

THE REALITY OF THE PRESCRIBED PRAYERS IS A KIND OF ASCENSION

So, O my lazy soul! The reality of the daily prescribed prayers, which is, in fact, a kind of Ascension, is like the soldier in the previous comparison being admitted to the royal Presence as a pure favor. So, too, your being admitted to the presence of the All-Majestic One of Grace, the All-Gracious One of Majesty, Who is the True Object of Worship, is an instance of pure mercy. Declaring 'God is the greatest' is to leave behind the two worlds-this one and the next-in spirit or in imagination or by intention, and transcending the restriction of matter, to rise to a universal rank of worship or a shadow or a form of it. Being honored with a sort of admission to the Divine Presence, it is to be favored (everyone according to his own capacity) with the most exalted attainment of addressing God directly, 'You alone do we worship.' Through repeating 'God is the Greatest' in its acts, the prayer is a sign of attaining to higher and higher spiritual ranks and rising from being an insignificant, particular being to being a universal one. It is a concise title to the perfection of God's Grandeur which is beyond our knowledge. It is as if each 'God is the greatest' shows the attainment of a new degree in the way to Ascension. To attain to a shadow or a ray of this reality of the prescribed prayer in spirit or by intention or in imagination is a great happiness.

It is for this reason that during the Hajj, 'God is the greatest' is frequently repeated. For the Hajj is an act of worship at a most comprehensive level for everyone. On a special occasion, such as a festival, a soldier takes part in the king's celebrations like a general, and receives his favors. So too, like a saint who has left behind many ranks, a pilgrim, no matter how common, turns towards his Lord as the Mighty Lord of all the parts of the earth. He is honored with universal worship. Certainly, the degrees in the manifestation of Divine universal Lordship open up for the pilgrim with the key of the Hajj, and the horizons of Divine Grandeur become observable to him through its telescope. Awe and amazement, and the feelings of majesty in front of Divine Lordship are caused by the spheres of worship and servanthood, and the levels in the manifestations unfold more and more to his heart and imagination through his observance of its rites. All these can only be quieted by declaring 'God is the greatest' repeatedly. Again only through 'God is the greatest' can those observed or imagined, unfolded degrees be announced. After the Hajj, this meaning is found in various elevated and universal degrees in the religious festival ('Id) prayers, the prayers for rain, and the prayers done on the occasions of solar and lunar eclipses, and in congregational prayers. That is why the public symbols and rites of Islam, including those of the category of Sunna-supererogatory types of worship-are extremely important.