

The Pillars of Islam

5.1 Pillars of Islam- Testimony of Faith

5.1 Testimony of Faith

Host: What are the Five Pillars of Islam and what is the origin of this expression?

Jamal Badawi:

The term and the specification of the number appear in more than one saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). One of the most famous sayings is narrated in the collection by Muslim and says that the infrastructure of Islam is based upon the oneness of Allah, the performance of regular prayers, the payment of *zaka* or the poor's due, the fasting, and the pilgrimage. The term was based on the mention of this Hadeth.

More specifically the first pillar on the oneness of Allah means that in order for a person to be Muslim they would have to confess with conviction of the heart and mind that there is no deity but one God and that is Allah who is the one and only universal God of all. One is required to mention this a minimum of one time in their lifetime in order to be Muslim.

The second pillar is the performance of regular prayers and these are also specified as five specific prayers which follow a specific format during the day and night. This is not prayer in terms of supplication, I use the term prayer in English because it is the closest translation. It is not prayer in the sense of sitting and making supplication but requires lots of preparation.

The third pillar is the payment of poor's due and is called *zaka* in Arabic.

The fourth is fasting and this refers to observing the fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan which is the ninth lunar month in the Islamic calendar.

Finally is the pilgrimage to the Holy places in Macca at least once in a life time if a person is able to.

Host: When non-Muslims write about Islam and mention these Five Pillars quite often one is under the impression that these Five Pillars is all that Islam is about. Is this correct?

Jamal Badawi:

Unfortunately, it is not. The problem with many non-Muslim authors, writers, film producers, and narrators is that they try to interpret Islam from the point of view of their own background which is like placing Islam in an alien framework and this is where the mistake occurs. Most writers in films and so on and many who pose as experts on Islam come from a background which views religion as a large set of dogmas or rituals or something that focuses on the spiritual aspect of life with some kind of separation from the secular or mundane activities. True Islam is an all embracing comprehensive way of life, it is a way of looking at life and taking it as a totality not making an artificial separation between religion and secularism. The lack of understanding of this particular point makes many people view the pillars of Islam in the sense that doing those five things is all that Islam is about.

Any particular structure pillars are not everything but essential for a building's support. In addition to the pillars one needs a roof, walls, partitions, insulation heating system and furnishing. The same thing applies to Islam. Many people think that once we talk about the Five Pillars of Islam that they've got everything. No they have not. If we look at Islam the same way we look at the structure of a building as a functioning religion as a faith that is not limited to the spiritual aspect but is a complete way of life. One doesn't have a functional building just with the pillars one has got to have all the other things that go along side with the pillars. The pillars are essential and are the create the base but they are not everything. There is a difference between saying the pillars are everything and between saying the Five Pillars are the basis of everything. This is the way a Muslim looks at the Pillars of Islam. In fact Islam addresses spiritual, moral, social, economic and even political aspects of life. When those writers refer to the Pillars of Islam they do not even depict it in sufficient depth. Like I said earlier it is depicted as a formal ritual, whereas if one looks very closely in depth at the nature of those pillars one finds that they give lots of lessons which regulates social, moral, economic and even political life. In a way Islam goes far beyond the simple notions of rituals or formalisms.

Host: Is there any significance as to the order in which these pillars appear and if so which come first and why?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, there is a hierarchy. For example the first pillar which we mentioned which is the corner stone of Islam is the belief in the one universal God of all. Belief in God and faith in Him and acceptance of his prophets represents the very foundation upon which any good deeds can be accepted by God. This is the source of all virtue.

One notices that the second Pillar is the keeping of regular five daily prayers which is the most noble act of communicating directly with God without an intermediary. This is a reflection of how a Muslim after accepting God tries to nourish this direct relationship with his creator.

The second pillar is followed by the poor's due which is an instrumental pillar in building social equity and justice in society. This is followed by the fourth pillar which is fasting. This is a method to discipline one's self and control our desires and as such lead a virtuous life. Finally is the pilgrimage for those who are able to. As I understand it there is a hierarchy of relative importance.

Host: Could you explain the meaning and significance first pillar?

Jamal Badawi:

The first pillar means that in order for a person to be a Muslim he would have to confess with full conviction without compulsion or pressure of the mind and heart that there is no deity but the one God, Allah, and that Muhammad is his messenger. More specifically the formula goes like this "I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger." The mere uttering of this with conviction allows a person to automatically enter into Islam without the need for a specific ritual or priestly pronouncement. It is a person's right to accept with conviction God as his master, his friend, his companion, his guide. This right doesn't need the approval or accept of anyone because it is a matter between the creature and his creator.

Host: What does the Quran say about the nature of God?

Jamal Badawi:

The formula of creed which admits a person to Islam starts with negation as it says that there is no deity but the one God, Allah. This has some significance because the fact that it starts with negation rather than affirmation shows that for a Muslim it is not enough to say that there is a God but it is important to negate that any creature shares any of the divine attributes with the creator. In that sense we can say that God is the universal creator and sustainer of this universe and that He is the absolute Sovran or power in this universe and he has no partner or helper. Thirdly we need to

realize that the nature of God is definitely far beyond our limited human imagination and perception. God is not limited to the material, space or time. The Muslim regards it as erroneous to take any images for God whether human or otherwise as He is beyond material images.

It follows that the transcendence of God is contradictory not contradictory to his closeness to mankind because as the Quran indicates God is close to us, He guides us and whenever we chose His path He aids us and helps us continue on the right path. He reciprocates and values our love for Him. An example can be found in (2:255) in the Quran “Allah. There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor Sleep. He is all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitted? He knoweth what (appeared to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).” This is one of the most beautiful and widely quoted verse called *Ayatul Kursi*. There are a few more quotes in (42:11) “There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things).” Another example is in (6:103) “No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.” In one of the shortest chapters, 112, of the Quran it says “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.”

On the point that his closeness to man is not contradictory to his transcendence we read in (50:16) “It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.” These are just a few samples of what the Quran states in regards to the attributes of God.

Host: Can you explain the second part of the testimony “I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah.”

Jamal Badawi:

This is a logical follow up to the belief in God. As we mentioned before God cares for us and guides us and wants us to achieve felicity in this life and hereafter. It follows then that He must have a way that He communicates this kind of guidance to us and the most effective way of communicating this information through prophets. The Muslims believe that God chose model human beings throughout history and sent them as His prophets. This process started all the way from Adam (PBUH), regarded as the first prophet, all the way through Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and finally Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The fact that a Muslim, in the first Pillar of Islam, confesses that Muhammad is the messenger of God is simply an expression that Prophet Muhammad was the last catalyst of all prophets and that God has completed his message, perfected it and made it more comprehensive in terms of providing total guidance for life through this last prophet. A Muslim's acceptance of the second half of the testimony implies acceptance and belief in all prophets who preceded the last prophet.

According to the Quran the Muslim is obliged as an Article of Faith to believe in all prophets. This belief is one of the acts of righteousness. Even though the Quran mentions that some prophets had more of a role to play than others that in terms of brotherhood it emphasizes that we should not make a distinction between them as it appears in (2:285) "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys." Believing in Prophet Muhammad implies the belief in the previous prophets. The Quran is full of praise of the moral character, struggle, and nature of prophets throughout history. The Quran and Hadith makes it clear that no shameful or moral sin is attributed to any of the prophets. For a Muslim to accuse any prophet of moral sins that blemish their character and their role would be contrary to the text of Quran. No one is saying they were anything but human but they were the best models for humanity. The five great prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are praised in the Quran. By virtue of faith a Muslim has to accept the prophets.

In fact we do not only find this connection through the Quran but we might recall that the whole third series titled Muhammad in the Bible pointed out that the advent of Prophet Muhammad has already been prophesied by many prophets throughout history and particularly by the Israelite prophets including Moses, Jesus and Abraham (PBUH). If one recalls we went into great detail to point out that even in the Bible in its present form there is talk of the great nation who will come from the descend of Ishmael who is the grandfather of Prophet Muhammad. We described how the Bible mentions the place in Arabia and Mecca (Mecca) which the prophet will come from. There was also a description of the nature of the revelation that would come to him and of the Ka'aba the Holy Shrine in Mecca. We discussed the prophecy made by Prophet Jesus (PBUH) who is again highly regarded and respected by Muslims as one of the greatest five prophets. All prophets of the past have prophesied the advent and coming of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and they ordained their followers to follow him because he would receive the same essential message in a more complete form. In that sense if we take scriptures in their proper we will find that the prophets are presented there as brothers like links in the same chain which has been completed and perfected through the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Host: Are there are other beliefs that are related to this first pillar that are over and above the belief in Allah and the belief in Prophet Muhammad.

Jamal Badawi:

As a result of the Five Pillars and especially the first one, believing in God and the prophets of God, there are four addition Articles of Faith so that there are six total Articles of Faith that the Muslim must believe in. The articles of Faith are first the belief in the oneness and uniqueness of God, the belief in the angels of God, the belief in the scriptures revealed by God, he belief in the prophets of God, the belief in The Day of Judgment or life after death, and finally the belief in measure. The previous series dealt with these Articles of Faith in greater detail.

The belief in the first Pillar of Islam implies that one believes in God and that He cares for them. If one believes that He cares for them then they believe that He sent prophets, and if one believes in prophets then one has to accept the scriptures that the prophets received. If one believes in revelation they have to believe in angels because the archangel Gabriel was the angel who carried the revelation to the prophets and then one has to believe in The Day of Judgment. In the end they all relate to one another.

Host: Is there a place in the Quran or sayings of Prophet Muhammad that mention these beliefs and require the Muslim to accept them?

Jamal Badawi:

There is one famous Hadeth known as Gabriel's Hadeth where Gabriel came in the form of a human being to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) while he was sitting in front of people and Gabriel asked him questions that covered many things including both the five Pillars of Islam and the six Articles of Faith.

Gabriel asked Muhammad "tell me what is Islam." So Muhammad told him the Pillars of Islam (Oneness of Allah, prayer, fasting, poor's due, and the pilgrimage). Then he asked him "what is faith?" The Prophet replied that faith was to believe in God, His angels, His Books, His prophets, The Day of Judgment, and due-measure. Then he asked him "what is excellence?" He said excellence is to worship God as if one sees him but if one doesn't see Him one should feel that he sees you.

5.2 Pillars of Islam- Purity & Hygiene

Summary of 5.1 "Testimony of Faith"

There were there basic points that we discussed last time. First was the quotation from Prophet Muhammad that the infrastructure of Islam is based on five pillars the

testimony, prayer, payment of poor's due, fasting and performing the pilgrimage once in a life time.

The second major point we try to make is that many time non-Muslim writers about Islam present the pillars as if they are they are the entirety of Islam which is erroneous. We made an analogy between a building and Islam and that one can have pillars within a building but one can not have a building with pillars alone. A building need a roof, walls, insulation, partitions and heating etc. At the same time Islam cant be a complete way of life if we simply have the pillars as they are the bare minimum upon which the remaining structure of Islam is built. The Pillars of Islam are necessary but insufficient for a complete Islam.

These pillars are not formalistic rituals they are a lot more than that because they give lessons that cover all aspects of human life be it social, economical or political.

The third major point was to look at the first Pillar of Islam the testimony. We said that in order for a person to be a Muslim must confess with conviction without any compulsion that there is no deity but Allah, the one and only universal God of all humanity and that Muhammad is his messenger. We discussed why this testimony starts with negation rather than affirmation to show that there is rejection of any authority or sovereign other than that of God. We also explained briefly what it means in terms of some of the divine attributes of God being all powerful, all merciful, being close to mankind and caring for them. We also briefly looked into the meaning of prophethood and that it is a Muslim's obligation to believe in all prophets from Adam to Muhammad with a focus on the five major prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and last of them Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through whom revelations were completed in the form of the final holy book or the Quran.

As I mentioned last time it took about forty programs to explore in some degree of depth the meaning of that first fundamental pillar of Islam.

5.2 Purity and Hygiene

Host: The next pillar is *salah*. Is the term *salah* roughly equivalent to the English term prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

In fact the term *salah* in Arabic which is the original for what is termed prayer in English is a lot more comprehensive. When one checks the dictionary prayer means something like supplication, petition, humbleness and invocation. In that sense the Muslim term *salah* includes but is not exclusive to the meanings for the English term prayer. The reason for this is prior to those prayers the Muslim must make certain acts of washing or cleanliness called ablution or *wodu* in Arabic. In addition to that prayer is not merely supplication after preparing for the prayers there are certain movements and prostrations that are done with the prayers. In a way the Muslim understanding of the term *salah* is a lot more than the meaning of prayer. However, one should say in fairness that the essence of Muslim prayer *salah* is actually petition and supplication to God. Prayer is a rough term but it may represent one major aspect of Muslim prayer.

Host: You have mentioned that special washing is required before one performs the five daily prayers. Could you explain to us how this washing is done?

Jamal Badawi:

This washing before prayers is called *wodu* and is usually translated as ablution. In the most common cases before a person performs the prayers by way of preparation he has to wash at least, and I am talking about the bare minimum, the face, hands, rub over the hair and wash the feet.

The more perfect and complete form of ablution as taught by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and as communicated to him through angel Gabriel is to start by washing the hands to the wrist three times. This is followed with rinsing the mouth three times, preferably also brushing or cleaning the teeth, then after this rinsing out the nostrils three times, then washing the face three times, all the way from the forehead to the chin and from ear to ear. Then one should wash the right arm to the elbow three times then the same process is repeated for the left arm, the next step is wetting the hand and gently rubbing over the hair and then washing the ears with the index finger on the inside and the thumb on the outside. The last step is washing the right foot and then the left foot. This is the most complete form of performing ablution.

