



## Significance of Worship (Ibada) in Islam and Judaism

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### ABSTRACT

In every age and for every nation, God nominated prophets and apostles for the reformation of society through His revealed commandments for smooth running of the discipline of this world. Throughout history, the fundamentals preached by all the prophets were the same, i.e. Oneness of God, Prophethood and the hereafter. The religion preached by all the prophets was the same but commandments and rituals remained different to some extent. The teachings about the ways of offering Prayer and fasting, the prohibited and the permitted, the ways of ablution, purification and bathing in different sharias remained different. The present study compared the existing literature on the significance and philosophy of worship in Islam and Judaism for finding the similarities and differences in both. To this end, this study adopted a pure speculative analytical approach to arrive at a conclusion. The study found that in both the Islamic Law and Moses' law worship has similar purpose. Both the laws consider worship is a source of bringing man closer to his Creator, purifying his soul, improving his deeds and making him a better human being and thus resulting in a peaceful society based on social welfare and collective good.

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### Introduction

Worthy of praise and admiration is the Being who created the whole world and also provided a complete code of life for running its system. In every age and for every people/nation, He nominated prophets and apostles and assigned to them the tough task of the reformation and guidance of society. Appointing man as the best of beings, He handed over the reins of control of the world in his hands and for his guidance, revealed His messages through the prophets so that the discipline of this world may run smoothly.

Starting from Prophet Adam (May peace be upon him) to the Holy Prophet (May peace be upon him), the religion and basic fundamentals preached by all the prophets were the same, i.e. Oneness of God, Prophethood and the hereafter. Religion has remained the same throughout the history of mankind and it is the same till now. But many (sharias) laws were revealed, many were rejected and many were changed or altered in the history of mankind. But never in the history was religion altered due to the change in sharia. The religion preached by Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were all the same. But commandments and the forms of worship remained different to some extent. Prayer and fasting were observed in different ways in different sharias. Similarly, the teachings about prohibited and permitted the ways of ablution, purification and bathing in each sharia remained different from those preached by any other sharia. Despite all these, the followers of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), those of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and those of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were all believers because the basics of all religion is one which is present in the Torah, the Psalms the Gospel and the Quran in the form of common or shared teachings and beliefs.

The present study compared the existing literature on the significance and philosophy of worship in Islam and Judaism for finding the similarities and differences in both. To this end, this study adopted a pure speculative analytical approach to arrive at a conclusion. The study found that both the Islamic Law and Moses' law worship has similar purpose to solve. Both the laws consider worship is a source of bringing man closer to his Creator, purifying his soul, improving his deeds and manners and making him a better human being and thus in the long run resulting in a peaceful society based on social welfare and collective good.

Since times immemorial, God has been sending his revelations to his selected prophets and apostles in different nations for their guidance about the purpose of man's existence on this earth and each sharia has guided people about certain sets of rituals for worshipping the Creator along with some sets of rules for conduct in daily life's affairs and dealings in relationships-religion being a combination of worships, dealings and manners.

Commandments and rituals determine the limitations of the external and internal affairs of human life and provide a guideline and rules for his character and relationships which engulf the whole of human life. Therefore, the obedience to Almighty Allah requires that man follows the will and wish of God in beliefs, words and deeds, and all the affairs of life and moulds his life and ways according to His commandments, instructions and laws. Whenever Allah ordains him something, his attitude must we have listened and obeyed.

A strong faith demands that man gets rid of mundane desires and obeys the commandments of his Creator. Because in His commandments God has hidden an underlying benefit and purpose or significance in every commandments which cannot be imagined by man's limited vision. For example, '(salat)' or prayer not only fulfils an obligation, man's whole being also rejoices in obedience and submission to God, and it also

strengthens the connection between the created and the Creator. Moreover, the greatest benefit of prayer to a man is that it keeps the consciousness of the fact that he is Allah's servant or creature and he has to lead his life in a specific manner alive and afresh in his mind. Likewise, if fasting inculcates the spirit of sacrifice, a fasting man obeys the limits and restraints of commandments which stop him from wrong doing because the best way of killing desire and keeping the soul alive is patience and the best way to acquire patience is to fast for a few days because it suppresses the sexual desire and force of anger which are the roots of all sins, are curbed very effectively by fasting and this patience results in piousness or piety which is the ultimate purpose of fasting.

