

IBADAH: THE WORSHIP OF ALLAH

Ibadah (Worship) is the sole objective Allah Almighty has created the mankind for. He declares in the holy Quran:

﴿ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴾ ^{٥٦} الذاريات: ٥٦

(Translation of meaning) [“I did not create the jinn and the mankind except that they worship Me” (Az-Zariyat: 56)].

Thus, the wisdom implicit in the creation of mankind and giving them a span of living is that they submit to Him alone and worship Him alone and that they should not accept the bondage of any other being. This is the reason that throughout the various epochs of human history various apostles and messengers were sent by Allah who informed their people of the purpose of their creation. There are innumerable verses in the holy Quran which point out this fact. Some of them are mentioned here.

﴿ وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ ﴾ ^{٣٦} النحل: ٣٦

(Translation of meaning) [“And We delegated to each people a messenger [to tell them] to worship Allah” (An-Nahl: 36)].

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴾ ^{٢٥} الأنبياء: ٢٥

(Translation of meaning) [“And We did not send any messenger before you but We had revealed to him that there is no deity but Me so you must worship Me” (Al-Anbiya: 25)].

﴿ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَتَقَوَّمُوا عِبَادُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴾ ^{٢٣} المؤمنون: ٢٣

(Translation of meaning) [“And verily We sent Nuh [Noah] to his folk to tell them: O my folk worship Allah” (Al-Muminoon: 23)].

﴿ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۖ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴾ ^{١٦} العنكبوت: ١٦

(Translation of meaning) [“And We sent Abraham who said to his people worship Allah and fear Him” (Al-Ankabut: 16)].

﴿ وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَتَقَوَّمُوا عِبَادُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴾ ^{٦٥} الأعراف: ٦٥

(Translation of meaning) [“And to A’ad [We sent] their brother Hud. He told them: O my folk worship Allah” (Al-A’raf: 65)].

﴿وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَتَقَوَّمِرُ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ ۖ﴾ الأعراف: ٧٣

(Translation of meaning) [And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said O my folk worship Allah” (Al-A’raf: 73)].

﴿وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَبْنَىٰ إِسْرَءِيلَ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي﴾ المائدة: ٧٢

(Translation of meaning) [“And said the Masih [Jesus] O Children of Israel worship Allah your Creator and my Creator” (Al-Maedah: 72)].

Ever since the advent of Hazrat Adam (*Alaihis Salam*) till the arrival of Hadrat Muhammad (*sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) the mission of all the apostles of Allah towards calling the people to the worship of Allah is not merely missionary preaching but an imperative of the divine creation. This is why when we look at the gestures and movements of all the creatures in this universe we discover the magnificent phenomenon that every atom of this universe is engaged all the time in the worship and obedience of Allah the Almighty. This phenomenon has been narrated in the holy Quran in these words:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ ۖ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ۚ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ ۚ وَالْأَنْبِيَاءُ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ ۚ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ﴾ الحج: ١٨

(Translation of meaning) [“Did you not see that whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is on the earth and the sun and the moon and the mountains and the trees and the cattle and many of the mankind are prostrate before Allah. And there are many who are destined to suffer retribution. There is nobody to honour one who dishonours God. Allah does what He wills” (Al-Hajj: 18)].

On another occasion Allah declared:

﴿وَأَذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ ۚ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ۖ﴾ ١٧ ﴿إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ﴾ ١٨ ﴿وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً﴾ ١٩ ﴿كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ﴾ ص: ١٧ - ١٩

(Translation of meaning) [“And narrate the episode of Our bondman Daud [David] who was mighty and turned back to his God [in all his matters]. And verily We had subjugated the mountains with him hymning our praise night and

day. And the birds herded together and came down to listen to his hymns” (Sad: 17-19)].

The above verses indicate that all the creatures are engaged in the worship and obedience of Allah. Now, if the humankind which is but one of the creatures of this universe adopts this same pattern of submission and obedience to the Almighty they become one with the rest of the universe which is a sign of their success and welfare. Conversely, if they adopt the path of defiance and disobedience they become inconsistent with the universe and sail against the current. It is but obvious that this defiance of theirs can do them no good whatever. It amounts to their misfortune and adversity as it isolates them from the rest of the universe. This conduct is both unreasonable and surprising. All other creatures of the universe express their surprise as well as regret over it. The surprise of the bird hud hud over such acts has been narrated in these words:

﴿ وَجَدْتُهُمْ وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴾ (٢٤) ﴿ أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴾ (٢٥) ﴿ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴾ (٢٦) النمل: ٢٤ - ٢٦

(Translation of meaning) [“And I found her [the queen] and her folk prostrating before the sun leaving Allah and the Satan beautified their acts for them and he distracted them from the right path so they could not find the right guidance. Why do not they prostrate before Allah who takes out the hidden objects from the heavens and the earth and knows what you hide and what you reveal. Allah [is the sovereign] there is no god but Him; He is the Lord of the Grand Throne” (An-Naml: 24-26)].