Host: Why is this done before one begins to perform the *salah*? Why is this specific order followed?

Jamal Badawi:

First of all it is an act of worship and it is connected to prayers. It is really like a continuation of prayer. In acts of worship one obeys it as a divine command out of love for God and out of love of God, obedience and submission to His will. In fact ablution has been mentioned in the Quran itself in (5:6) the minimum parts that are to be washed.

In addition to this each of these acts of worship even though they may be purely a matter of obedience and submission to the will of God carry lots of wisdom and reason. The attitude of the believer is that if a divine command is given they would follow it as it is. The revelation doesn't prohibit one from trying to seek some understanding of possible reasons but a person doesn't put the reasons as a prerequisite to following them.

If we really reflect on the meaning of ablution prior to prayers we find that first of all it is a kind of psychological preparation. A Muslim's prayer is one of the most noble if not the most noble acts that any human can have by communicating directly with God without any intermediary. If we as human beings consider it adequate and polite to get ready when we want to meet somebody who is great among humans then when we are going to stand in front of God in supplication it is even more adequate to have this psychological preparation.

Secondly, the Muslim prayer is performed five times everyday which allows for a kind of refreshing break from our routine while getting ready for the act of prayer. The feeling of cleanliness itself enhances the benefit that one gets from prayer.

To address why ablution is performed in this particular order we should notice that first of all one washes their hands because they will be used to wash other parts. As soon as the hands are clean one cleans their mouth and nostrils the logical order is to wash the face afterwards. There is a logical order here that the face comes before the arms and the arms before the feet which are the last body part to be washed.

Another interesting observation is that when I was talking to some brothers in the medical profession and when I described that when we wash the arms we take the water and let it flow towards the elbow they said that this is what they learn so that the germs stay away from their hands. This is an interesting reflection that people have given to the meaning of ablution. The Prophet emphasized the importance of ablution as a spiritual act. As the Prophet said that when one gets ready for prayer and really washes completely and perfectly before prayer ones sins flows out of their body every time they wash their body parts until they also come out of finger nails. In a sense then symbolically when we get ready for the prayer we are washing our face and our eyes which might have committed something that is not appropriate. In a way we are repeating this symbolic act of repentance and purification (Muslims do not believe in original sin) as we are constantly attempting to cleanse ourselves and to pray to God for forgiveness and improvement in our life.

Host: After an individual has preformed *wodu* or ablution how many prayers can be done before the person is required to make another ablution? Or is it done for every prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

It is not necessary for one to make ablution for every prayer so long as the ablution is still valid. Knowing our normal biological functions it is virtually impossible for one to remain for the whole day without the need to renew the ablution. There are certain things in Islamic law that are regarded as nullifying factors of ablution, which means one must make *wodu* before making additional prayers. These factors include natural discharges when a person goes to the washroom, deep sleep, or if a person is unconscious from fainting or some other problem then the ablution is nullified and the person must make another ablution before performing additional prayers.

Host: Are there any concessions related to this issue of ablution, or special circumstances that one might become involved in that would exempt them from carrying out the ablution?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes there are and in fact this is one aspect of the flexibility within the Islamic jurisprudence. This is based on a rule established in the Quran for example in (5:6)* it says “Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favor to you that ye may be grateful.” The basic rule is not really ritualism in itself but an aspect of training in physical and spiritual cleansing.

There may be circumstances where ablution could either be impossible or very difficult. An example of this would be a person who is traveling and doesn't have enough water (if there is water it may be needs for drinking, cooking or to give to animals) can simply stroke something that is clean like stone or sand (blow the dust off) and rub both hands over the face once and that would do the job.

There are cases where a person has a skin disease where water could be quite harmful or a person might be injured and he may have a bandage one can make ablution on parts that wont be hurt by water, they can gently rub the area, or they can do the symbolic act without using any water.

Another interesting and useful thing that was used by the Prophet fourteen hundred years ago that relates to the question people ask about washing the feet in the

workplace or office setting where there are no facilities for this. If a person wakes up in the morning and makes complete ablution including washing the feet and puts on stockings it would be permissible, over the next 24 hours for a resident and three days for a traveler, to later make regular ablution for all parts but to wet the hands and gently rub the right sock then the left sock to substitute washing the feet. These are examples of solutions to problems that may arise from time to time which shows that it is not the ritual of the law that matters but the purpose behind it that really matters and if it is possible to achieve both that is good but if there are extenuating circumstances there is always some kind of flexibility.

Host: Are there circumstances where ablution alone is insufficient?

Jamal Badawi:

There are situations where bathing or washing the entire body would be a prerequisite for performing *salah* or prayer. Both males and females after intimate relations can not pray by just making ablution but they must take a bath. Muslim females after the monthly cycle or the postnatal resting period, a maximum of forty days but could be less, can not pray directly but must take a full bath. For males after a wet dream a full bath is required. These are examples where ablution would not be enough but these situations are not as repetitious as the other functions that simply require renewal of ablution.

Of course the same kind of concessions that apply to ablutions also apply to bathing. For example if a person needs to take a bath but there is no water available or it may hurt him for health reasons at least for a temporary period the concessions I mentioned could be applicable.

The cases I mentioned are the minimum mandatory cases where a person must take a bath. In addition to this we find that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught Muslims that a person must at least once a week rub and clean his body and take a bath. He encouraged people to take a bath on Friday before going to the congregational prayer, before festivals and many other occasions. There are numerous occasions where bathing would be a highly recommended act religiously not just as a custom as it is part of our religious duty to maintain cleanliness.

Host: Some might wonder as to the injunctions on *wudu* and prayer as not too detailed and involved?

Jamal Badawi:

It depends on how one understands and perceives the term religion. This is where Islam stands quite distinct. For the majority of people primarily in the west the term religion seems to be associated with a set of dogmas and beliefs in spiritual and moral

aspects and that is it. To the Muslim however the word religion means a complete way of life. Now if Islam is a complete way of life then it must also provide complete and comprehensive guidance to humans. It doesn't leave a person hung up with some beliefs without showing how to conduct a life that would be pleasing to God and satisfactory and understandable in the human sense. If this is the case then that religion must be capable of giving guidance in spiritual belief, moral aspects, social aspects, and political aspects. Personal cleanliness and hygiene are definitely parts that can not be left out, even ecology is part of the picture. This simply shows the comprehensiveness of the nature of Islam.

To start with Islam doesn't view physical purity and spiritual purity as two different or opposing things. Why should one be achieved at the expense of the other? The equivalent of the English word purity in Arabic is *al-tahara*. The word *tahara* as used in the Quran is used in both the spiritual and physical sense. In the Quran in (9:108)** it describes people who stand in prayer to God in Mosques or places of worship as people "who love to be purified" and that is in the spiritual sense. In the (2:222) it says that "Allah love those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

The very same derivative of the word *tahara* is used for physical cleanliness. For example in the Quran in (8:11) that "He caused rain to descend on you from heaven, to clean you therewith." This verse is referring to the physical cleanliness. In Islam the physical and spiritual purity is integrated.

There are plenty of other teachings that are related to hygiene and ecology. For example there is the *miswak* which is a kind of twig from a special tree called *arak* and fourteen hundred years ago which was twelve hundred years before the invention of any toothbrush Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recommended very highly that people use that cleans and refresh their mouth. In fact in one of his sayings as quoted in Muslim he says "if I didn't think it would have been too hard for my people I would have ordered them to clean their teeth with this before every prayer." There have been some studies about the *miswak* that found that it contained a combination of natural oils and minerals which are very effective in dental hygiene and that it is less abrasive than the toothbrush it is more gentle and provides nice stimulation for the gums. In addition to this one finds that Islam requires circumcision for males, trimming nails and shaving excess hair from the body. The Prophet (PBUH) forbade people from relieving themselves in waterways, sheds, or the roads of others. Again using modern science we can understand that this is one way of preventing the spread of germs. There is also prohibition of drinking of alcoholic drinks or other intoxicating things that might hurt the health, or eating dead animals except for fish of course if an animal dies without being slaughtered it is not to be eaten. It is also prohibited to eat pig meat. There is no virtue in Islam in shabbiness. The Prophet (PBUH) in numerous sayings indicated that cleanliness and tidy appearance is one of the characteristics of a believer, he was talking in particular about tidying the hair and

cleaning it. Islam also taught that one should wash his hands before and after eating food and to eat with the right hand. Islam encouraged physical fitness. It shows that our wellbeing whether moral, spiritual material or physical are important in Islam.

5.3 Pillars of Islam- Preparation for Prayer

Summary of 5.2 "Purity and Hygiene"

Last week's program dealt mainly with the question of purity or cleanliness as a preparation for prayers. We mentioned that in the most common cases all that is needed before prayers is ablution which is washing the hands three times, rinsing the mouth, nostrils and face three times, washing the right left arm three times, rubbing over the hair, cleaning inside and outside of the ears, washing the right then the left foot. This is the ablution that is done before the prayers.

In some places water is not available or harmful because of skin diseases there are concessions and substitutions of a symbolical act called tayamum. We also mentioned that in the case of washing the feet there is a concession if the person washes his feet in the morning and wears his socks he can gently wipe over them instead of them for the rest of the day. This makes it quite convenient to make ablution in offices or places where there are no facilities for washing the feet. We also briefly discussed the special cases where ablution may not be enough bathing is required. This discussion in fact leads us to two interesting topics. One is the notion that Islam itself has the attitude towards integration of various aspects of life in response to the question of cleanliness. Islam takes human life as an integrated whole which includes all social, political, personal, spiritual and hygienic aspects of life.

The second topic that came up in the topic of discussion was the question of hygiene in Islam. Its not only the ritualistic preparation for prayer and washing in a specific way and order is only part and partial to the Islamic approach on cleanliness and hygiene. We also mentioned that the word tahara is used in the Quran to refer to both spiritual and moral cleanliness as well as physical cleanliness. There is no need for contradiction between the different aspects of tahara as Islam tries to integrate between all of them.

We discovered that quite a few interesting teachings that appear both in the Quran and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which relate to hygiene, preservation of ecology, protection of the environment and prevention of the spread of germs and diseases. It is fascinating to learn that these were revealed as part of Islamic teachings 1400 years ago before germs were even discovered. Some of the things we discussed were keeping water ways and sheds clean, wise use of resources, dental hygiene and the medical benefits of using the miswak the toothbrush used fourteen hundred years

ago by Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught quarantine regulations in regards to contagious diseases and prevention of intoxicants. In fact what we touched upon was only part of the issue of Islam and hygiene. I know a lady who is writing her doctorate dissertation at Indiana University just on the issue of the Islamic views on hygiene and physical fitness.

5.3 Preparation for Prayer

Host: Can you explain the role and significance of salah in Islam?

Jamal Badawi:

In the first series of this program we mentioned that the super structure of Islam or the basic minimum duties are the five Pillars of Islam. Immediately after the belief in God and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which implies the belief in all prophets comes the second pillar in Islam which is prayer. Prayer has been mentioned in dozens of places in the Quran. It is tied with charity and many different kinds of virtue as Prophet Muhammad indicated in a number of sayings found in the collections of Muslim, Bukhari and Tirmidhi that the line that divides a believer from a non believer is neglect of prayers. Indeed to neglect the prayers is almost tantamount to disbelief. For a Muslim to deliberately neglect prayers with the understanding that it is irrelevant or by belittling its importance is an actual act of disbelief and a person with that attitude can no longer be called a Muslim. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has also indicated that the first thing that we are held accountable for in the day of judgment is prayer. An example found in the Quran is that the believers will ask those in hell fire “what led you into the hell fire?” and they will say “we did not keep our prayers.”

On the other hand the bright side of the picture we find that keeping regular prayer to God is one of the main causes for people to get into paradise as it is a sign of placidity and success. We find in (87:14-15) “But those will prosper who purify themselves, and glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer.” In one saying of Prophet Muhammad says “God has enjoined on you five prayers in every day and night any a person who keeps them sincerely, Allah promised to enter him into paradise if he doesn’t then it is up to Allah to forgive him or punish him for his neglect. There are endless sayings on this topic in both the sayings of Prophet Muhammad as well as in the revelation of the Quran. Of course this shows how important and central prayer is in the life of the Muslim and the far reaching impact that it could have on the believer’s life and that it is done in such a way that it is not just a ritual or formal thing but to get all the lessons that prayers are intended to teach.

Host: You had mentioned before that the teachings of all prophets are essentially the same. What about the question of prayer or salah? How do they compare with previous teachings?

Jamal Badawi:

There is lots of mention in the Quran that prayer in principle was a requirement in the teachings of all prophets. We don't know whether the exact format is the same as the Muslim prayer as taught to Prophet Muhammad by angel Gabriel. The Quran insists however that the principal of prayers was in the teachings of all prophets. For example the Quran talks about Prophet Abraham the patriarch of monotheism as is usually excepted in (14:40) "O my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring O our Lord! And accept Though my Prayer." Similarly we find that the Quran indicates that God has inspired Isaac, Jacob to keep regular prayers in (21:72-73) "And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional give, (a grandson), Jacob, and We made righteous men of every one (of them) And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)."

