

Prophethood, its nature, and necessity

God has most graciously provided man with all that he needs in this Universe. Generally, every new-born child arrives in the world endowed with eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell and breathe, hands to touch, feet to walk, and a mind to think.

Everything essential for his life is provided: air, light, heat, water, and so on. A child on opening his eyes, finds his food in his mother's breast. His parents love him instinctively and in their hearts has been implanted an irresistible urge to look after him, to bring him up, and to sacrifice their all for his welfare.

Under the sheltering care of His system of sustenance the child grows to maturity and at every stage of his life obtains from nature all that he needs. All the material conditions of survival and growth are provided for.

Now God has provided all the materialistic essentials a human being needs to live on this earth. So a question arises: has God also provided the spiritual needs of a human, the questions he has for his existence and purpose in life?

The answer to that is God has certainly provided guidance to mankind through his messengers and prophets. they never do or utter wrong, nor do they commit any evil. they always encourage righteousness and practice what they preach to others. Neither their words nor their deeds are prompted by self-interest.

When it becomes quite clear that a person is a true Prophet of God, the natural dictate of this realization is that his words should be accepted, his instructions followed and his orders obeyed. It is God's command that one should put one's faith in the Prophet and follow him. Thus, one who refuses to believe in God's Messenger refuses to follow God's Commandment and becomes a rebel. Disobedience of a prophet is disobedience of God - and disobedience of God leads to ruin.

The Finality of Prophethood

The life and teachings of the Prophet are the beacon to guide a people to the right path, and as long as his teachings and his guidance are alive he is, as it were, himself alive.

The real death of a Prophet consists not in his physical demise but in the ending of the influence of his teachings. The earlier Prophets have died because their followers have adulterated their teachings, and distorted their instructions. Not one of the earlier books - Torah, Zabur (Psalms of David), Injil (Gospel of Jesus), for example, exists today in its original text and even the followers of these books confess that they do not possess the original books.

By this criterion, no one can deny that Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and his teachings are alive. His teachings stand uncorrupted and are incorruptible. The Qur'an - the book he gave to mankind - exists in its original text, without a word, syllable or even letter having been changed. The entire account of his life - his sayings, instructions, and actions are preserved with complete accuracy. It is as though it all happened yesterday rather than thirteen centuries ago. The biography of no other human being is so detailed as that of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). In everything affecting our lives, we can seek the guidance of Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and the example of his life. That is why there is no need for any other Prophet after Muhammad, the last Prophet (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him).

Furthermore, there are three conditions that necessitate the arrival of a new Prophet to replace a deceased Prophet. These may be summed up as follows:

- 1. That the teachings of the earlier Prophets** have been distorted or corrupted or they have died and their revival is needed.
- 2. That the teachings of the Prophet** who has passed away were incomplete and it is necessary to amend them, improve on them, or add something to them.

3. That the earlier Prophet was raised for a particular nation or territory and a Prophet for another nation, people, or country is required.

None of these conditions exist today. The teachings of the last Prophet Muhammad PBUH are alive and have been fully preserved. The guidance he has shown to mankind is complete. All the sources of Islam are fully intact and each and every instruction or action of the Holy Prophet can be ascertained without the least shadow of a doubt.

Secondly, God has completed His revealed guidance through the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and Islam is a complete religion for mankind. God has said that, "Today I have perfected your Faith - religion - for you, and have completed My bounty upon you," and a thorough study of Islam as a complete way of life proves the truth of these Qur'anic words. Islam gives guidance for life in this world and in the hereafter and nothing essential for human guidance has been left out. There is no ground for new prophethood on the plea of imperfection.

Lastly, the Message of Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) was not meant for any particular people, place, or period. He was raised as the World Prophet - the messenger of truth for the whole of mankind. The Qur'an has commanded Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) to declare: "O mankind, I am God's Messenger to all of you." He has been described as "a blessing for all (the people of) the world" and his approach has been universal and human. That is why after him there remains no need for new prophethood and he has been described by the Qur'an as Khatam-an-Nabiyyin (the last of the chain of the true Prophets).

Belief in Angels

The Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) has further instructed us to have faith in the existence of God's angels.

The polytheists have associated two kinds of creatures with God:

(a) Those who have material existence and are visible to the human eye, such as the sun, moon, stars, fire, water, animals, and great men.