Similarly, spending or giving alms in the way of God serves the purpose of well being of humanity on the one hand and on the other hand it is the name of mutual help and support, sympathy and empathy among human beings. Above all, another significance of giving alms is that when man spends his wealth in the name of God, his heart will also remain with or inclined to Him. As Prophet Jesus says, 'Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for your selves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Mathew, 6:19-21)

After alms comes hajj or pilgrimage whose purpose is to retain the 'sunnah or practice of one's forefathers and forerunners alive and for children of Israel, it is to retain the memories of the past fresh. Similarly, for Muslims, going round the Kaaba-the holy place for Muslims- during pilgrimage and slaughtering an animal has been ordained by Allah to refresh the sunnah of Hajra, the wife of Ibrahim and Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him). Therefore, the philosophy behind Hajj is the connection with past, producing a sense of obedience and submission to the Creator in mankind, expression of love for the holy places, and keeping the emotions of unity, oneness and fraternity among a nation alive.

Next to hajj, sacrifice or slaughter in Islam as well as Judaism is a source of attaining God's pleasure and purification of soul or inner self and all kinds of sacrifices revolve around the point of attaining Allah's nearness, pleasure and purification of one's soul. In short, Allah's law has adopted various styles and ways of man's training and grooming. And in doing that, law has kept this in view that man should be made aware of the real purpose of life. Therefore, to this end, law has advised mankind about the transience of this world, inclination towards the hereafter, and Allah's worship. In fact, Allah's worship has been declared the basic purpose of existence of all jinn and men.

#### **Literature Review:**

Numerous scholars have penned down about the philosophy, purpose and significance of worship and a lot of work has been and is being done on the topic. In his book, 'A Scholarly View of Islamic Rituals/worships', Muslim scholar Maududi(2000) says, The purpose of worship is that one leads the whole life in Allah's obedience and whatever one does is according to the law of God'.

Shibli Naumani(1982) in his book 'Ibadaat' has declared ibada (worship) to be the greatest means of improving manners because through worship or due to worship, 'man's inner self keeps awake and ready for being influenced and affected by good deeds and virtuousness.

Another Muslim scholar Izzuddin bin Abdus Salam mentions in his book Qawaid ul Ahkam(1934) that the purpose of worship is the attainment of personal benefit and wellbeing of mankind because Allah is indifferent to everybody's worship. Neither can the obedience of the obedient benefit Him in any way nor can the digression of the digressed or the sins of the sinners harm Him in any way. The entire benefit of worship is for man himself.

Arabic author Yousaf Qarzavi, in his book 'The real Interpretation of Worship in Islam' (2004) translated in Urdu by Khuda Bakhsh Kalhar, has elaborated in detail the need for and importance of worship. This has been only the role of ibadah (worship) to serve as a warning for man against being forgetful of the Lord or neglectful of the Day of Judgment and then leave him alone for pursuing the worldly needs with full zeal and activeness.

Wahba al Zaheli(1991) in his book 'Nazria zarurat al-sharia' mentions the philosophy of worship thus, Obedience to Allah or God in itself is not the only goal, objective or aim of life because there is neither any advantage to God in people's obeying Him nor any disadvantage to him if they disobey Him. Instead, obedience to God is a source of training or grooming for the creature/human being the whole benefit of which is derived by the individual and collective lives of human beings. Therefore, the purpose of obedience to God is the preservation and protection of human life cycle through inculcating public/social welfare, the development and progress of the world, will to do good deeds and lead a better life, recognition of the Creator, and well being for all and sundry.

Abdul Hamid Badauni(ND) in his book 'The philosophy of Islamic Ibadah' (worship) opines about the philosophy of ibadah (worship) that through them, man's inner self becomes civilized. And they are an expression of man's obedience and bandage and a source of attaining nearness of the Creator. The more a man achieves this nearness to Allah through ibadah (worship), the more exalted he becomes before Allah.

Fosdick(1915), in his book 'Meanings of Prayer' mentions that it is only through worship that our lives become aware of God's commandments and teachings and guidance and it is through worships that our belief in the presence of Almighty God is strengthened and this is possible only through constantly submitting and turning to God and performing worship.

A columnist of Encyclopedia Judaica (ND) mentions the attainment of Paradise as the purpose of worship according to the Torah which is of the view that Worship helps man achieve Allah's nearness and pleasure or approval whose result appears in the form of paradise for an individual.

Geoffery Parrinder(ND) in his book 'Worship in the World's Religions' mentions that commandments requires a Jew to completely practice all the worships throughout his life because the purpose of worships is to please God and attain His nearness.