In regards to the other side of the household of Abraham, Ishmael his first son, the Quran indicates that he kept his prayers and enjoined it on his people. For example in (19:54-55) "Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was an apostle (and) a prophet. He used to enjoin on his people Prayer and Charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord." Going to another great prophet in history, Moses, in (20:14) it describes the scene when God gave him the ten commandments "Verily, I am Allah. There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise." We go down through history and find that this is repeated with Prophet Jesus (PBUH), another great prophet in Islam. In (19:30-31) it quotes Jesus addressing his people "He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live." There are similar statements about Mary (PBUH) the mother of Jesus in (3:43) where she was also ordained to bow down and prostrate to God, there are examples of Prophet Shoaib in (11:87) and Luqman the Wiseman mentioned in (31:17). The same thing was reconfirmed in the teachings given to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the last of the messengers of God, as found in (17:78-79) it ordains the prophet to establish regular prayers, similarly chapter 73 deals largely with the incumbent duty of Prophet Muhammad to establish prayers at night as a way of showing gratitude and love for God.

Host: Are there any other preparations needed before one commences prayer or salah?

Jamal Badawi:

There are other preparations that are only befitting to prayers. First of all as human beings before we go to meet any person of position we try to dress properly and so on by the same token a Muslim who is going to pray should be dressed appropriately. This doesn't mean that there is a specific style that one is required to wear but one should cover his body properly. This applies to both males and females and especially in the case of the female since prayer is about total devotion and they may pray in the same place as males, the minimum requirement is that they have their entire body covered except for their face and hands. They should wear something that is not transparent and doesn't show the shape of the body. It doesn't mean that they have to wear any particular style of dress that is related to any particular culture as long as the minimum requirements are met.

In addition to ablution a person should be free from any impurities or unseemliness. In addition a person should pray in a place that is clean. Some people prefer to use a prayer rug which is very commonly found all over the Muslim world. Of course this doesn't mean that one has to have a particular rug, this is just a convenient mobile item. Any other place and proper can be a place of prayer. For example if someone is traveling and the only place they have is clean grass or clean sand one can pray on it. One can pray anywhere as long as it is free from impurities which will invalidate the prayers.

Host: Is there any particular place or building that a Muslim must go to in order to perform the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

It is not necessary to pray in a specific place except in a few cases of congregational prayer. The main requirement is to find a place that is clean and adequate for prayer. We can pray at home, at the park or at the rest areas on the highways. One of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad in which he says that "the whole earth was made as a Mosque or place for prayer for me and my followers. Any person wherever he is can stop and pray when the time of prayer comes." This doesn't mean that there aren't specific buildings called Masjids or Mosques as is usually translated in English where congregational prayers are held. People are actually encouraged to pray in the Mosques but it is not a precondition for the prayer to be accepted. This makes it flexible and easy and keeps a person's personal relationship with God possible anywhere and under any circumstances.

Host: Many people say that Muslims pray towards the east, is this correct?

Jamal Badawi:

No it is not and many references are correcting this. Muslims neither pray towards the east or west but rather to God and in the direction (which is called the Qibla) of the Kaaba the holly shrine. So for example if one is in North America the direction is north east which is the closest line connecting North America with the Qibla. So the direction of prayer depends on where one is located.

There may be cases where a person is unable to determine the direction of the Kaaba in which case a person should try his best to determine the approximate direction and then he can go on and perform his prayers. In fact there may be cases where a person may be traveling in a bust, plan, train or ship for a long time and several prayers would be missed if he doesn't pray on board. In this case a person can determine one direction and he can continue the prayers and not bother about the constant change of direction.

Host: What is the significance of facing in the direction of the Kaaba during prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

The Kaaba is the first house on earth to be built for the worship of the one God by Prophet Abraham. Perhaps its history might go beyond the time of Abraham because of some indirect evidence we find in the Quran. When Abraham left his son Ishmael and his mother Hagar he said "oh God I have left my progeny in a barren place near your holy house." This was before he built the house because Ishmael was a young man and helped him with its construction. In that sense then the Kaaba is the symbol of monotheism that goes back to old prophets, it is a symbol of the unity of the mission of all prophets throughout history especially with the role played by Prophet Abraham and his decedents, Israelite prophets through Isaac and Ishmaelite through Ishmael the last of whom is Prophet Muhammad. In the initial period before Islam the pagans perverted the use of the shrine in order to put idols in it and this is why in the early period of Islam, Muslims prayed towards Jerusalem, another holy place for Muslims, until the psychological association of the Kaaba with idols was removed and Muslims were able to revert to the first house of worship on earth for the worship of the one God. For 1400 years now the Kaaba remains the center for the Muslim world. One could be in Indonesia, Nigeria or wherever one is they will always direct themselves towards the Kaaba. The Kaaba is a symbol of unity under God.

Host: What are the proper times for each of the five daily prayers?

Jamal Badawi:

There is one prayer at dawn which depending on the season is roughly 90-75 minutes before sunrise. The second one is at noon which is half way between sunrise and sunset. The third one is in the afternoon which is roughly between noon and sunset. There is one immediately after sunset. Then there is the night prayer which starts when the redness in the horizon disappears and depending on location is 75 minutes to an hour and half after sunset and extends till midnight or even till dawn if a person is not able to do it on time.

It is preferable that a person making salah performs them at these exact times. All prayers have a range of time and the basic rule except for the morning prayer is from the beginning of that prayer till the next one starts. So the noon prayer can be performed at noon or any time before the mid afternoon prayer and mid afternoon prayer should be performed anytime before sunset. Only the morning prayer has a cutoff at sunrise which is not the beginning time of the next prayer.

Host: Muslims have a unique way of alerting other Muslims that it is time for prayer, could you give us a description of the nature of this call and its meaning?

Jamal Badawi:

In the Muslim for 1400 years this call to prayer has been made from tens of thousands and perhaps even hundreds of thousands of Mosques or places of worship throughout the Muslim world and sometimes outside of the Muslim world where there are significant Muslim minorities in any given area. The athan is a unique way of announcing prayers that is made using the same formula at the beginning of each prayer. Instead of using material objects to announce the prayers like a bell it uses the human voice that does not only announce the prayer but has a special formula that affirms the faith in God and is a summary of the nature of the teachings of Islam.

The athan repeats "God is great" twice "I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah the one and only God" repeated twice, "I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" is also repeated twice "come to the prayer" twice "come to success" is also repeated twice. The athan ends by saying once "God is great, God is great, there is no deity but Allah." This is an affirmation of faith and the belief in God and belief in Muhammad which implies the belief in all prophets. It is a call for prayer and success and then rounding it up by praising God as the great and affirming faith in Him.

5.4 Pillars of Islam- Prayers: Form & Significance

Summary of 5.3 "Preparation of Prayers"

The first thing we emphasized last time was the importance of prayer and how it is the second most important pillar in Islam after the confession of faith, belief in God, and that leaving prayers out of neglect is regarded as a major sin but leaving prayers with an attitude of belittling its importance is actually a kin to disbelief and destroys the remaining line between believer and disbeliever as emphasized in the Quran. We also indicated that on the day of judgment the first thing that we are held accountable for before God is whether or not we kept regular prayers.

Prayers are not limited to the ritualistic or formal part of it but when properly understood it has a far reaching impact on the attitude, behavior and life of the believer. The second major point was to trace the history of prayers. According to the Quran all major prophets had been ordained to keep their prayers. We found evidence in the Quran about prayers being prescribed on prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, Ishmael, Muhammad and there was also mention of Mary the mother of Jesus (PBUH). This shows that prayer has been a basic common belief of believers throughout history.

The third point was about the preparations for the prayers and we said that in addition to ablution or cleanliness as described in the previous program there is also a requirement to have proper coverage of the body. We described the minimum requirement for males and females. We also mentioned that the place that a person prays in is supposed to be clean and a Muslim doesn't have to pray in a specific building or place of worship. We quoted the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), indicating that the whole earth is like a place of worship. Of course there are Mosques where people are urged to pray but if it is time to pray and a person has no access to a Mosque then he can pray anywhere. We also said that when one prays he should direct himself towards the *Kaaba*. The significance of the *Kaaba* we describes is that it was the first house built on earth for the worship of one God. It was originally built by Prophet Abraham with the help of his son Prophet Ishmael.

The last point we discussed was the number of prayers. We said the Muslim is supposed to make five prayers every day. The first prayer is at dawn before sunrise the second is at noon, the third one is in the afternoon or midway between noon and sunset, the fourth is immediately after sunset and the fifth is the night prayer and comes about an hour and half or so after sunset and extends for the rest of the night. We ended with the call for prayer and its meaning. So we basically covered the preliminaries for getting ready for prayers.

5.4 Prayers: Form and Significance

Host: How are the movements of *salah* actually done?

Jamal Badawi:

Once one has made ablution and establishes the direction of the *Kaaba* one is ready to start performing the prayers. Of course both males and females need to make sure they are dressed appropriately. Each prayer is composed of a number of unites. Each unit is called *raka'a*. I will describe one of those unites. Before one starts the prayer they would have to think in their own heart that they now have the intention to pray before God, worshipping him, supplicating to him in full obedience and submission. Once this intention is there one raises both hands up towards the side of the head and says *Allahu Akbar* which means God is the greatest. Then the right hand is placed over the left hand. After this the minimum that is to be recited is the short first chapter of the Quran. For the entire duration of the prayer a Muslim is not supposed to look around or talk to other people or eat or drink. Prayer is total devotion and concentration. A person does not necessarily have to close his eyes but can look at the place on the floor where he will prostrate. After finishing the recitation one raises his hands again and says *Allahu Akbar* and prostrates. In this prostration a person bends himself at the waist and puts his hands on the knees and the back should be flat and the head should be at the same level as the back. There are also certain supplications that are mentioned. Then the person says *Samia Allahu Liman Hamidah* which means God hears those who praise Him and raises up to standing position. Then one says *Rabana WaLaka Alhamd* Oh my Lord all praise or thanks are due to you. After this comes perhaps the most beautiful moment in the prayer which shows complete humility and submission to God. Then one goes down onto hands and knees with the toes facing the direction of the *Kaaba*, the hands are by the ears as the forehead and the nose touch the ground. While in this position there is another supplication that is made. Then one sits up onto their legs from this position before repeating the same prostration again. This would be the end of the first unit called *raka'a*.

Host: How many unites are required in the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

It ranges between two to four depending on the time of day and which prayer is performed. For example the early morning prayer at dawn before sunrise is composed of two unites. The noon prayer, afternoon prayer and the late night prayer are four unites each. The prayer that is performed after sunset is composed of three unites. So the order of prayer in one day is 2, 4, 4, 3, 4 making a total of 17 unites.

Host: Can you go back and explain the significance of some of the movements? First of all what is the significance of raising the hands at the beginning of the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

Usually as humans we use the hands as symbols of power. When we raise these hands in the time of prayer it symbolizes that one is really yielding and submitting to their Lord and that any physical, intellectual or other power that is bestowed on us is all in Your hands as You are greater than we are. In fact the very lifting of the hands is to show that one yields consciously not under pressure and that is why we use the word submission. There is another meaning also to lifting of the hands and it is that this action is like throwing the world away and that now one is going to concentrate and focus on devotion and worship to God. Like I said before one doesn't look at people around them or talk to them or think about eating or drinking as one is only thinking about God. Then placing the hands on top of one another is like one says "in front of You oh Lord I am humble, I am weak, I am nothing." Also I said that when one raises his hands they say *Allahu Akbar* or that God is the greatest and this shows again the nature of Islam where the physical movement and the utterance of the tongue are consistent, so there is full harmony between the movement and utterance of glorification.

Host: What is the wording and meaning of the first chapter of the Quran that is read in the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

Well of course this is a very important chapter and it is mandatory to recite this chapter in each unite of prayer. This chapter is of great significance and is called the Mother of the Book or the Cornerstone of the Quran because short as this chapter may be it has the most beautiful supplication that anyone can think of. "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The significance of this is that it teaches the believer that anything he does should be done in sincerity and in the name of God. God has appointed us as trustees on this earth and anything we do by way of worship or other activities in life should be done in His name because it is by His power that we are able to do these things. This does not only apply to prayer, a Muslim should recite this first verse whenever he starts any activity.

The second verse says "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds." First of all it says that thanks are due to God and this reminds us that one of the purpose of prayer is thanks giving. God has given us boundless benefits and bounties which are innumerable. He gave us health, property, food and everything that we have on this earth we owe to God. As humans when someone gives one a bar of chocolate or piece of candy one says thank you, so what about He who created the

whole universe and the original giver of all of those bounties. The second part of the verse is a beautiful reminder of the universality of Islam and that there is only one God and one humanity and God is not the Lord of certain people but of the entire humanity and universe. This in a way is a revolution against all types of false barriers that people establish between human beings. The barriers that are based on geographic locations, nationalistic orientation, differences between races and the sexes based on wealth or social status does not mean anything for the Muslim because there is only one God and one Brotherhood that is the entire humanity.

The next verse says “Most Gracious, Most Merciful.” These are two words that reflect the mercy of God. *Al-Raheem* means Merciful; *Al-Rahman* is a beautiful word that does not have an exact equivalent in English it is usually translated as Beneficent (in this case Gracious). In Arabic *Al-Rahman* could mean the source of Mercy, not only is God Merciful but he is the source of all Mercy, He is Mercy Himself. This is very important because it shows the orientation of the Muslim. Even though there are so many divine attributes of God that appear in the Quran but the most cherished quality of God as the Quran emphasizes (the evidence is found in this chapter which is repeated by every Muslim at least seventeen times everyday) is The Beneficent, The Merciful.

The next verse says “Master of the Day of Judgment.” It reminds us that our life here is not senseless and aimless as there is a Day of Judgment where we will stand before God and that He will be the sole Judge.

