is seen that a prayer is carried on till it is about to be accepted and then the supplicant gets tired and the result is failure and frustration. Frustration results in the denial and effectiveness of prayer and gradually culminates in the denial of God. It is said if there is God Who accepts prayer why have not those prayers been accepted which were offered over a long period? If those who think thus and stumble were to reflect upon their lack of perseverance, they would come to know that all their frustration is the result of their own haste and impatience which generated an ill concept of the powers of God and resulted in despair. So one should never get tired..... Those who are in haste get tired quickly and give up, and those who are steadfast persevere and arrive at their objective. It is true that there are many stages in prayer, ignorance of which deprives the supplicants of the fruits of their prayers. They are in a hurry and cannot wait, whereas there is progression in the works of the Almighty. It never happens that a man marries today and a child is born to him next morning. Though God is All-Powerful and can do whatever He wills, yet compliance with the law and the system that He has appointed is necessary. In the first stages of childbearing nothing is known, like the nurture of vegetation. For four months there is no certainty. Then a movement begins to be felt and after the expiry of the full period the child is born after great travail. The birth of the child also gives a new life to the mother. It is difficult for a man to form a concept of the troubles and travails which a woman has to endure during her pregnancy, but it is true that the coming of a child is a new life for the mother. She has to accept death so as to have the joy of bearing a child. In the same way, it is necessary for a supplicant that he should discard haste and endure all troubles and should never imagine that prayer is not accepted. At last the time arrives for the result of the

prayer to be manifested; the child which is the objective is born.”(Essence of Islam Vol2 Page 201)

May Allah enable each one among us to never tire in offering prayers to Him and may He grant all our prayers and may we be counted among the sincere and true followers of the Holy prophet Mohammad (saw).