#### **Philosophy of worship according to Torah and Quran:**

According to Ibn Manzoor (1906) 'Abd' is the one, who is someone's possession or a slave and this word is the opposite of 'Hur' meaning free. It also means enslaving someone and treating him as a slave and worship is the form of obedience which is done with complete submission.

Alzubaidi (ND) cites worship means such acts of deeds that please God.

Alabudia means the expression of servitude in front of someone but 'alibadah' is used when talking of expression of

extreme servitude and humbleness. Therefore, the being worthy of being worshipped can be only the one who is the most beneficent and merciful and Sustainer. Therefore, the Quran says, 'And your Lord has ordained that you do not worship anyone except Him.' (Bani Israel, 17:23)

According to Alsahah(1999), the origin of 'abudiah' is humbleness, obedience and servitude etc.

Muhammad Abduho(ND) says that worship with extreme earnestness and concentration i.e., worship that expresses the whole purpose and clarifies its sense is obedience.

In commandments worship means professing one's servitude and abudiat in front of God Almighty and acting according to His commands. That is why the Quran uses the word pride and haughtiness as its opposite. The Quran mentions this in this way:

'And those near Him (angels) are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, nor do they tire.' (Anbya, 19:21)

### **The significance and philosophy of Worship**

God being the Creator of mankind and this universe knows best what is good for mankind and the smooth flow of the system of this universe. Therefore, He has guided men about deed and rituals which are beneficial to them and to the society where they live. These deeds and rituals not only ensure that men obey the Creator but also discipline them in such a way that they benefit from it in their individual and collective lives which I very necessary for the smooth running of a society and protecting it from anarchy or destruction.(1991)

Worships are for an individual's own benefit and wellbeing. In this regard, Azz uddin bin Abdus Salam (1934) says:

'Allah is indifferent of anybody's worship. Anybody's obedience or disobedience is of no personal advantage or disadvantage to God.'

According to Abdul Hamid Badauni(ND), worships discipline and groom the man's self. They inculcate good habits in humans by eradicating the bad ones. The time that man spends in praying and worship, he restrains from worldly desires, purifies or clarifies his brain and soul and concentrates towards his Creator alone. The way the approval and pleasing of a king improves the life style of a slave or subject, and he is promoted in ranks, the expression of man's binding or servitude to his Creator is a source of nearness to God and is a way of achieving God's pleasure. The more nearness he achieves, the more exalted he becomes and he achieves an inner elation and ecstasy and he will experience an inner revolutionary experience by receiving divine energy in his heart and soul.

Allama Raazi(1990) says worship is characterized by extreme resignation and nobody is worthy of it except the One from Whom originate all bounties and blessings and boons, the greatest expression of which is life which is essential for benefitting from all other blessings.

Imam Ghazali(ND) states the philosophy of worship thus, 'Worships have the same impact on the health and well being of human heart and soul that medicines have for his physical ailments though Man himself does not know about the contents, characteristics and functions of medicine. Only the doctor or physician who has specialized in that field knows these details. Every patient follows the medication that a physician prescribes and does not argue about it. So I came to the conclusion that the medication or remedy of worship have been prescribed, diagnosed and fixed in their dosage and limitations by the prophets.

God's commandments have adopted various ways of training, teaching and grooming humanity, keeping in view only one purpose, i.e. making men realize the purpose of their existence. To this end, commandments has suggested to man the realization of the transience of this world, concern for the hereafter and worship of Allah so much so that the main objective of the existence of man and jinn has been declared to be God's worship. 'And I (Allah) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone).' (Adh-Dhariyat, 51-56) According to Ibne Abbas (2001) this verse means no matter whether men worship God willingly or by force, they are bound to worship Him.

Imam Raazi(1990) states when God mentions those who argued or denied, He revealed this verse to mention their bad deeds also that they gave up worshipping God although they had been created for His worship.

Therefore, human beings are created for the sole purpose of worshipping God and they have been instructed to worship which is the ultimate goal of their existence on earth.

Maulana Maaddodi(2000) writes, let the whole life be spent in worshipping God, so much so that one considers himself a permanent and full time slave to God and no moment of his life is devoid of God's worship. Whatever man does in this world should be according to God's law each and everything from sleeping, waking, walking, eating drinking should be done in accordance with God's law.