Then it goes on “Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.” This flows logically from the previous verses because if we acknowledge God as the Lord of the universe and the ultimate Judge then it follows that He is the only One worthy of worship and devotion and the One who should be sought after to fulfill our desires and needs and to remove our anxieties.

The next one is “Show us the straight way.” This is a kind of supplication and what is a better supplication than asking to be guided. All things will follow and fall in place once one is guided on the right path. Then it describes that path in the following verse as “The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.” This makes the distinction between the only straight path (we know that mathematically that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line) which is clear and concise with no complexities, as it is a straight man to God relationship which is distinct from the path of those who earned the anger of God or totally rejected God or of those who might have believed but then were misled. Then it ends with the word “Ameen” which is equivalent more or less to the English word Amen.

If one really reflects on the meaning of this short chapter in the Quran one can say safely that it is perhaps the most beautiful, concise and universal supplication which can strike cords with any believer anywhere and at any time.

Host: When the individual or the Muslim recites this as part of the *salah* or prayer does he or she actually feel that God is listening and responding to this?

Jamal Badawi:

Absolutely, this is one of the main characteristics of Muslim prayers. There is no intermediaries, even prophets are not regarded as intermediaries. A person prays directly to God. The best way to explain this is to quote a saying of Prophet Muhammad in which he says that God said that he divided this chapter into two parts one for us and one for Him. Then he continues that when we say “praise be to God the Lord of the universe,” God would respond “My servant thanked me.” When a person says “Most Gracious, Most Merciful” God will say “my servant praised me.” When the believer says that God is “Master of the Day of Judgment” God would respond “my servant glorified me.” When we recite “Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek,” God will respond “whatever my servant asks he will get.” This means that the remaining verses in the chapter about guidance onto the strait path is already accepted by God.

Host: You had mentioned that the recitation of this chapter was the minimum for each unit of prayer, are there any additional things that may be added or are required to be added?

Jamal Badawi:

The bare minimum is the recitation of the first chapter of the Quran. Before reciting this after one says *Allahu Akbar* at the beginning of the prayer there are various supplications that were suggested by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and one can select any of them. Let me quote part of one “I turn my face to He who created the heavens and earth, submitting uprightly to Him and I am not of those who associate other deities with Him, verily my prayers, my rituals, my life and my death are all for God Lord of the universe there is no partner with Him. So I am ordained and I am of those who submit to the will of God.

In addition to this after a person recites the first chapter of the Quran it is desirable to recite an additional portion of the Quran. This part could be a short chapter or a portion of a longer chapter depending on the time and circumstances of the individual. An example of this would be one of the very short chapters in the Quran (112) the translation is “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal,

Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.” There is a great deal of flexibility as one can make the prayer in a few minutes or in a longer amount of time.

Host: Why do prayers include so many movements? What significance do the movements have?

Jamal Badawi:

Prayer reflects the whole philosophy and attitude of Islam towards life. A human being is composed mainly of spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects. Islam doesn't see these elements as conflicting parts but that they should be harmonized together and brought together in submitting to God. In the prayer first of all one feels that he is in the presence of God. He cleansed himself before hand and finds a clean place to pray, devotes his attention and thinks only about God when he prays. This is one of the greatest experiences of spiritual ecstasy, nobody can really describe it or know what it is like unless one really tastes the feeling that one is directly communicating with God. Now beside the spiritual part a person's mind is not absent because he is required to think about what he recites. Like I said before one recites from the Quran which is full of wisdom and knowledge and one should always think about what he recites, so that the intellect is participating in the prayer as well. The physical and material is not excluded as the body itself is in harmony and complete synchronization with the spiritual and intellect is also participating in the expression of humility and submission.

5.5 Pillars of Islam- Prayers: Form & Significance

Summery of 5.4 "Prayers: Form & Significance"

Last time we covered three major points. The first was a brief description of how the main unit in the prayer called *raka'a* is performed. We described briefly the various movements, standing in the beginning of the prayer including the recitation that is said in the beginning of the prayer. Then we went into the various prostrations with the hands resting on the knees then the standing position the prostrating position with the hands, face, knees and toes on the ground which is repeated after a brief rest in-between. We also mentioned that these prayers are conducted five times every day and that the unit vary between 2 to 4 depending on the time of day.

The second major part of our discussion we tried to analyze some of the movements by looking into their significance. For example we discussed the beginning and the way one raises their hands by way of declaration of submission to God and humility before Him. The very statement of the term *Allahu Akbar* or God is the most great is most befitting when one stands before God and starts communicating with Him. We discussed what is recited in the standing position which is the first chapter in the

Quran. We analyzed the beautiful meaning that it carries and how it praises God, acknowledges His lordship and of one's servitude to Him alone and in seeking His guidance and help alone in our lives. Then again we described how the various prostrations are preformed.

The last point that was raised was about the significance of these movements and we only touched upon one aspect of that. In a Muslim's prayers the entire human being is involved in the prayer with his heart, soul, mind and body. This reflect the nature of Islam which is a faith which is regarded as a complete way of life which integrates all these aspects of human life into one with no conflict between intellect, faith or the physical material body. In that sense then when the Muslim prays he prays with his soul, heart, mind as they are all in total harmony under the servitude of God.

5.5 Prayers: Form and Significance (Cont.)

Host: We addressed what is said in the standing portions of the prayer; what is said in the other portions in the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

Just as a reminder the first thing that is recited in the standing position when the hands are placed on the torso is the first chapter of the Quran. It is also encouraged to any additional small chapter or other part of the Quran depending on the time and ability of the individual. After this is finished the person raises their hands again and says *Allahu Akbar* and then kneels with the hands resting on the knees and the back is strait. In this prostration one recites *Subhana Rabia Al-Atheem* three times which means God is most great (or glory be to my Lord most great). Then one stands up again saying says *Samia Allahu Liman Hamidah* and *Rabana WaLaka Alhamd* which means God hears those who praise Him and Our Lord praise be to You. Then again when the person gets down on the floor and he puts his hands and forehead on the floor in the act of prostration which reflects ultimate humility and submission before God. In this position one says *Subhana Rabia Al-A'ala* three times which means glory be to my Lord most high. The two prostration are separated by a brief rest where one sits up in which one could say *Allahuma Ighfirli Wa Irhamni* which means oh my lord forgive me and have mercy on me. Then again the same prostration on the floor is repeated and the same words are recited. So the prayer is not just movements that are void of any meanings but each movement has certain supplication that go with it.

Host: Now you used Arabic and then you translated it, is it necessary for a person to use the Arabic words?

Jamal Badawi:

If one really looks into the bare minimum that is required to be recited in Arabic in the prayer it is very simple. These recitations are very simple and are repeated in every unit of every prayer five times a day so it becomes very simple to repeat. It doesn't mean that one has to repeat it without understanding it. The bare minimum supplication's meanings are easy to recognize. According to unanimous position of the Muslim jurists the Quran when it is recited in the prayer is the word of God and can not be translated because the Quran was not written by Prophet Muhammad who simply received it by dictation. Not only the meaning but also the words that were dictated to him. The word of God can not be translated as it has to remain in its original language because any translation can not convey fully what the meanings are. Prayer in its nature is an act of submission and complete servitude to God, and as such it should be done in the same way that we are commanded to do it.

If one looks at it in terms of the practical implications one will notice that throughout the Muslim world for 1400 years since Islam was completed with the advent of Muhammad (PBUH) hundreds of millions of Muslims throughout the world have been praying in exactly the same way and by using the same words or supplications as taught 1400 years ago by Prophet Muhammad. This makes the believer feel a strong sense of identity with other believers in the present, past and future. In different parts of the Muslim world everyone prays in the same way. It is beautiful that one can go anywhere in the Muslim world and despite the hundreds of different dialects the prayer uses exactly the same words message. Whether one is praying in China, Russia, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Arabia, Morocco, Dartmouth, Halifax and North America or wherever one goes the prayer is always the same. Any Muslim does not feel strange wherever he goes in the world because the prayers are the same and the language used in them are also the same. Indeed it is not a bad idea at all that there is one universal language in addition to the language used in any specific location as it would foster communication by people from all over the world. In fact when Muslim civilization was at its height one found Muslims from all over the world all knew Arabic whether they were from India, Russia, China or other parts of the world.

Host: Is there any special way or expression that one would use to end the prayer?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, one doesn't just walk out of the prayer when one finishes the prayer. Like we said before when one starts the prayer it is like throwing the world behind one and praying and standing in full devotion and submission in front of God. So once the prayer is finished just like when one visits someone great one has to take permission

in order to leave, one doesn't just finish what they came for and turn their back and leave, which is even more important when one is in front of God. After the number of unites are completed with all the recitations and prostrations one would be sitting and there is a specific formula that should be recited. The meaning in English goes something like this "Greetings and prayers are due to God; peace and blessings upon you oh Messenger of God and God's mercy and blessings. Peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of God, I bear witness that there is no deity but the One and only God, Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. Oh God bestow your grace on the descendants of Muhammad as you bestowed your grace on Abraham and the descendants of Abraham and bless Muhammad and the descendants of Muhammad as you blessed Abraham and the descendants of Abraham. And yours is thanks and glory." After this is recited a person who is praying turns his face to the right side and says *Asalamu Alikum Warahmatu Allah* which means Peace be upon you and the mercy of God and His blessing. Then one turns their head to the left side and repeats the same thing. This is almost like someone who comes from travel greets the people around him.

Host: We mentioned that prayers are required five times a day and is in a specified time range. Is there any significance in the timing of the prayers in this way?

Jamal Badawi:

The five daily prayers are distributed in such a way that it allows the believer to be in a state of constant remembrance of God throughout his day regardless of other activities or jobs that one may do. This is beautiful in a sense because a believer in Islam is not required to leave his work aside and become an unproductive member in society in order to spend his time in devotional prayers. It doesn't teach the believer that religion is only one aspect of his life that should not interfere with other activities and only remember God for a couple hours once a week. But rather the course of our activities are beautifully intermingled with the remembrance of God. That is why one notices that each of these prayers, even there are five of them in a day, really don't take much time. It could take as little as three minutes to perform a prayer. The prayers are distributed throughout the day to keep us on our toes and always in a state of remembrance.

The first prayer is the early morning prayer that is performed before sunrise. This a beautiful beginning to the day at a time where there is transition from the tranquility of the night the activities of the day, one takes the shift and remembers God on the proper railing.

The noon prayer comes at a time when a person is really involved in his activities and occupation. One stops for a few minutes so as not to forget God and to find encouragement to conduct their activities in accordance to the guidance of God.

The late afternoon prayer which comes between noon and sunset. This comes at a time when a person is in the midst of their activities but getting closer to the end of a working day. Again one affirms his faith in God and seeks inspiration and guidance while relaxing for a few minutes.

The night prayer that comes at sunset, *Magrib*, is performed when a person has finished his working day and when one is united with the family. The prayer is an expression of grace to God that a whole day had been completed and fulfilled. God is remembered again when night falls and the day ends.

The last and fifth prayer, which takes place a half an hour or so after sunset and extends to midnight but is preferably done before a person goes to bed. Again one ends the day with the remembrance of God and thanking Him for His grace and things he enjoyed throughout the day.

The prayers are beautifully distributed along the entire spectrum of activities from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. One is always in a state of remembrance of God while still being productive and conducting normal business.

Host: What is the position of an individual if inadvertently or due to circumstances beyond their control they might miss the prescribed period for a prayer? And what can be done in this case?

Jamal Badawi:

As a principle one should try their best to perform the prayer in its proper time or range which usually extends to the beginning of the next prayer. It is not a desirable act to deliberately delay a prayer from its appointed time or range of time especially if it is out of neglect, apathy or lack of attention because this reflects the attitude of the person towards God. This is not encouraged.

But there may be circumstances where a person may inadvertently forget, a person may be sleeping and is really tired and does not wake up until the time for the prayer has passed, or there may be a Muslim physician in the middle of an emergency operation and he can't leave the person to go pray where there is reasonable justification by exception to delay the prayer. If this is the case a person should perform the prayer as soon as the cause for this difficulty is removed. The prayer is not left out but makes it up in an effort to catch up.

Host: Is there anybody who is exempt from praying or are there any special concessions that are made as a result of circumstances?

Jamal Badawi:

If you mean exemptions as in a person would not be required to pray there is a basic rule that this is very rare and in very specified cases. For example a small child would not be required observe the prayer as this requirement begins with puberty. A person who has mental disease where a person can not understand the concept can not be punished for not keeping the prayer. But other than that any adult Muslim be it male or female is required to keep their prayers from the age of puberty up till death. There are some specified concessions. The most important of which are given to women during their monthly cycle and during their postnatal period of rest. It may be too hard for them to perform the prayer when they are in a state in where they might be suffering. Of course they can make other types of supplication but not the prayer in this form and with these movements. Women are exempt in these cases and are not required to make up for it after their cycle is finished or after their postnatal natal rest period (maximum of forty days) is over.

There may be however some concessions which do not exempt a person from prayer but rather makes it easy for them to adapt under special circumstances. Prayer is such a central and important aspect in the life the believer that it is required to be maintained under all circumstances. It is not like fasting where some people might be exempt for health reasons or like the pilgrimage where the person may not be required to do it if he can not afford it and it is not like the poor's dues where if a person is not rich he would not be required pay the poor's due. *Salah* is the second most important pillar of Islam that keeps the believer in contact with his creator. An example of concessions however is if a person is sick and is unable to pray while standing he can pray while sitting, if he is not able to pray while he is sitting he can pray while laying down and there are special formats for this that meet the requirements of the person.

