

The effects and blessings of Servitude and Submission

1. Sense of honor and esteem

Which honor is more sublime than that man could talk to his Creator and He in turn would listen to the words of man and grant them?! In this fleeting world, if a person speaks with a scholar or a great man, he feels a sense of honor because of his presence and the opportunity to be in conversation with him, and that a person who was once a student of a certain distinguished professor also gives him self-esteem.

2. Sense of strength

So long as a child is holding the hand of his strong and kind father, he feels a sense of strength, but if he is alone, he experiences fear and apprehension lest others annoyed him. A person who is linked to God feels a sense of strength vis-à-vis the superpowers, *ṭāghūts* and arrogant (powers).

3. Sense of dignity

Dignity [*‘izzah*] means not to come under the influence of others. In the school [*maktab*] of the prophets [*anbiyā’*] (‘a), all dignity belongs to God just as all power belongs to Him. Thus, the Qur’an criticizes those who incline to other than God, saying: “Do you want dignity from other than God? It is natural that linking with the Absolute Beloved and Eternal Power gives dignity to man, just as words such as “*Allāhu akbar*” [Allah is greater] humiliate the *ṭāghūts* in the eyes of man and make him dignified in comparison to them. So, the Qur’an orders us to seek power and strength from prayer and worship when we face difficulties and adversities.

During critical moments, the saints of God also used to strengthen themselves through prayer. On the afternoon of the ninth day of Muḥarram in Karbalā’, the army of Yazīd made an assault on the camp of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a). The Imām (‘a) said: “Postpone the battle for one night as I am fond of prayer and I would like to engage in worship tonight till morning.

The righteous servants of God are not only fond of the obligatory [*wājib*] prayers but also of the recommended [*mustahab*] prayers. The recommended prayer is a sign of fondness for prayer. There are many people who perform the obligatory prayers due to fear of divine wrath for missing them. With respect to the recommended prayer, however, love rather than fear is not the issue. Yes, anyone who loves somebody likes to talk with him more and does not want to separate from him. How could man claim that he loves God when he has no enthusiasm for speaking with Him?!

In any case, the one who does not perform the optional prayers is not worthy of expecting virtues from God, just like someone who is waiting for the advent of the Reformer [*muṣliḥ*] (Imām al-Mahdī (‘a)) while he himself is not reformed or righteous [*ṣāliḥ*]. The recommended prayers also compensate for the defects and shortcomings of the obligatory prayers.^{1[1]} A certain person asked the Imām (‘a): “My heart is not in my prayer and I do not benefit from the blessings of prayer. What should I do?” The Imām (‘a) said: “After the obligatory prayers, perform the optional prayers as they compensate for the shortcomings of the former and lead to the acceptance of the obligatory prayers.”

1[1] *Tafsīr Aṭib al-Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 161.

It is on account of these effects and blessings that the saints of God paid much attention not only to the obligatory prayers but also to the optional prayers, and they used to keep aloof from those things that obstruct and disturb this religious wayfaring and spiritual ascension such as excessive eating, excessive talking, excessive sleeping, eating unlawful or unlawfully earned food, debauchery, and worldly engagements, which keep man away from worship and make prayer heavy for him.

4. Training agent

Although prayer is spiritual and religious communion whose aim is the remembrance of God, Islam seeks to implement this spirit (of communion) under the framework of a set of educative programs, and thus, it has set many requirements for it—i.e. requirements for the correctness of the prayer, requirements for its acceptance and requirements for its perfection.

Cleanliness of the body and clothing, facing the *qiblah*, correct recital of the words, permissibility [*mubāḥ*] of the place and clothing of the performer of prayer are some of the factors necessary for the correctness of prayer, which are related to the body of the performer and not his soul. However, Islam has framed this prayer in this manner so as to give lessons to the Muslims about hygiene, cleanliness, independence, and the observance of the rights of others. Just like concentration, complete devotion, acceptance of the leadership of the infallible Imāms ('*a*) and payment of those financial obligations such as *khums*²[1] and *zakāt* are requirements for the acceptance of prayer, so too are the performance of prayer at its earliest time, in the mosque and in congregation, that the performer of the prayer wears clean garments, applies perfume, brushes his teeth, and observes the order of the lines and the like are among the requirements for the perfection of prayer. A keen scrutiny of these requisites makes it clear that each one of them plays a key role in training human beings.

However, in order for Muslim society to understand that it must have a single direction and learn the lesson of unity and solidarity, everyone is ordered to face a single direction. But why is that direction toward the *Ka'bah*?

It is because the *Ka'bah* is the first place to have been selected as a place for the worship of mankind:

2[1] *Khums*: literally means *one-fifth*. According to the Shi'ah school of jurisprudence [*fiqh*], this one-fifth tax is obligatorily levied on every adult Muslim who is financially secure and has surplus in his income out of annual savings, net commercial profits, and all movable and immovable properties which are not commensurable with the needs and social standing of the person. *Khums* is divided into two equal parts: the Share of the Imām [*sahm al-Imām*] and the Share of the *Sayyids/Sādāt* (descendants of the Prophet) [*sahm as-Sādāt*]. Accordingly, the Share of the Imām is to be paid to the living Imām, and in the period of Occultation, to the most learned living *mujtahid* who is the giver's *marja' at-taqlid* [Source of Emulation]. The other half of the *khums*, the Share of the *Sayyids/Sādāt*, is to be given to needy pious *Sayyids* who lack the resources for one's year respectable living in consonance with their various statuses. For more information, see Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Khums: An Islamic Tax*, <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html>.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah,3[3] blessed and a guidance for all nations.4[4]

On one hand, the founder and custodians of the *Ka'bah* throughout history have been prophets ('a). Thus, standing facing the *Ka'bah* is a sort of ideological solidarity throughout the ages. On the other hand, the *Ka'bah* is the source of independence. It is because when the Muslims were still facing the Bayt al-Muqaddas, the *qiblah* of the Jews and Christians, the latter taunted the former, saying: "You are standing while facing our *qiblah*; why do you have no independence?" The Qur'an thus states with utmost explicitness:

قَوْلَ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ
لِنَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةً

Turn your face toward the Holy Mosque, and wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it, so that the people may have no argument against you.5[5]

In sum, the *Ka'bah* is the source of independence, unity and solidarity, and these are the educative lessons of prayer.

5. Summoning up spirits

The market for hypnotism and summoning up spirits has flourished nowadays in the world, but our point is not those things. Our point is that we have to summon up our runaway soul toward the Creator through prayer and let this truant pupil be present in class. One of the blessings of prayer is the summoning up of the rebellious and runaway soul to the Presence of God.

In the *Munājāt ash-Shākkīn*, Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn ('a) complains in the Presence of God against his own soul, saying: "O God! I am complaining to You against a soul which is inclined toward carnal desires and is escaping from the truth." It is this soul that considers sin to be sweet and light to man, justifying it thus: "You will repent afterward anyway," or "Others have also done these deeds." The soul is like a wanton child. If his father is not watchful of him, he will separate from his father and go wherever he wants, and in every moment he is susceptible to every kind of danger. The best way of controlling this rebellious soul is for man to summon it several times a day to the Presence of God and thereby remove its negligence and save it from drowning in the quagmire of material things.

From: <http://www.erfan.ir/english/7900.html>
<http://www.erfan.ir/english/7901.html>

3[3] Bakkah: the Holy Mosque or the city of Mecca, or the territory where they stand. [Q Trans.]

4[4] *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* 3:96.

5[5] *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:150.