### **The meaning and interpretation of worship in Judaism**

Israel Abraham (ND), the columnist of Encyclopedia Judaica explains prayers thus:

Prayer means the offering of petition, confession, adoration or thanksgiving to God .In the Bible, the concept of prayer is based on the conviction that God exists, hears and answers, that He is a personal deity.

Abraham (ND) further defines it thus, 'Services rendered to God and comprehending both, the attitude of reverence and love, toward the deity and the practicing in conduct as well as ritual in which the homage finds expression'.

Standard Jewish Encyclopedia (1959), writing about Prayer says it is 'Man's appeal to God, whether as a request or in thanks giving.'

Therefore in Judaism worship or prayer means bowing in front of God, crying in repentance, asking humbly for forgiveness, thanking God for His graces and blessings and along with all this, worship is a source of expressing one's servitude.

In Torah, Jews are ordered to worship with extreme willingness and happily and in case of denying it, they have been warned strictly which give a fair idea of the importance and significance of worship in Moses law.

The Torah says, 'because you did not serve the Lord, YOU God joyfully and gladly, in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies.' (Deuteronomy, 28:47, 48)

### **The purpose and philosophy of worship in Judaism**

Fosdick(1915) in his book 'The Meaning of Prayer' writes, 'Prayers open our lives to the guidance of God' meaning that our lives are enlightened by the instructions and guidance of God only through worship and prayers.

A columnist of Collier's Encyclopedia (1963) mentions the significance of worship in Judaism thus, 'Judaism as a way of life, requires practice. Every ritual practice and ceremonial observance is for the Jew a reminder of God's continuous place

and presence in his life. Religious practice is regarded as a discipline to help improve man's character. It is a form of instruction- learning by doing. For the Jew, it provides a way of reliving the experiences of his people and thus strengthens his loyalty because it is a means of survival of his people and his faith.

A columnist of Encyclopedia Judaica (ND) states that the purpose of life according to Torah is worship. He further says, 'All man's deeds should be for the attainment of heaven. For example, when one eats or drinks something, it should not only be to in order to relish the food and drinks but to have strength and stamina for God's worship and service. The same applies to his sleeping, marital relations and conversing with others. All should be done for the sake of heaven and not for personal gratification.'

Geoffery Prrinder (ND) states that many Jews pray at home on week days and attend the synagogue on the Sabbath and festivals. Home prayers follow the outline of public prayers, with small omissions. The schema is repeated by devout Jews every morning and evening. It is the first prayer learnt as a child and the last repeated by the dying.

In this regard, Fosdick(1915) states that we should establish in ourselves a realization of the presence of God and this is possible only by continually turning to him, conversing with Him.

A similar purpose is mentioned in Collier's Encyclopedia (1963) that in Moses law the purpose of worship is achieving the nearness of God and pleasing God and it also helps inculcating the love of God in man. The philosophy of worship in Moses law is purification of soul, spiritual exaltation, betterment and welfare in this world and the hereafter and achieving God's approval and nearness. Rabbi Geiger states that virtue and righteousness in both laws ensure respect and well being and dying with good deeds and righteous people is worthy of reward and eternal success.

Therefore, the Quran and Torah both state the signs of believers and worshippers that they pray to God for acting upon God's commandments, forgiveness for their sins and being included in the righteous on the Day of Judgment.

God says in the holy Quran, 'Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith, [saying], 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and cause us to die with the righteous.' ('Āli 'Imrān, 3:193)

Similarly, Torah mentions Balaam's prayer in which he asks God for the ability to follow the ways of His prophet Jacob in these words

'May I die the death of the truthful and may my hereafter be like theirs.' (Number.23:10)

Righteous deeds and manners are the beauty of humanity. This beauty is enhanced by obedience to God. Therefore, both Moses law and law of Muhammad (saw) have stressed upon obedience to God's commandments and have promised success and rewards in this world and the hereafter as a result of following these commandments.

### Conclusion

The study found that according to both the Islamic law and Moses' law, the philosophy or purpose of individual and collective worship is achieving piousness, God's pleasure, and

remembrance of God and the purpose is not offering rituals only, worship also becomes a source of inculcating good manners and deeds. In turn, these good deeds and manners lead the society towards improvement, peace, prosperity and progress. Gradually, this society is considered an exemplary society and man deserves to be called man in the real sense of the term because the teachings and commandments of God are aimed at not only practice but also making mankind aware of the concept of social welfare.

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