A person may be traveling and facing difficulty and regardless of whether one is traveling on horse back, train or plane is always hectic and tiring. For travelers there is special concession. The prayers that are required to be four unites like the noon,

afternoon and night prayer can be shortened to become two unites. Also a person can combine prayers by prayer the noon and afternoon prayer together either in the noon or the afternoon time. One can also combine the sunset prayer and the night prayer together either at the time of sunset or later at night to make it easier for the traveler and facilitate this process.

In principal however, even if a person is on the battle field or under fear the prayer should still not be left out and the person should still make the prayer in whatever form possible. This keeps the remembrance of God always in the mind and heart of the believer irrespective of health, disease, travel or residence but it is adaptable depending on the circumstances.

Host: Is it possible for a person to make more prayers than the five required prayers?

Jamal Badawi:

Oh certainly the sky is the limit. Muslim jurists divide prayer into three types. There are prayers that are absolutely mandatory which include the five daily prayers and it includes by way of collective duty on the community the funeral prayers. Then there is a second category called *Sunnah* which is highly recommended by the Prophet. Within this there are degrees with certain prayers which are highly recommended which are called *wajib* which just next to the absolute requirement like praying two unites before the morning prayer, two or four unites before noon and two or four after, two unites after sunset prayer and prayers after night prayers. There are other prayers which are less emphasized which regularly go before or after the five main prayers. The third category is called *naflah* or *nafl* which are prayers that are conducted anytime one feels like praying, and especially for the night prayer. One should only avoid prayers when the sun rises or sets or in the few minutes shortly before noon but other than that one can pray at any time.

5.6 Pillars of Islam- Group Prayers, Conclusion

Summery of 5.5 "Prayers: Form & Significance Continued"

First we started by giving the translation and meanings of the recitations and supplications that are mentioned in the prayers. We indicated that these supplications have to be in the original Arabic language, which gives the opportunity for any Muslim in the world at any given time in the present or in the past fourteen hundred

years to pray using the same words in the same language and to unite with other Muslims.

Third of all we talked about the significance of the timing of the prayers throughout the day. Regular performance of the prayer helps keep the believer's life on the proper rail for the entire day. We talked briefly about some of the concessions in prayers to facilitate difficulties like travel or sickness. Finally, we indicated that the five daily prayers are mandated on every adult Muslim and that beyond that a Muslim can make additional prayers at any time during the day or night.

5.6 Group Prayers, Conclusion

Host: Are there any prayers that must be preformed as a group, in congregation?

Jamal Badawi:

There are certain prayers that must be preformed in a congregation. The most important congregational prayer is the noon prayer on Friday. Usually the prayer is proceeded by a brief sermon explaining some aspects of Islam and its application to people's lives and some of the contemporary problems. In addition to that there are certain other prayers like funeral and festival prayers that must be prayed in a congregation. There are two basic festivals a year one after the month of fasting and the other is called the Feast of Sacrifice at the time of the pilgrimage. These are the prayers that must be prayed in congregation.

In addition to the above it is highly desirable for the five daily prayers are to be preformed in congregation especially if a person has easy access to the mosque. In fact prophet Muhammad PBUH indicated that to perform prayers in a congregation would give one at least twenty seven the spiritual reward than if one does it by themselves. However if a person doesn't have easy access to a mosque or might be traveling to a place were there is no possibility of going to the mosque then at least a few people neighbors or family can perform congregational prayer.

Host: When prayer is performed in congregation is it the same as when one does it alone?

Jamal Badawi:

The basic format of the prayer doesn't change when praying individually or in congregation. When prayers are conducted in congregation people who are praying stand in straight rows shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot. In front of the rows

would be an *Imam* or leader of the prayer (his position is not like a priest or intermediary as there is no such thing in Islam) who is simply standing there as a coordinator. So the basic format of the prayer are done but following the *Imam* whom initiates the beginning of the prayer and who gives signals by saying *Allahu-Akbar* (God is Greatest) while moving from one prostration to the other. When all recitations are finished at the end of the prayer the *Imam* ends the prayer by saying *Asalamu-Alikum* (Peace Be Upon You) which is a signal for those praying behind him. During a congregational prayer everyone prays in unison as a solid group. A person should not anticipate the *Imam* and should just follow him so long as the prayer is done in the proper way.

When the prayer is done on Friday there is a sermon that proceeds it or during festivals there is a sermon that follows the prayers. There might be other detailed differences but not in the basic format of the prayer.

Host: Can women join in the congregational prayers?

Jamal Badawi:

Certainly, women can have congregational prayers in a variety of forms. Women can do it by themselves if there are only women available, they can pray with other Muslims (a man, wife and children can pray together along with their neighbors). If women prefer to go to the mosque they should be welcome. In fact Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that “we should not prevent the female servants of God (just as the male servant of God) from going to the houses of God or houses of worship. In fact in his own practice Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) welcomed women in the mosque as they joined in prayer with the men. The so called rightly guided caliphs after the Prophet, especially the first four, who strictly followed the instructions of the Prophet (PBUH) also followed in the same tradition of welcoming women to the mosque.

But one should also indicate that there are concessions for women concerning congregational prayers which are not given to men. These concessions are related to the compulsory nature of attending congregational prayers. For example it is compulsory for males to go and pray the congregational prayer on Friday and it is almost compulsory to pray in the festivals or even the five daily prayers whenever possible in the mosques. For women it is optional to go to any of these prayers. They are given this concession in consideration of their basic noble function as mothers which may make it at times difficult or inconvenient to go to the mosque on a regular basis several times a day. This is simply a concession but not something that is to mean that they are not welcome there.

Host: Where do women who wish to participate in the congregational prayer stand?

Jamal Badawi:

In my description of how the Muslim prayers are performed one has to understand the format of prayer in order to understand why it is organized in a particular way. As I said before Muslim prayers are not simply people sitting together or singing but rather it involves thinking, recitations as well as physical movements. As I said in congregational prayers people should stand in straight rows shoulder to shoulder and toe to toe as one row after the other. Considering this kind of format in prayers there are three alternatives where women can participate in the prayers. Either they would be in front and the men pray behind them, they could stand next to men within the same rows or they should stand behind the men in rows.

Lets address each alternative. If women were to stand in front of men and prostrate to the ground in prayer while men are behind them they would not feel a sense of privacy and it would be uncomfortable for either side. If they stand along side men shoulder to should and toe to toe obviously this would not be the most conducive atmosphere for both sexes to really concentrate on their devotion in prayer where they should be standing before God and communicating with Him and dedicating themselves to God. The third alternative which is perhaps the more logical solution and is what the Islamic Law agrees with is that when men come to pray they should go to the front rows and women should start from the back rows and close in the rows. In this way both sexes can be totally devoted and concentrate on their prayers without any particular physical distraction that might reduce this highly spiritual act as the format simply necessitates this particular order.

Host: What are some of the benefits that come from performing prayer and some of the impact that this can have on an individual's life? What are the spiritual impacts of prayer on a person?

Jamal Badawi:

As human beings we have natural inclinations to relate to and worship a power that is greater than us. What happens in the absence of divine guidance to the right path is that people seek the power that is greater than them, the power that they yearn to relate to. They may find it mistakenly in some powers that God created in nature like the trees, rivers, sun, and moon and they worship those objects which is an erroneous way of fulfilling this natural human aspiration. Some people find this fulfillment by worshipping other human beings. Other people who may not believe in a revealed religion may seek fulfillment a tyrant or their own desires. Self worship and mind worship are all various forms of misdirection of the instinctive natural feeling of relating to the greatest power that anyone can perceive in this universe.

Prayer is basically communication, personal contact and our relationship with the creator. Islam fulfills the instinctive feeling of aspiration and yearning to the only one who is worthy of being worshipped, the one and only creator and sustainer of the entire universe, God.

Secondly prayer by its very nature is a practical way of expressing ones love of God. Standing five times every day and keeping this vigilant remembrance of God, knowing and realizing that when we pray He hears and listens to our prayers and that he responds to our prayers without any intermediary or obstacles that may stand between us is a beautiful feeling and way of expressing divine love. We find that God addressed Prophet Moses in the Quran in (20:14) “Verily, I am Allah. There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.” Remembrance of God is one of the greatest aspects of the expressing the love of God in a practical way.

When a person stands for prayer he or she stands on the earth from which they were created unto which they are going to return and on which they will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. The humble movement when the person puts their forehead on the ground to express submission to God is a reminder for one not to be too arrogant or proud because after all the face which is the most honorable part of the body is submitting itself by putting itself on the floor in expression of humility before God. It is as such a total expression of submission to God. It is submission of the soul, mind and body. The body is trained through prayer to be obedient to the way of life and the path of God. Prayer is the very embodiment of the virtue of humility.

In addition there is the recitation in every unit of prayer where there is praise of God and thankfulness to God for the various countless bounties and blessings that He has given to mankind. As such this develops a sense of appreciation and content feelings in the mind of the believer. When prayers are understood in their true spirit and meaning it could provide a person with infinite strength to face the difficulties and tribulations of life. If a person is suffering from anguish or stress, he should pray in order to be soothed and to release these feelings. We find the Quran describes prayer as one of the basic things that one can seek strength in (2:153)“ O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer;” which is also a source of stress release. If a person is in a state of anxiety and worry the best cancelation and encouragement is to perform prayers. In the Quran in (13:28) it says “Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah. for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.” This creates a therapy for the common anxiety and stress. There is no wonder that fourteen hundred years ago the Prophet of Islam that whenever he had any kind of worry or difficulty he would go and make ablution and start praying. In the Prophet’s own sayings he said “my ultimate pleasure is in performing the prayers.”

Host: How can prayers contribute to an individual's moral development?

Jamal Badawi:

The best answer is to quote the Quran directly in (29:45) "Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." This means that if the person performs the prayer, not just as mechanical movements of going up and down as many Muslims do today without getting into the depth and impact of prayer, in its complete sense then the prayer itself is capable of transforming the life of the individual. Five times everyday a person goes into this vigilant remembrance of God. One remembers the greatness of God and expresses their love of God; this approach to prayer or a person who performs it in that sense is not likely to indulge in acts which are indecent or things that are morally improper according to the revelation of God. We find that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicated that a person who's prayer does not forbid him from indecency is not really getting anything out of that prayer. This means that one just makes the mechanical movements of prayer but doesn't get the benefits of the prayer. One time the Prophet quoted in a *Hadith Qudsi* (the Prophet relates the inspiration of God in a form that is not the Quran) in which God says "I only accept prayers from those who humble themselves before my glory, those who try to restrain their passion and keep away from what I have forbidden, and those who feed the hungry and cloth those who don't have clothes." This is the real nature of the moral aspect of the prayer.

However, what if a person makes an error, as we are all sinful as human beings we are not perfect? Again through prayer the believer finds ample opportunity to correct mistakes, to try to get on the right path and to purify one's self from whatever he one may have done between prayers. This basic point was explained by prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he said "suppose one of you has a river right at his doorstep and five times everyday he goes to the river, immerses himself and cleanses himself would he have any impurities on him?" So the companions replied "no" and he replied "the prayer is like that." So prayer is likened to total cleansing. It teaches the believer that the moral aspect of life is not separate isolated compartment of life but that all aspects of life are interwoven through one's entire life. Prayer shows us that religiosity is not limited to a few hours every week but is part of our entire lives.

Host: In what way is prayer relevant to the social aspect of life?

Jamal Badawi:

In a sense prayer and especially congregational prayer, which is highly encouraged, is a practical manifestation of true human brotherhood and equality before God. When a person goes to a place of worship there is no place reserved for this person or that person. People don't stand in lines by virtue of race, status or any kind of false criteria. In prayer it doesn't matter if a person is a ruler, rich or poor everyone stands in one line side by side shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot expressing true universal brotherhood and equality before God.

When people go for congregational prayers in the mosque they do it five times a day and they meet people as they go to prayers five times a day. This establishes solidarity, mutual concern and caring for one another unlike what we see today where a person could die and rot in his home before anyone can ask about him. In addition to this we find that in congregational prayer where we follow the movements in unison of the *Imam*, it teaches public order and self discipline. This leads us to the leadership in Islamic government and we see that if we make an analogy between the rules of leadership in congregational prayer and leadership in a government system they fit perfectly. An example is that in prayers the *Imam* can not impose himself he should be consented to from the people who pray behind him, which is this is the same as the rule in Islam that a ruler can not impose himself but should be accepted by the people.

Secondly, in the prayer the role of the *Imam* is not as an intermediary between man and God but simply a person who follows the format of prayer as he doesn't invent anything or have dictatorial or absolute power. In Islamic government there is no theocracy and a ruler is not an intermediary and can't claim to have powers that are beyond human capacity. People follow the leader not as an intermediary but as a coordinator.

Thirdly, in prayers if the *Imam* makes a mistake it is an incumbent duty on those who are behind him to gently correct him without disturbing the prayers and the unity. In the Islamic system of government it is an incumbent duty of the ruled to correct the ruler if he makes a mistake without creating chaos.

Finally, if the person leading the prayer continues to make mistakes and refuses to comply with the rules of prayer which is incumbent on everybody then people have to remove him from his position which is the same with the system of government in Islam. So really guidance in prayer is not limited to an individual but involves collective training of the community of believers.

5.7 Pillars of Islam- Zakah (Charity)

5.7 Zakah (Charity)

Host: What is the meaning of the term *Zakah* which can be roughly translated as charity? There are many translations that are assigned as the meaning for *Zakah* such as tithe, religious tax, alms, charity and so on.