(b) Those who have no material existence and are not perceptible to the human eye: the unseen beings.

Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) has informed us that these invisible spiritual beings, whom people believe to be deities of gods or God's children, are really His angels. They have no share in God's divinity; they cannot deviate from His commands even by the slightest fraction of an inch. God employs them to administer His Kingdom, and they carry out His orders exactly and accurately. They have no authority to do anything of their own accord; they cannot present to God any scheme conceived by themselves, they are not even authorized to intercede with God for any man.

To worship them and to solicit their help is degrading and debasing for man. For, on the very first day of man's creation, God had made them prostrate themselves before Adam, and granted to him greater knowledge than they possessed.

What dishonour can, therefore, be greater for a man than prostrating himself before those who had prostrated themselves before him!

Muhammad (blessing of Allah and peace be upon him) forbade us to worship angels and to associate them with God in His divinity. He also informed us that they were the chosen creatures of God, free from sin, from their very nature unable to disobey God, and ever engaged in carrying out His orders. Moreover, he informed us that these angels of God surround us from all sides, are attached to us, and are always in our company. They observe and note all our actions, good or bad. They preserve a complete record of every man's life. After death, when we shall be brought before God, they will present a full report of our lives-work on earth, wherein we shall find everything

correctly recorded, not a single movement left out, however insignificant and however carefully concealed it may be.

We have only been informed of some of their virtues or attributes, and we have been asked to believe in their existence. We have no other means of knowing everything about their nature, their attributes, and their qualities. It would, therefore, be sheer foolishness on our part to attribute any form or quality to them of our own accord. We must believe in them exactly as we have been asked to do. To deny their existence is kufr for, first, we have no reason for such a denial, and, second, our denial of them would be attributing falsehood to Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). We believe in their existence only because God's true Messenger has informed us of it.

Belief in revealed books

God had revealed His Books to His Prophets before Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and these books were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'an to Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). We have been informed of the names of some of these books: Books of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, Zabur (Psalms) of David, and the Injil (Gospel) of Jesus Christ. We have not been informed of the names of Books which were given to other Prophets. Therefore with regard to other existing religious books, we are not in a position to say with certainty whether they were originally revealed books or not.

But we tacitly believe that whatever Books were sent down by God are all true.

Of the Books we have been told, the Books of Abraham are extinct and not traceable in existing world literature. David's Zabur, the Torah and the Inji'l exist with the Jews and the Christians, but the Qur'an informs us that people have changed and added to these books, and God's words have been mixed up with texts of their own making. This corruption and pollution of the Books has been so large and so evident that even the Jews and the Christians themselves admit that they do not possess their original texts, and have only their translations, which have been altered over many centuries and are still being changed. On studying these Books we find many passages and accounts

which evidently cannot be from God. God's words and those of man are mixed together in these books, and we have no means of knowing which portions are from God and which from man.

We have been commanded to believe in previously revealed Books only in the sense of admitting that, before the Qur'an, God had also sent down books through His Prophets, that they were all from one and the same God, the same God Who sent the Qur'an and that the sending of the Qur'an as a Divine Book is not a new and strange event, but only confirms, restates and completes those divine instructions which people had changed or lost in time.

The Qur'an is the last of the Divine Books sent down by God and there are some very prominent differences between it and the previous Books:

1. The original texts of most of the former Divine Books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist today. The Qur'an, on the other hand, exists exactly as it was revealed to the Prophet.

2. In the former Divine Books man mixed his words with God's, but in the Qur'an we find only the words of God - and in their pristine purity. This is admitted even by the opponents of Islam.

3. Even a cursory study of the first books of the Old Testament and the four Gospels of the New Testament reveals that they are the productions of men.

The first five books of the Old Testament do not constitute the original Torah, but parts of the Torah have been mixed up with other narratives written by human beings and the original guidance of the Lord is lost. Similarly, the four Gospels of Christ are not the original Gospels as they came from the Prophet Christ (peace be upon him). They are in fact, the life-histories of Christ compiled by four different persons on the basis of knowledge and hearsay, and certain parts of the original Gospel also fell into them.