Bondage to Allah is the loftiest status which can be attained by the human beings. This attribute of man being a bondman of Allah is an attribute with which Allah Almighty has honoured His noblest and most honoured creatures—His apostles. Bondage of man to Allah is his real apogee. This term has been a source of pride and honour for the apostles and each one of them has felt exalted by it. Thus Allah declares:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾ (١٧١) الصافات: ١٧١

(Translation of meaning) [“And We have already made a promise to Our bondmen Messengers” (As-Saffat: 171)].

In another place He declares:

﴿ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا﴾ (الإسراء: ٣)

(Translation of meaning) [“And you are the progeny of those whom We had loaded [on the boat] with Nuh [Noah] who was a grateful bondman” (Al-Isra: 3)].

In a third place He declared:

﴿وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ﴾ (ص: ٤٥)

(Translation of meaning) [“And remember Ibrahim [Abraham] and Is'haq [Isaac] and Yaqub [Jacob] who were men of power and foresight” (Sad: 45)].

In a fourth place He pronounced:

﴿ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا﴾ (مريم: ٢)

(Translation of meaning) [“In remembrance of the beneficence of your Creator upon His bondman Zakaria [Zacharias]” (Maryam: 2)].

In the fifth instance He pronounced:

﴿وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ﴾ (ص: ٣٠)

(Translation of meaning) [“And We blessed Daud [with a son] Sulaiman, the best bondman he was and the most turning to God” (Sad: 30)].

In a sixth instance He pronounced:

﴿إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ﴾ (ص: ٤٤)

(Translation of meaning) [“Verily We found him to be perseverant, best type of bondman and the most turning to God” (Sad: 44)].

In a seventh place Allah says:

﴿إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَاتَنِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا﴾ (مريم: ٣٠)

(Translation of meaning) [“[The Christ declared] Verily I am a bondman of God who has given me the Book and made me His apostle” (Maryam 30)].

Likewise, with reference to the episode of his ascension, Allah declares about his last Messenger Hadrat Muhammad (*sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ﴾ (الإسراء: ١)

(Translation of meaning) [“Glory be to Him who took His bondman [upwards]” (Isra: 1)].

In another place He revealed about His Messenger Hadrat Muhammad (*sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ﴾ (النجم: ١٠)

(Translation of meaning) [“Then He revealed to his bondman what He revealed” (An-Najm:10)].

Regarding the missionary endeavours of Hadrat Muhammad (*sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*):

﴿وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا﴾ (الجن: ١٩)

(Translation of meaning) [“And that when the bondman of Allah stood up to invoke Him they were about to strike at him” (Al-Jinn: 19)].

In all these above-mentioned verses Allah has designated his different apostles as his bondmen. The remarkable point is that Allah Himself accepts the bondage of his chosen creatures calling them and testifying them as his bondmen. The truth is that when we study the life story of the divine messengers and apostles we find that the end of all their life was the solemn dedication and devotion to Allah the Almighty all the time. This is the reason why Allah the Almighty has made them venerable for the rest of the mankind. The Messenger of Allah, Hadrat Muhammad (*sallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) who was the most obedient and most devoted servant of Allah all the time felt overwhelmed by this sense of his bondage. His entire sublime life was an epitome of submission and subservience to Allah. Allah the Almighty ordains:

﴿قُلْ إِن صَلَائِي وَمُتَكِبَاتِي وَفِيءُ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ (١٦٢) لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَيَذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

﴿الأنعام: ١٦٢ - ١٦٣﴾

(Translation of meaning) [“Say: Verily all my prayers and rituals and life and death are for Allah the Creator of the worlds. There is no co-partner of Him. And I have been commanded to it and I am the first of the Muslims [submitters]” (Al-An’am: 162-163)].

It was this sense of bondage which kept him remembering Allah all the time. He was so much engrossed in his prayers that when he stood for his *salat* he kept standing so long as his legs developed swelling. When he started fasting it continued so long as the people thought that he will never break his fast. When he indulged in benevolence and munificence it appeared as if there will remain no hunger and penury. According to a tradition, once he stood up for prayers. His *qiyam* [standing] so prolonged that his legs swelled. When he had finished his *salat* Hadrat Ayesha (*RadhiAllahu Anha*) said O Allah's Messenger, Allah the Almighty has already forgiven you. Have mercy upon yourself. He replied: Should I not become a grateful bondman? (Al-Bukhari & Muslim). One who tastes the pleasure in worship becomes oblivious to the world and what is in it.

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