Jamal Badawi:

Quite frankly none of those terms fully explain the meaning of the Islamic term for *Zakah* and I don't know of any language that has an exact equivalent to this term. The literal meaning of *Zakah* in Arabic is purity. For example we find in the Quran in (9:103) "Of their goods, take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them." Other related Arabic meanings for *Zakah* are blessings, growth and development. In the legislative sense in terms of Islamic jurisprudence *Zakah* simply means the payment of a certain percentage of one's assets to rightful beneficiaries. This is also an act of the love of God and obedience to him. In this basic sense some of the terms that you referred to are erroneous and others are incomplete.

An erroneous term that I am familiar with and is mentioned quite frequently is tithe. *Zakah* is not equivalent to tithe. Tithe according to the dictionary is one tenth of the produce of the land which is paid (especially during medieval times) to support the church and clergy; in Islam *Zakah* is not paid to support clergy but to support the poor. In Islam also there is no institution of church as is understood in the Juneau Christian tradition.

The term tax is not appropriate either, because most people think of something that one has to pay or be punished by law. When one pays tax one pays it reluctantly while trying to seek every deduction possible or to avoid it completely. In the case of *Zakah* it is done by the Muslim as an act of worship and love of God. One does not do it reluctantly but enthusiastically. Furthermore *Zakah* is different from tax because it is a minimum payment and the person is encouraged to pay more.

In that sense the terms charity or alms is the closest meaning to *Zakah*. In the Webster Dictionary charity means an act of love of God or fellow human being. There is one reservation and that is that when one says charity most people think of something voluntary. *Zakah* in Islam is an obligatory duty on every Muslim that has a minimum but has no maximum.

Host: What is the significance and the place of *Zakah* among the Pillars of Islam?

Jamal Badawi:

Zakah always comes third in the Pillars of Islam. This is confirmed further in the Quran where we find that *Zakah* is mentioned side by side with prayer in more than eighty verses. An example of this is in (24:56) “So establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and obey the Messenger. that ye may receive mercy.” The Quran also indicates that failure to pay this duty of charity, towards needy fellow human beings, earns the person the wrath and punishment of God in this life and hereafter. In this life it could be the loss of blessings and suffering as well as punishment in the hereafter. An example in (9:34) in the Quran “And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah. announce unto them a most grievous penalty.” Then it goes on that this metal that they used to cherish will be heated and they will be marked or branded on their faces, backs and flanks. This verse gives a very terrible description of the consequences of miserliness and lack of gratefulness.

On the other hand one finds that the Quran is replete with quotations which encourage people to do this act of *Zakah*. An example is found in (2:261) which gives a vivid description of how God rewards people by manifolds of what they spend by way of charity. “The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear Hath a hundred grains. Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.” An example that describes the believers on the Day of Judgment is found in (51:15-19) where it gives a vivid description of the enjoyment and felicity of believers and then it relates it to the reasons they are rewarded and one of which is *Zakah*. “As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs, taking joy in the things which their Lord gives them, because, before then, they lived a good life. They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night, and in the hour of early dawn, they (were found) praying for Forgiveness; and in their wealth and possessions (was remembered) the right of the (needy,) him who asked, and him who (for some reason) was prevented (from asking).” Payment of *Zakah* is an act of the love of God and an expression of the commitment to obey God or submit to His will.

Host: What did you mean when you said that *Zakah* literally means purity?

Jamal Badawi:

It means that when one pays *Zakah* it purifies in a number of ways. First, it purifies one’s property; because if it is one’s duty to pay dues on one’s asset is not pure till they are paid. *Zakah* purifies property and makes it blessed and legitimate from the spiritual sense.

Second of all, it purifies the heart of the one who gives *Zakah* from selfishness, greed, materialism and lack of concern for fellow human beings. It also purifies the heart of the recipient of *Zakah* from jealousy and hatred against those who possess more.

From a social level *Zakah* is purification of society at large. It protects against class conflict and injustices that the system of economics or political systems that allow the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer. This purifies society from any subversive ideology which finds fertile grounds when one has this kind of greed and lack of social justice.

Host: How does Islam view personal property in relation to the topic of *Zakah*?

Jamal Badawi:

To start with Islam makes it clear and we find abundant evidence of that in the Quran that all the universe and all of what it contains belongs ultimately and exclusively to God. God is the absolute sovereign owner and master of the universe. From this basic notion it follows that no human being owns anything in the absolute and ultimate sense. According to the Quran humans are the trustees of God on earth and that God has endowed us with these resources to test us with this trust. In that sense we find that the Quran talks about property as the domain owned by God as we find in (57:7) "Believe in Allah and His apostle, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity),- for them is a great Reward."

We do find however in the Quran the terms "your property" and "your wealth" when referring to human beings in order to give humans a sense of dignity and confidence in themselves and in order to encourage and to motivate humans to work and reap the reward. We find examples of this in (2:252) and in (2:188). What is really fascinating is that even though God owns everything when he asks us or commands us to spend part of that for the needy He says that is a loan from us to Him. This gives us the sweet feeling that we are not just dealing with human beings, governments or tax collectors but with God himself who is abundantly generous. In (2:245) it says "Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan, which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times? It is Allah that giveth (you) Want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return." Also in the same chapter it talks about multiplying the rewards 700 times or more. This reflects the attitude of the Muslim in Islam does not condemn private ownership nor does it tolerate greedy economic systems that crush the poor and needy.

Host: What is the system of *Zakah* and its rules? Who has to pay *Zakah*?

Jamal Badawi:

Zakah is due on every Muslim who owns things beyond their basic needs for a year amounting to what is called *nasab* or more. *Nasab* is simply a minimum of extras beyond which one must pay *Zakah*. This *nasab* varies from time to time and is estimated at the present time to be roughly between \$400 and \$500. In other words if you are a Muslim and you have things beyond your basic needs amounting to \$400 or more in value for a year or more then *Zakah* is on this amount.

One does not pay *Zakah* on basic needs such as clothes, food and one's principal residence. The tools of profession are also exempt from *Zakah* because they are not wealth but rather tools used to help one earn money. Some jurists make analogy with machinery in the factory used to produce goods. Women's jewelry that is used and is of a reasonable amount is not subject to *Zakah*. If the jewelry is used as savings then it is subject to *Zakah*. It is the luxuries that *Zakah* is paid for.

Some jurists say *Zakah* is due in terms of assets on four categories. One is the produce of the land; secondly it is due on cattle and there is a whole detailed system as to the age and so on that is subject to *Zakah*. It is also due on articles of trade like inventory that is bought and sold in a year. Also *Zakah* is paid on gold and silver, which is a classic term, used in the book of jurisprudence, today instead of using gold and silver we use money. *Zakah* applies to cash savings we have in the bank or stocks.

Host: What is the amount of *Zakah* required?

Jamal Badawi:

This varies as there is a large body of literature detailing all these issues. The amount ranges anywhere between 2.5% to a maximum of 20%. This varies depending on the type of assets and the difficulty with which one acquires them. In Islam there is a built in system of equity and justice. For example for savings, gold or silver the amount of *Zakah* is 2.5%. On land or the produce of land it is 10% if the land is irrigated by rain alone and it is 5% if one uses irrigation equipment. Some jurists say that if it is irrigated by both rain and equipment then the amount is 7.5% and if one uses lots of equipment and lots of effort then it is 2.5%. If one finds treasure or a mine without putting much effort the amount of *Zakah* is 20%. The amount of *Zakah* varies but the most common is 2.5%.

Host: Is there a particular time that *Zakah* has to be paid?

Jamal Badawi:

The most common rule is that it should be paid at the end of every year. There are exceptions to that for example if one finds a treasure then *Zakah* is due immediately. On land produce *Zakah* is due upon harvest because it all depends on how the harvest is each year. It is recommended to pay *Zakah* during the month of *Ramadan* because the rewarded manifold. If one wants to pay *Zakah* in installments throughout the year which is also subject to a final adjustment at the end of the year that is also acceptable.

There is wisdom behind it being paid once a year, because if it is paid every week or month it would become quite cumbersome. Also, if the time between payments becomes too long then it affects the people who need it. So there is a balance between the needs of individuals and society.

Host: Who is entitled to receive the *Zakah*?

Jamal Badawi:

There are eight categories that are specified in the Quran in (9:60). This includes first the poor, second the needy (who do not ask for help), third the employees appointed by the government to collect *Zakah*, fourth people who recently embraced Islam and have difficulty settling or to prevent harm from being done to Muslims, fifth to free slaves or prisoners of war by way of ransom, sixth those who are in debt by way of disaster but not because they squandered money, seventh in the way of God which is open category for defense or propagation of the faith and the eighth is the way fairer who is stranded in foreign lands and don't have sufficient means. It is recommended to first give those who are in most need within one's own town while gradually moving outward. Of course for people who are living in places where there is a large degree of affluence jurists say that people can send or transport the charity to places where it is most needed and places that have famine.

For those who may not be able to make monetary contribution there is a saying of Prophet Muhammad that says that when one smiles in their brother's face it is charity; when one ordains the good and forbids the evil it is also charity; when one removes harmful objects from the way it is charity; when one helps someone who is lost it is charity; when one helps someone who is blind or has bad sight it is charity; when one takes water from their own bucket and puts it in their brothers bucket it is an act of charity. *Zakah* is much more than just money.

5.8 Pillars of Islam- Siyam (Fasting)

5.8 Siyam (Fasting)

Host: What is the month of Ramadan and its significance to Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

In the Quran in (2:185) “Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.” It continues in(2:186) “When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way.”

It is apparent from these two verses in the Quran that there are two basic elements that are significant to the month of fasting. One is historical and the other is spiritual and moral.

From the historical aspect the month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar which follows the lunar year is the month in which the Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he was meditating in the cave of *Hira'a* outside of Mecca. This took place about 1400 years ago. The importance of the month of fasting is not only limited to Muslims but it is very essential event in the history of the world at large.

For the first time in history God chose to send a prophet not to a particular tribe, not to a particular ethnic group and not for a particular time but rather a universal prophet for all mankind and for all times. It is also significant that threw the last Prophet, God chose to reveal His complete will, guidance and way of life to mankind. This was done in the final scripture which is never to be changed or mixed with the philosophies of people. This scripture is authentic and is available till today in exactly the same way and language it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. As the Quran itself indicates that the revelation of the Quran was very important in the history of mankind because it culminates the essential message that was preached by all prophets from Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and finally Muhammad in one final and complete scripture. It also corrects misinterpretations or mixing of previous scriptures given to previous prophets. In that sense the revelation of the Quran represents an event for which not only Muslims but the entire world should be thankful for. I don't think that anything in the world is worthy of thanks more than guidance than being brought from the state of philosophical and theological riddles to

the simple straight forward path of truth. Nothing is better than going “from the darkness unto the light” as the Quran calls it.

The other aspect of Ramadan, as has been shown in the second verse I mentioned above, is mainly spiritual in nature. In this verse God talks about how close He is to mankind and to those who are earnest in seeking his guidance.

Host: How is fasting in the Muslim context observed?

Jamal Badawi:

As a general rule the month of Ramadan is observed by abstaining from food, drinks, smoking and sex from dawn (approximately 75 to 90minutes before sunrise) till sunset. When we talk about abstinence we are talking about total and complete abstinence. There is no restriction (other than what is not permissible in Islam) and all foods and drinks are permissible between sunset and dawn. It is only the restriction of common sense that exists during this period for people to avoid indulgence which is contrary to the wisdom and wisdom behind fasting (learning self control) and even the Islamic teachings about eating.

Host: Why does Ramadan come in different months and seasons?

Jamal Badawi:

The month of Ramadan is an Islamic month so it follows the Islamic Calendar which follows the lunar year. In the lunar year every month is about twenty nine and a half days. When the days are totaled the lunar year is about 10-11 days shorter than the solar year. This means that every year the month of fasting, Ramadan, come about 10-11 days earlier than the previous year. For example if this year Ramadan starts on July 13th next year it would start around July 3rd, the following year would start late in June and so on. This is how Ramadan rotates threew different seasons and months of the solar calendar. In a way one could say that it is advantageous if all fasting only occurred in December which would mean that one would fast for only 11 hours every time from dawn till sunset but if it always occurs in July one would fast between 16-18 hours. By rotating the month of Ramadan through different seasons and months the Muslim experiences the discipline of fasting under all kinds of conditions in all kinds of seasons.

Host: What do people who live by the polls or in Scandinavia who have months of continuous sunshine or darkness?

Jamal Badawi:

Islamic law in its nature has endless adaptability and flexibility when it comes to the application in particular situations. Of course we can't tell the people that they can't break their fast during the times of sunshine because night never comes and it doesn't mean that when it is always dark that they can't fast! Both situations are unreasonable and contradictory to the aspect of Islamic law that says one shouldn't fast continuously for days without food or drink. The solution for people who live in these places is that they can fast a number of hours that is equivalent to the number of hours fasted by people who are close to them or they can fast the number of hours fasted in Mecca being the place where the Quran was revealed. There should not be a problem with this as the people in those areas work out a schedule for working hours and sleeping hours so they can just work with that and make approximations and their fasts will be acceptable.

Host: Is fasting compulsory on all Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

The general rule is that fasting is prescribed on every Muslim male or female who have reached the age of puberty. Since fasting is an act that requires a fair amount of discipline and sacrifice it is desirable for children who are not required to fast to start training gradually so they can get used to fasting. For example in many Muslim countries and even in Canada and the US the children usually start by fasting from dawn to noon or from breakfast to lunch which gets them somewhat used to the concept. As the child grows older and becomes more interested in it they might try fasting a full day or a few days and the following year he may increase the number of days. This kind of gradual learning should be done with lots of motivation and encouragement rather than pressure. With my personal experience as a father my children ask to be woken up in the morning so that they can fast. This kind of practicing allows it to become normal for them by the time they reach the age of adolescence.

