

Servitude

Prostration, submission and surrender are all definitions of a single truth: servitude to Allah. Servitude, in this sense, is a fact imposed on all of Allah's creation. The entire universe, with its various realms of matter, living beings and other creatures, is directed through its construction and evolution, to be connected to Allah's will, in the form of prostration, submission and surrender, completely and absolutely, to Allah the Exalted.

Through this submission, all creation attains to the best forms of perfection and preordained performance. In this way existence evolves flawlessly and the general cosmic order is preserved. If any part of this universe could deviate from the order of creation and development, it would certainly perish and be destroyed. If the planets changed course from their orbits, or if the earth changed its position, or the sun departed this solar system, all the order of the universe would be subject to annihilation. Thus, all beings, the inanimate objects, plants, animals and human beings, are genetically submissive to the general law and order which govern the world according to Allah's will.

This fact is better described by the Glorious Qur'an through its intriguing artistic illustration of the creation's way of surrender, prostration and connection to their Creator. This submission is illustrated through diverse verbal images presented in attractive statements, so that we can discern through them the universe as a worshipping entity possessing a genuine submissive reverence, keenly aware of the existence of its Creator and admitting the greatness of its Maker.

The Qur'an refers to this fact concerning the general inclination of the universe towards Allah the Exalted, its ties with Him, its need of Him, and its function according to His will, by way of prostration and surrender as a token of submission and of being humble and obedient. Thus, the whole universe is placed before us on the altar of worship and response to Allah's will and command.

All this is to make us feel in ourselves the meaning of servitude to Allah, and to have the lights of obedience and submission shine in our hearts, so that we may merge in the unity of this universe in its prostration and surrender. This process does not cease as it is the cause of existence, its perfect order and its expression of the goal of its being.

The Glorious Qur'an describes the prostration of the universe and the worlds, by saying: "Do not see all the things that Allah has created - casting their shadows to the right and the left, prostrating before Allah in humbleness? To Allah prostrate whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth from among the creatures; and the angels and they do not show arrogance." Holy Qur'an (16:48-49) "Do they seek other than the religion of Allah, and to Him submits whatever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned?" Holy Qur'an (3:83)

Thus, the Qur'an draws the picture of the creatures' prostrating, brings our attention to their worship, rebukes those who are inattentive, and enjoins us to ponder the universe and the

worlds around us, where we see everything submissive, overwhelmed, insignificant and obedient to Allah's greatness and will. The earth, the heavens, animals, plants, and everything on which the light of existence shines, have no power to rebel, to be proud, to reject Allah's command, nor can they contradict His wisdom and arrangements.

It is as if the Qur'an, addressing us, says: Why does not man accept the reality of this truth? Why does he try to deviate, rebel and be disobedient until he falls into the precipice of misery and wretchedness? Is it not more becoming of him, as a rational being, to merge with the procession of this universe which is continually singing the hymns of praise, and experiencing ecstasy over the delights of glorifying and worshipping? Does not he discern that? "All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah, and He is Almighty, All-Wise?" Holy Qur'an (57:1)

Man and Servitude

Servitude, this cosmic truth running through the depths of existence and the universal characteristic personified throughout the whole world, is such that man cannot but find himself either as individual forcibly revolving along its orbit or as a living will, wavering between its two choices. Thus, to the human who has will and can choose, and is liable to reward and punishment according to his responsibility, servitude to Allah is of two kinds:

1. GENETIC SERVITUDE

The one who lives with the Qur'anic imagery, discerns with his conscience and feelings, the prostration of the universe, of the worlds, of the creatures and of all things. He understands that man, in his entirety, is a part of this world, and is forced to prostrate and submit. He is forced genetically to worship, with no power to dodge from, or to rebel against Allah's inherent design which pervades the whole of existence.

Man is forced to live, to die, to grow, to give birth, etc. He cannot choose his physical dimensions, nor his parents, nor the race to which he likes to belong, nor the quality of his genes. Furthermore, he cannot act contrary to the laws of nature, i.e. the laws of physics, chemistry and biology, to which he is subjected, and which organize his existence. The same principle applies to all other creatures and beings that have no will of their own, as none of them is able to create himself. As a consequence of this incapability and need of a Creator, man is but a bondman who is bound by an innate compulsion to submit to Allah's will.

In order to make man comprehend this fact, the Qur'an (incessantly) asserts and confirms man's surrender to the Creator of existence. Allah the Exalted says: "And if Allah were to enlarge the provision for His servants they would surely rebel in the earth, but He sends down by measure as He wills. He is informed, a Seer of His bondmen." Holy Qur'an (42:27) "And on the Day when He will assemble them and that which they worship instead of Allah and will say: Was it you who misled these My servants or did they (themselves) wonder from the way? Holy Qur'an (25:17) "There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes to the Beneficent as a servant." Holy Qur'an (19:93)

In these verses the Qur'an asserts that all people are Allah's servants by means of their intrinsic

relation to Him, be they believers who obey through their own conscience, will and choice, Allah's commands; or rebellious disbelievers who refrain from complying with Allah's orders.

Man is by innate compulsion moving within the orbit of servitude, because he is Allah's bondman and follower, and is submissive to His will. This is why the Qur'an calls the wrongdoers and the misguided servants', as it similarly calls whatever there is in the heavens and the earth, angels and men, servants', whether believers or disbelievers. This kind of servitude, surrender and submission is termed inherent or genetic servitude', i.e. compulsory and natural submission.

2. OPTIONAL SERVITUDE

Man is different from other beings in that he is an intellectual and understanding creature, possessing the will and ability to choose by means of the unique mental power bestowed on him by Allah, and the right given to him to choose his mode of conduct. Through that faculty he can do good or choose the way of evil; go towards Allah and be connected to Him or rebel against His commands and laws and pursue the path of deviation and rebellion.

This type of connection to Allah is quite different from that of genetic connection. There, man is compelled and has no choice whatever, while here, in organizing his connection with Allah, he has free-will, can choose the divine road leading to Allah's consent; that is, choosing the way of servitude to Allah. Likewise, man can choose the way of perversion, which is the way of servitude and submission to other than Allah; as he may worship his ego, or his desires to which he yields; or he may take as gods human tyrants and despots, follow their commands and place himself at their service. This servitude which is chosen by man, be it servitude to Allah or to other than Allah, is optional, as it is chosen through his own free will. He therefore is responsible for it and will be questioned on Judgment Day. Allah says: "And stop them, for they must be questioned." Holy Qur'an (37:24)

"We have made the deeds of every human being to cling to his neck. And on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him which he shall find, wide open. Read your book, you yourself suffice this day as a reckoner against you. Whoever is guided, is truly guided for his benefit and whoever becomes perverse, is only perverse to his own self. And no laden soul bears the burden of another. We never punish until We have sent a messenger." Holy Qur'an (17:13-15)

From:

Concept of Servitude in Islam Al Balagh Foundation

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