The fact is that the original Word of God is preserved neither with the Jews nor with the Christians. The Qur'an on the other hand, is fully preserved and not a syllable has been changed or left out of it.

Faith in the earlier divine Books should be limited to the confirmation that they were all from God, they were true and were sent down to fulfill, in their time, the same purpose for which the Qur'an has been sent. On the other hand, belief in the Qur'an should be of the nature that it is purely and

absolutely God's own words, that it is perfectly true, that every, word of it is preserved, that everything mentioned therein is right, that it is the duty of us to carry out in his life each and every command of it and that whatever be against it must be rejected.

Belief in the Day of Judgement

The Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) has directed us to believe in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgement. The essential ingredients of this belief, as taught to us by him, are as follows:

- 1- That the life of this world and of all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. Everything will be annihilated. That day is called Qiyamah, i.e. the Last Day.
- 2- That all the human beings who have lived in the world since its inception will then be restored to life and will be presented before God Who will judge all mankind on that day. This is called Hashr (Resurrection).
- 3- That the entire record of every man and woman - of all their doings and misdoings - will be presented before God for final judgment.
- 4- That one who excels in goodness will be rewarded; one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his good deeds will be punished.
- 5- Those who emerge successful in this judgment will go to Paradise and the doors of eternal bliss will be opened to them- those who are condemned and deserve punishment will be sent to Hell - the abode of fire and torture.

The Need of this Belief

Belief in life after death has always been an integral part of the teachings of the Prophets. Every Prophet asked his followers to believe in it, in the same way as the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him), has asked us to do.

The belief in life after death and in the Judgement day is the most decisive factor in the life of a man. Its acceptance or rejection determines the very course of his life and behavior.

A man who believes in the next world will not put his eternal salvation at stake for a short benefit of this world. He will look at things in a wider perspective and always keep the permanent benefit or harm in view. He will do the good, however costly it may be to him, and he will avoid the wrong, however tempting it may look. He will judge things from the viewpoint of their eternal consequences.

Thus, it is the belief or disbelief in life after death that makes a man adopt different courses in life.

Belief in Predestination

The idea of predestination—that everything has already been decreed by the Creator from eternity—has troubled theologians and philosophers for centuries. How can we reconcile the two apparently contradictory facts that Allah has absolute power and sovereignty over all creation, and that at the same time we are responsible for our actions? Are we forced to do what we do, or are our choices meaningful?

This question led to one of the earliest sectarian difference in the Muslim community, between the Qadarites, who believed in absolute human free will (Allah has no control over us), and the Jabarites, who believed in absolute determinism and fatalism (we have no control over our actions). Each of these groups developed an extreme and misguided theology. If Allah has no control, then why call upon Allah in prayer? And if we have no control over our actions and fate, why do any good deeds at all?

The Quran and Sunnah take a middle path between the two historical extremes, upholding both the sovereignty of Allah and the responsibility of humankind. From a purely rational standpoint, these two aspects seem mutually exclusive; in other words, it seems they cannot both be true. However, we have to remember that Allah exists outside of time and space, beyond the cosmic veil in the Unseen. By contrast, we human beings can only conceive of realities within the framework of time

and space. Divine providence, or predestination, is a reality that exists beyond time and space, which means we are simply incapable of conceiving it with our limited rational senses.

Allah has complete control over what is decreed from the beginning and what is later expunged. While all things have already been decreed from eternity, Allah has the power to change destiny based upon the choices we make. We are, indeed, morally responsible for our actions.

The Nature of Divine Predestination

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

Are you [Prophet] not aware that God knows all that is in the heavens and earth? All this is written in a Record; this is easy for God. [22-70]

لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ - يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ ۖ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

There is a time decreed for everything. God erases or confirms whatever He wills, and the source of Scripture is with Him.[13- 38-39]

The “source of Scripture” is literally the “Mother of the Book” (Umm al-Kitab). It is the Preserved Tablet in which the unchanging decree from eternity is written. But the books of individuals, our deeds, and fate as recorded by the angels can change according to our actions. Ibn Abbas explained the verse, saying, “There are two books: a book in which is erased whatever Allah wills, and with Him is the mother of the Book.”