There are other exemptions which are temporary and others which are permanent. Examples of temporary exemptions are people who are ill where fasting might aggravate their illness or delay their cure. It is not one of the objectives of Islamic law to put people in greater difficulty or endanger their life like it was mentioned in the verse I cited. So sick people may not fast till they are cured and then they can make up the days they missed.

Obviously another of the compassionate teachings of the Quran is that women during their monthly cycle (they probably feel weaker or tired), women who are pregnant, postnatal time and mothers who are breastfeeding their infants are also not required to fast provided that they can make up for the days at a later time when the reason for the exemption has been removed.

As far as permanent exemptions they apply to people who would not be able to make up even in the future to make up for their missed days. An example would be a very old person, who would just keep getting older and weaker. In this case a person can substitute for fasting by providing two meals per day for a person. A person who is chronically ill and fasting is harmful to his health can also make this substitution.

Host: How would you respond to a person who finds it difficult to contemplate this kind of fasting?

Jamal Badawi:

If one tries to fast it might be a little hard and difficult in the beginning but once one gets used to fasting it gets easier. Even those who fast year after year find that the first couple of days are a little difficult and that one has to give up bad habits like smoking and drinking coffee. Fasting is a little hard at the very beginning but as one's system adjust to the fast it stops being that hard. Of course it requires a lot of discipline but it is not really impossible or unreasonable for a number of reasons. First of all one is permitted to eat and drink whatever they like between sunset and dawn. If one wakes up as late as possible, and as close as possible to dawn or roughly 75min before sunrise and have a meal it could really help sustain one for the rest of the day. The key point is to train early for fasting because once the person starts training little by little they get used to it and they actually get pleasure out of fasting. Sometimes we undermine how adaptable our body is to certain conditions but we have to have the courage to try it.

Host: Sometimes we hear that in the media that everything comes to a stand still because of Ramadan in the Middle East and other Muslim countries. How accurate are these reports?

Jamal Badawi:

These reports are grossly exaggerated. There is no doubt that the observation of fast may cause a slight slow down in the way that business or other functions are performed especially if Ramadan falls in the hot and long days of the summer. I was born and brought up in the Middle East and what happens is that employees of the government may be permitted to work one to two hours less especially for those who wake up late at night to observe the prayers. Sometimes they adjust the working hours so that they start a little earlier and going home early so that they can take a nap in the afternoon. As far as businesses they go on as usual. The main sector that is affected at least superficially is restaurants, but even then they pick up after sunset. In this case it is simply a readjustment of the business hours rather than bringing everything to halt.

People keep talking about the places where Muslims are a majority but what about the millions of Muslims who are in Europe, United States and Canada? This whole program has been prepared while everyone is fasting. Personally as an individual I have gone through all kinds of experiences while fasting such as working, teaching, preparing for exams and everything else without much difficulty.

Host: What is the significance of fasting as a religious duty for Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

As a religious duty fasting is an act of worship, submission, obedience to the will of God, it's a kind of dedication and commitment of one's life to the commandments of God and it takes the love of God beyond just a slogan but into an actual practice and sacrifice of lawful things. If there is nothing in fasting but this it would suffice. In addition to this we find that it is a very important moral lesson that is learned from fasting. If one gets training and is able to restrain themselves from the lawful things in life such as food and drinks then they would be more likely to restrain themselves from committing unlawful acts. One verse in the Quran in (2:183) "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint."

In addition to this we find that fasting teaches other moral virtues as the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (PBUH) was quoted in one Hadith as narrated in Bukhari "whomever does not abstain from falsehood in words and deeds God has no need for him to give up his food and drink." Thus fasting is not just to stop eating and drinking but to teach one's self to be virtuous in other respects of life. In addition the month of fasting is a chance for a person to rededicate his life or atone for forgiveness from God for previous sins and mistakes and that is why the Prophet of Islam says as narrated in Ahmad "whomever fasts Ramadan with faith and in the pursuit of God's pleasure his previous sins will all be forgiven." In a sense then fasting is a form of Jihad or struggle against the domination of our low desires and their hold on us. Fasting is an annual spiritual cleansing.

Host: Is there a celebration after the month of Ramadan is over?

Jamal Badawi:

One important aspect that relates to this question is the social aspect (as there is no separation between secular and religious) and that when people fast they feel more compassion for the poor and needy. One can talk for as long as they want on how it feels to be hungry but it is very different when it one's self who is hungry. This is why both in the month of Ramadan and immediately after it ends there is a great celebration of compassion for the poor. There is a charity immediately after Ramadan that is required to be given to the poor and the regular charity (other than the

Ramadan charity) is also encouraged to be paid for during the month of fasting. The first morning after the month of fasting which is the first day of the next month a Muslim is encouraged to wake up early in the morning, take a shower, put his best clothes on (or new clothes), go to the mosque for the congregational prayer of Eid (Muslim holiday after fasting). At the prayer people chant glorifications and give thanks to God which is followed by prayers then a short speech is to be given. After that people can go visit friends and relatives and exchange gifts.

5.9 Pillars of Islam- Hajj: History

5.9 Hajj: History

Host: What does Hajj or pilgrimage mean?

Jamal Badawi:

Hajj is one of the five basic pillars of Islam. The other four being the testimony of faith, performance of the five daily prayers, payment of poor's due, fasting and then Hajj is the fifth and last in the series of Pillars in Islam.

Technically speaking Hajj means to make pilgrimage Mecca and the surrounding area and to participate in certain rites and acts of worship both in Mecca and nearby places. It is like prayers or act of worship where the soul mind and body all participate in worship. It is an incumbent duty on every Muslim who is able to perform the pilgrimage both financially and physically to do so at least once in his or her lifetime. Of course a person may wish to make the pilgrimage more than once but the requirement is fulfilled by making it once.

When we say financially able it doesn't mean that one has to be rich in order to make the pilgrimage. As Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicated that if a person has enough food and the means of transportation to go to the pilgrimage and enough to leave for the provision of his family that are not going with him then he should not wait. In fact he recommended against delays in performing the pilgrimage as no one knows what will happen to them as a person may die or get too old or sick may die before fulfilling this basic requirement of faith.

The importance of Hajj has been emphasized in the Quran and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). An example of this is found in (3:97) "Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah

stands not in need of any of His creatures.” A similar statement is found in (2:196). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicated that whomever fulfills the duty of pilgrimage without committing any indecent acts in words, deeds or devious actions would come back from the pilgrimage free from his sins as the day his mother gave birth to him (Islam believes a child is born sinless and pure) which is reported by both Bukhari and Muslim. In that sense the pilgrimage is a multifaceted type of relationship.

Host: Some non-Muslims say that it is pilgrimage to visit the grave of Prophet Muhammad is that true?

Jamal Badawi:

No this is totally untrue. It is one of the very common but unfortunately widely circulated misinformation about Islam that is found in lots of references. Indeed the Islamic pilgrimage is not a pilgrimage to visit the grave or tomb of any hero or prophet (including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). There is no single verse in the entire Quran that mentions the visiting of the grave of the Prophet or any other person as part of the pilgrimage. In his own teachings Prophet Muhammad never taught Muslims that visiting his grave is part of the rites of the pilgrimage. Indeed it suffices to say that all rites of the pilgrimage are all fulfilled in Mecca and the immediate surrounding within fifteen miles; whereas Medina, where the grave of the Prophet is located, is about 300 miles north of Mecca.

This doesn't mean that a Muslim may not visit the grave of the Prophet or any other righteous person's grave but this is totally different from saying than saying that the purpose of Hajj is to visit the grave of the Prophet. The pilgrimage is meant to glorify God not an individual.

Host: What is the purpose of Hajj? Is it just to visit sacred places?

Jamal Badawi:

It involves but not limited to the visiting of sacred places. Its significance extends beyond visitation, as some people take it as a tourist type of attraction which is not the case. Pilgrimage in Islam has a lot to do with historical significance as it not only goes back to Prophet Muhammad but it goes back to Prophet Abraham and according to some sources it goes back to Adam. There are some who believe that when Adam and Eve came to earth they came to Mount Arafat which is where the major part of the pilgrimage rites are performed.

Like any other act of worship in Islam, Hajj has many facets to it. In a way it is an act of worship and training to fully submit and be obedient to God, a reminder to the person doing the pilgrimage of the purpose of their creation, it is a reminder of death and the limited period that they will stay on earth and it reminds us of resurrection and accountability before God. It has socio-political aspects as it allows Muslims from all over the world to practice true brotherhood when they all meet from all over the world in large numbers, equally dressed without any symbols of status or race. It has aspects of mutual benefit and exchange (it is one of the earliest international conferences).

Host: What is the historical background surrounding Hajj? What is the historical significance of Hajj with Abraham and the relationship between Abraham and Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

According to the Quran Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was one of the prophets of God. In fact he was one of the five major prophets of God (the other four being Noah, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad (PBUT)). According to the Quran, God promised to bless people through Abraham and to give him a great lineage of prophets through his descendents. The first son of Prophet Abraham was Prophet Ishmael who dwelled in Arabia and from his descendents came the last of all prophets, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The second son of Prophet Abraham was Isaac (PBUH) who dwelled in Palestine and in his descendents came all of the Israelite prophets ending with Jesus (PBUH). In that sense it is quite obvious from the Islamic point of view that Abraham, who was not the first prophet to teach monotheism as all prophets did, but whom played a very significant role in religious history. In a way Abraham can be regarded as the father of pure monotheism which is the worship of one universal God of all humanity and through his descendents three of the world's major religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) came.

Host: How does the story of Abraham compare to what is found in the Bible?

Jamal Badawi:

The stories seem to be quite comparable. As for the family Abraham had a first wife (according to the Bible in the book of Genesis chapter 16) called Sarah who happened to be barren. In chapter 12 in the book of Genesis we are told that God promised to make Abraham a great nation and to bless all the families on earth through his descendents and this was before the birth of either Ishmael or Isaac. According to the Book of Genesis chapter 16 that Sarah gave Abraham Hagar, a bond woman who lived with them, to be his wife. Hagar bore Abraham his first son Ishmael. After the birth of Ishmael and before the birth of Isaac (Genesis chapter 17) again the promise is repeated that God would bless Abraham and make a great nation through his descendents. Later on (Genesis chapter 21) we read that Sarah who was barren in fact gave birth miraculously to the second son of Abraham Isaac (PBUH). From Isaac's

side descended all the Israelite prophets from Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon all the way down to Jesus (PBUT). The last of the Israelite prophets was Prophet Jesus (PBUH). The Bible also tells us that after Ishmael dwelled in Arabia he had 12 sons. The only thing the Bible does not mention is that out of the descendents of Prophet Ishmael came, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the last prophet. After all, both the Old and New testaments of the Bible were written prior to the advent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The promise of God made to Abraham about his descendents was already fulfilled through both the Israelite and Ishmaelite branch.

It is very important to note that up to this point there seems to be a general agreement between the Biblical version and the Islamic version of the story of Prophet Abraham and his two children. After this the Bible is relatively silent as to what happens to the Ishmaelite branch of Abraham's household. There is very faint mention of Ishmael and Hagar, his mother, in the Bible. It mentions that they dwelled in the wilderness Paran, which is actually Mecca, and where they lived in Arabia. His mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt and that he died in this land.

There are many statements that are made against Ishmael which are bias towards Isaac or the Israelite side of Abraham's children. These statements are either mistranslations of the Bible or misinterpretations of some of some of the verses in the Bible. Above all they are based on arguments that are a reflection on ethnic or racial bias which contrary to the will of God. The most famous claims that Ishmael was the bad guy and that Isaac was the good guy. They were both children of the same prophet and they were both prophets. Why should Ishmael, be regarded as a bad person when in Genesis 21 verses 13 and 18 God he is promised a great nation. Some claim that because Ishmael's mom was a bond woman his status is less than that of Isaac. Again does God subscribe to human perception of racial or ethnic superiority?

This reminds me of what one finds in the New Testament itself in Paul's letter to Galatians particularly in (3:28) when he says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Then it continues in (3:29) "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Paul carries the message further that not only should we have equal respect and remove the bias and prejudice because of the mother of Ishmael but he also considered all the descendents of Abraham seeds in accordance to the promise of God to bless the nations of earth through Abraham's descendents.

Host: What were the circumstances behind Ishmael going into Arabia (Paran)?

Jamal Badawi:

In Islamic tradition it says that when Ishmael was a small boy, the only son (at the time), God gave Abraham the command to take his only son and his mother Hagar and take them to the wilderness of Paran (Mecca). At that time Paran was a desolate place with no plantation, people or settlements. Of course this may sound strange to us as in our human judgment we may consider it to be cruel or harsh but if we really look at God's wisdom as manifested later in history we will see it in a different light. The mention of this appears in the Quran (14:37). As narrated in Bukhari (a collection of Hadith) that when Abraham took Hagar and Ishmael to Paran she asked him "where are you leaving us in this desolate place, with no body or companion?" She repeated this question many times and he did not reply. Then she asked him "Abraham did God ordain you to do this?" he said "yes." She replied in all faith and submission to God "if God ordained this then He will never get us lost."