The Prophet ﷺ said describing the Qadr of Allah:

Be mindful of Allah and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him before you. If you ask, ask from Allah. If you seek help, seek help from Allah. Know that if the nations gather together to benefit you, they will not benefit you unless Allah has decreed it for you. And if the nations gather together to harm you, they will not harm you unless Allah has decreed it for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.

Human Will, Action, and Responsibility

The Quran and Sunnah are clear in expressing the moral responsibility of humankind.

Allah said:

Each soul is responsible for its own actions; no soul will bear the burden of another. You will all return to your Lord in the end, and He will tell you the truth about your differences. [6: 164]

And the Prophet ﷺ said:

There is no Muslim on the earth who calls upon Allah in supplication but that Allah will grant it to him or divert some evil away from him, so long as he does not ask for something sinful or to cut off family ties.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

Whoever is pleased to have his provision expanded and his lifespan extended, then let him keep good relations with his family.

Abu Uthman Al-Hindi witnessed Umar ibn Al-Khattab (ra) performing Tawaf around the House and he was weeping, saying:

O Allah, if You have written me among the blessed, then affirm it therein. And if You have written me among the sinful and the damned, then wipe it away and affirm me among the blessed. Verily, You wipe away and affirm whatever You will, and with You is the Mother of the Book.

Conclusion

Allah decreed all things on the Preserved Tablet, which in an absolute sense does not change.

However, the fulfillment of those decrees can change based upon the actions we take. If Allah decreed an evil fate for us, He may change it if we sincerely supplicate to him or perform a good deed for His sake. Our God-given will, which is subordinate to the will of Allah, directs the destiny Allah brings into being for us. All people ultimately have two possible destinations decreed in the afterlife, Paradise or Hellfire, and only one of them will be fulfilled based on our choices and course of action.

Obligatory Islamic Practices

Prayer

Prayer is the most important act of worship. Islaam pays great attention to it. It explains its merit and its position among other acts of worship. Prayer is the link between man and his Lord. For, it is through prayer that man's obedience to his Lord's commandments manifests.

Meaning of prayer:

Linguistically, prayer is synonymous with supplication.

Islamically: Prayer is an act of worship that consists of special words and deeds. It starts with Takbeer and ends with Tasleem.

Its Importance in the Eyes of the Prophets and Messengers:

Prayer is one of the acts of worship prescribed in all divine ordainments that preceded the advent of our Prophet Muhammad's mission. Prophet Ibraaheem asked his Lord to make him and his offspring establish the prayer saying:

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۚ

"O my Lord! Make me one who performs As-Salaah (prayer), and (also) from my offspring."

Prophet Ismaa'eel also used to command his household to perform prayers. Allaah says about him:

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

"And he used to enjoin on his family and his people As-Salât (the prayers) and the Zakaah." [19:55]

Evidence for its obligation:

There are 67 verses about salah in the quran, which tells its importance in Islam. Out of those two are following:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

“And perform As-Salaah (prayer), and give Zakaah, and bow down (or submit yourselves with obedience to Allaah) along with those who bow down.” [2: 43]

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

Indeed, performing prayers is a duty on the believers at the appointed times.[4: 103]

And there are also numerous ahadith in which Prophet Muhammad PBUH order his ummah to pray five times in the day. He PBUH said:

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَالْحَجِّ، وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ

“Islaam is based on (the following) five (principles): To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allaah and Muhammad is Allaah's Messenger, to offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly, to pay Zakaah (i.e. obligatory charity), to perform Hajj. (i.e. Pilgrimage to Mecca) and to observe fast during the month of Ramadaan.”

“Call them to testify that there is no deity worthy of being worshipped but Allaah and the Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah. If they obey you in that, tell them that Allaah has enjoined on them, five prayers to be offered in one day and one night...”

Reasons for the commandment of the prayer:

The prayer is commanded for many reasons. some of them can be mentioned as follows:

- 1) As a sign of worship from the slave to Allaah and in order to show that he is a bondsman of Allaah. It is this prayer that makes a man feel the sense of servitude and enables him to remain in constant relationship with his Creator.
- 2) Prayer strengthens the relationship between man and Allaah and makes him always remember His Lord.
- 3) It prevents the worshipper from immoralities and sins. It purifies man from sins and iniquities.

This point is supported by the hadeeth narrated by Jaabir bin 'Abdillaah that the Messenger of Allaah, blessings and peace be upon him said,

"مثل الصلوات كمثل نهر جار غمر على باب أحدكم يغتسل منه كل يوم خمس مرات"

"The similitude of five prayers is like an overflowing river passing by the gate of one of you in which he washes five times daily."

- 4) Prayer is tranquillity of the heart and peace of the mind. It saves the mind from calamities that can disturb its peace. That was why it was the source of happiness for the Messenger of Allaah, blessings and peace be upon him and he used to resort to it whenever a matter disturbed him. He used to say,

يا بلال أرحنا بالصلاة

"O Bilaal! Let us have peace with the prayer."

Prayer is obligatory on whom?

Prayer is obligatory on every Muslim who is mature and sane, male and female.

Zakat

Zakaah literally means augmentation and increase. It is also used to mean praise, purification and righteousness. The amount paid as Zakaah is called so because it increases the wealth in blessing, and purifies the giver through forgiveness.

Zakat is one of the five pillars of islam. Its obligation is derived from Quran and sunnah.

Allah says in the Quran: وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

"And perform As-Salaah (prayer), and give Zakaah" [2:43]

“Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it.” [9: 103]

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ- يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ ۖ هَٰذَا مَا كُنَزْتُمْ لَأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ

And those who hoard up gold and silver (al-Kanz: the money, the Zakaah of which has not been paid), and spend them not in the Way of Allaah, announce unto them a painful torment. On the Day when that (Al-Kanz: money, gold and silver the Zakât of which has not been paid) will be heated in the Fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, (and it will be said unto them): "This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard." [9: 34-35]

Conditions that make it obligatory:

There are five things that make Zakaah obligatory:

One: Islaam. The disbeliever is not obliged to give Zakaah.

Two: Freedom from captivity. Most scholars agree that Zakaah is not due on the property of the bondsman. Likewise is Mukaatab² because he remains a bondsman as long as he has a single dirham to pay.

Three: Possessing the Nisaab. If the possessions are lesser than the Nisaab, Zakaah is not due on it.

Four: Complete ownership. Zakaah is not due on a written debt or on a shareholder's dividend before it is jointly owned, or on a debt owed by a poor person until the creditor collects it.

Five: Being held in possession for the period of one year. Zakaah is not due until the belongings are held in possession for a period of one year.

Beneficiaries of the Zakaah:

The beneficiaries of Zakaah are of eight categories according to verse no 90 of surah Tauba. They are:

One: The needy: They are those who do not have any livelihood or have little. They should be given from the Zakaah fund what can suffice them for a whole year.

Two: The poor: They are those who have the half or more of what is enough for them. Their condition is better than that of the needy. They should be given from the Zakaah fund what will suffice them for a whole year.

Three: Those employed to collect the Zakaah, preserve it and distribute it to its beneficiaries with the order of the Muslim leader. These people are also given part of the Zakaah in proportion to their work.

Four: Those whose hearts are to be conciliated: These are of two types: the disbelievers and the Muslims.

- The disbeliever is given part of the Zakaah if there is a hope that he can revert to Islaam or if it is felt that giving him a part of the Zakaah can prevent him from harming the Muslims.

- The new Muslim is given part of Zakaah in order to strengthen his faith or to make his relatives embrace Islaam.

Five: Those in captivity: They are slaves who are working for their emancipation but do not have enough money to ransom themselves. They are given a part of Zakaah fund, which they can use to free themselves from bondage.

Six: Those in debt: They are civilians who either incurred debts for themselves or for others.

- The one who incurs debt for himself is the one who takes a loan in order to fulfill his own needs and is unable to pay it back. He should be given an amount that will be enough to pay his debt from the Zakaah fund.

- The one who incurs debt for others is the one who incurs a debt in order to make peace between two dissenting persons or groups. He should be given from the Zakaah fund with which he can fulfill his commitment even if he is rich.

Seven: In the cause of Allaah: This generally means Jihaad. Part of Zakaah fund is given to those volunteers who fight for the cause of Allaah and get no stipends from the Muslim treasury.

Eight: The traveler: He is a stranded traveller who runs out of funds that will sustain him till he is back to his country. He is, therefore, given from the Zakaah funds that which can be enough for his sustenance until he returns to his country.