Then the story continues that Hagar ran out of water and she was very worried about her baby dying of thirst as he was crying. So she started running between two hills called Safa and Marwa which still exist in Mecca in search for water or for someone passing by who might have water that will help save the baby. Every once in a while she would go check on the baby. Miraculously when she checked she found that while he was crying and kicking the ground with his heels a fountain or spring of water gushed from under his feet. That well is still in existence till this moment which means it is over 3000 years old. It is called the well of Zamzam. Once water was available in the desert people began to settle around it and thus grew the holy city of Mecca.

Host: How does that story compare with the Biblical story?

Jamal Badawi:

The only area of full agreement is that Abraham took Hagar and Ishmael away from Palestine. There are major differences as to the reason behind this, the place they were taken too and the time when this took place. For example in the Bible in the Book of Genesis (21:10 onward) it is told as if Sarah was dictating her will not only to Abraham but to God, because when Abraham was very sad upon the request made by Sarah for him to take the bond woman and her child away. It says in the Bible that God told Abraham to listen to Sarah as if she is imposing her will on everybody including God. Furthermore it says in the Bible that he took Hagar to the wilderness of Beersheba in southern Palestine rather than Mecca where the historical reality shows that Ishmael settled. According to the book of Genesis it says that this happened after Isaac was born. It says that this happened when Isaac was weaned which means that Ishmael was about fifteen years or more.

It is interesting to note that if the Bible is read carefully and reflected upon, the stories would probably be identical if one realizes that perhaps there was some confusion about the sequence of events. I checked The Interpreter's Bible and the editors there

say that apparently there is confusion regarding the sequence in this particular story. The reason being is that when one reads Genesis 21 it give the impression that Ishmael was a baby. It says that Abraham put the child on her shoulder and that when the water finished she was very worried to sit and watch her baby die in front of her so she cast him under the shrub. Then an angel came to Hagar and told her to lift up the lad and she did and the angel showed her water that she could give to her baby. The impression is very clear that to cast and lift the lad is talking about a baby. But then the Bible says that this happened after Isaac was born which means that Ishmael was over 15 years old. How can a mother carry a fifteen year old boy on her shoulder or cast him under the tree or lift him up?

5.10 Pillars of Islam- Hajj: History Continued

Summary of 5.9 "Hajj: History"

First of all, we said that the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five Pillars of Islam and a duty on every Muslim male or female who is financially and physically able to do it at least once in their lifetime.

Secondly, we dispelled some of the common misconceptions about Islam and that the pilgrimage is simply a visitation to the grave of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and we said that the pilgrimage can be completed without visiting the grave of the Prophet. There is no evidence in the Quran, the word of God, or in the teaching of Prophet Muhammad that visiting his grave was part of the pilgrimage. Even more importantly, we indicated that the pilgrimage can be completed in Mecca, while the tomb of the Prophet is in Medina which is about 300 miles northwest of Mecca. There is no foundation whatsoever for the claim that Muslims make pilgrimage to his tomb as the pilgrimage is to the holy sites.

Thirdly we indicated the pilgrimage of the Muslim is not like any other pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is not simply the visitation of sacred shrines or places but it is rather an act of worship, it reminds us of our responsibility and mission on earth, it reminds us of our end and of the Day of Judgment, it reminds us how we will stand for accountability before God, it is practical training in obedience and submission to God and it is a practical manifestation of the Islamic principles of brotherhood and equality before God. The pilgrimage is very much related to Prophet Abraham, the father of all monotheistic religions. We explained the connection between Muslims and Prophet Abraham (PBUH). It starts with his descendents as Prophet Ishmael was his first son and the second was Isaac. We indicated that Isaac lived in Palestine and from his descendents came all of the Israelite prophets ending with Prophet Jesus (PBUH). Ishmael however, was taken to Mecca where he dwelt. Centuries later came the very last of all the prophets of God, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), from the descendents of Ishmael. Through Prophet Muhammad the Israelite and Ishmaelite

branch connected especially after the prophethood shifted from the Israelite branch to Ishmaelite branch following the rejection of Prophet Jesus.

5.10 Hajj: History Continued

Host: What were the circumstances surrounding Ishmael going to Arabia?

Jamal Badawi:

The first thing to emphasize first of all is that if you compare the story in accordance with the Islamic tradition with the story that appears in the Bible that there are points of agreement. The similarities are that Prophet Abraham took his son Ishmael and his mother Hagar away from Palestine. After this point there seemed to be a clear difference with respect to when this incident took place, where the baby and his mom was taken and also why they were taken there. In order to clarify that we said that according to the Biblical story that Ishmael and his mom were taken simply because of the jealousy on the part of Sarah the first wife of Abraham. If one reads the Bible in the book of Genesis chapter 21 verses ten on it appears that Sarah is not only dictating her jealousy to Prophet Abraham but it appears that she is dictating it on God. The reason for this is when Abraham was sorry and disappointed because of her request that God told him to listen to his wife.

In Islamic tradition the reason why Hagar and her son were taken to Mecca was not because of dictation on the part of Sarah but rather a command from God. The command was to have the first branch of the household of Abraham dwell in Arabia with the ultimate plan that more than 1600 years later the last Prophet would come from this branch.

A second area of difference is that in the Bible it says that Abraham took Ishmael and Hagar to the wilderness of Beersheba which is in southern Palestine. In Islamic tradition he took them to Mecca and is confirmed by events that preceded that advent of Prophet Muhammad and relics and sites that are connected with Hagar and Ishmael till this very moment. For example in Islamic tradition it was Hagar who ran between the hills of Safa and Marwah in search for water for her baby. These hills still exist in Mecca till this very moment. Even before the advent of Prophet Muhammad these hills were known to commemorate Hagar's search for water. The well of Zamzam which still exists till this very moment and existed before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the spring of water that gushed from under Ishmael's feet when he was crying and kicking the ground out of thirst.

The third point which is even more essential is when this incident took place. In Islamic tradition this took place before the birth of Isaac who was born (born 14 years

after Ishmael). In the Biblical story we find that a great deal of confusion; in fact I checked the Interpreter's Bible which is several volumes of commentary on the Bible written by Christian scholars and when it comes to this point they said there is a problem and probably a confusion of sequence. The reason is that if one checks the story according to the Bible (Genesis 21:8-21) it says in verse 8 that the incident happened after Isaac was weaned. Then if one reads the remaining parts of the chapter (verse 18) it says that Hagar lifted up her child when the angel told her to lift up the lad. It also says that when she ran out of water she was very grieved and could not stand watching her baby die of thirst. So it says in the book of Genesis that she cast him under a shrub. All of these descriptions give an impression that the child with Hagar was a baby because he is lifted and cast etc. Yet in accordance with the Bible in Genesis (21:5) it says that Abraham was a 100 years old when Isaac was born and in the book of Genesis (16:16) it indicates that Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old. This means then that when Isaac was weaned Ishmael must have been 15 years or more. How can it be that a child that is 15 years old is lifted and cast by his mother? So like I said Christian sources show that there is confusion in the sequence. If we compare this story with Islamic story we find that Islamic one is a very coherent story.

13:00

Host: Do we have any indication that Prophet Abraham visited his wife and Ishmael after he had left them in Mecca?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, there are at least two pieces of evidence that we can refer to from the Quran. The first was the case when Abraham went to Mecca and built the Kaaba, the holy shrine that still exists in Mecca, the first house on earth built for the worship of the one God with the help of his son Ishmael. The second incident where Abraham went to Mecca was in the story of sacrifice when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael.

The documentation for the first one is found in the Quran in (2:127-128) "And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. Our Lord! make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will); and show us our place for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful." This section doesn't only describe the building of the Kaaba by both Abraham and Ishmael but also shows us that the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad was in fact a fulfillment of the prayer made earlier by both Abraham and Ishmael for God to send a prophet in that specific location. In Hebrew Ishmael means God hears. In (2:129) it says ""Our Lord! send amongst them an Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

The second story I mentioned is related to the sacrifice of Prophet Ishmael. One time when Abraham was sleeping he saw in a dream that he was sacrificing his first and only son, Ishmael. As a basic rule a vision or a dream for a prophet is not like one for us as it is a command from God. When Abraham woke up he spoke to his son Ishmael and told him that he saw himself sacrificing Ishmael. Ishmael showed a great deal of faith in God and obedience to his father and simply responded that if God had ordained him to do so then he should do it. Abraham took his son Ishmael to a place which is now called Minah near Macca and was about to execute the command of God when an angel came from the heavens carrying a big ram. The angel gave the ram to Abraham and said that because he showed his obedience to God he should sacrifice the ram instead of his son. In the rites of the pilgrimage the same thing is repeated. When people finish their pilgrimage they go to Minah and they slaughter rams or other animals by way of sacrifice, commemoration, and thanks giving to God for saving Ishmael in order for him to become the grandfather of the last of God's prophets.

Host: What evidence is there that Abraham was ordered to sacrifice Ishmael not Isaac?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, there is no doubt about this point. In the Quran (37:99-113) gives the whole story. "He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!" So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou wilt find me, if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and Constancy!" When they had both submitted their wills (to Allah., and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him "O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision! thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: Peace and salutation to Abraham! Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For he was one of our believing Servants. And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a prophet,- one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls."

After the story of the sacrifice was finished and Abraham showed his faith in God and his willingness to sacrifice his only son, then God gave him the news that Isaac was to be born. So this whole event took place before the birth of Isaac.

Host: Why would a beneficent God a merciful God request Abraham (PBUH) to sacrifice his first son or any son for that matter?

Jamal Badawi:

There are a number of lessons to be learned from this story. First of all, it shows us that Abraham did not put his own logic and thinking above the wisdom of God. This teaches humility because God did give us logic and intelligence but we should not be arrogant enough to think that we are above the wisdom of God. There may be certain things that we can't understand and so we should not hasten and make a quick judgment.

A second lesson is basically like the verse I cited that it is a test of Abraham's faith. Here a man's logic and emotions told him not to sacrifice his son, but as a prophet he knew for sure that God said for him to sacrifice his son. Again this is a test of the depth of faith; the mind and heart sway towards one direction and the command is in another direction. I don't know if any of us who might be subjected to this kind of test could pass it.

The third lesson is in humility. Prophet Abraham through out his life has gone through lots of tribulation and tests. He stood up against the idolatry of his father and people, he was thrown into the fire and threatened and he traveled a lot for the sake of God. This was a lesson that taught him not to think that he was any better than a human and no matter how pious or perfect a human he was(as much as human perfection can be attained) still weak. Sacrificing his son was his weakness, even though he obeyed the order it was not easy on him. In addition to this the very fact that the angel substituted a ram for a human is a lesson that we as humans should not sacrifice a human or spill blood while thinking that we are pleasing God. Pleasing God is through righteousness, piety and trying ones best. If one has to sacrifice something it should be an animal and it should not only be done for the ritual but to feed the poor. This is done to transfer the idea of blood sacrifice into something beneficial to the community.

Finally, we can't just say that this is part of history but in reality the supreme act of sacrifice on the part of Abraham is a good lesson for us that each one of us has his own Ishmael (Abraham loved Ishmael so much especially after waiting for so many years to have a child, he did not have Isaac at that time, he was still willing to carry out the command of God). All of us have something that we love that seems to compete with our love of God (the love of material, children and property) that we forget to remember God. This story teaches us about sacrifice a little bit.

Host: Why should a person accept one version of the story over the other?

Jamal Badawi:

Like we discussed the age of Ishmael when this took place one can go to the Bible and read it carefully and they will be surprised that many of the common notions are not necessarily accurate or there is question about the proper interpretation of them. We run into similar difficulties in the book of Genesis in (22:2 and 16). In (22:2) it says "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." It says take your only son Isaac which lead some scholars to suspect that the word Isaac may have been a later insertion, and that the original word was probably thy only son Ishmael. According to the Bible itself in (16:16) it says that when Ishmael was born Abraham was 86 years old and in (21:5) it says that when Isaac was born Abraham was 100 years old. The only son that Abraham had for 14 years was not Isaac but Ishmael. Some people try to resolve this by making claims that Ishmael was not a legitimate son as this has no foundation in the Bible where it says that Hagar was Abraham's wife and that Ishmael was his seed. Some try to say that Isaac was the only son Abraham had at home at that time, but again if one has a son in Vancouver and one in Halifax one doesn't say their only son is the one here. Some claim that the promised son was only Isaac, but according to the book of Genesis in (22:13 and 18) God also promised to make of Ishmael a great nation. We are not denying that Isaac was a great Prophet of God and he was also promised to have prophethood in his descendents for nearly 1600 years. All we are saying is that the Bible itself shows that Ishmael was also promised and God's promise has been fulfilled in both branches. It doesn't mean that because Muslims believe that Ishmael was the son of sacrifice (which is logical according to both the Quran and the Bible) that this in any way belittles Prophet Isaac in any way. Both Isaac and Ishmael are both great prophets and the children of a the great Prophet, Abraham, and grandfathers of great prophets which include Jesus and the last Prophet, Muhammad (PBUT).

5.11 Pillars of Islam- Hajj: Rites & Significance

Summary of 5.10 "Hajj: History Continued"

The basic emphasis in the first two programs was on the historical aspect and the importance of the holy city of Mecca. We said that upon the command of God Abraham took his wife Hagar and her son Ishmael to the wilderness of Mecca where they dwelled. We compared the Islamic story with the Biblical story as we pointed out their similarities and differences. We tried to point out that is a very significant story in the sense that through Prophet Abraham came all monotheistic prophets that came after him. Through Abraham's second son Isaac came all the Israelite prophets ending with Jesus (PBUH) and through Abraham's first son Ishmael the last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came. This is the connection that we find between the three major monotheistic religions.

We also described the different historic sites in Mecca, such as the well of Zamzam which gushed under Ishmael's feet when his mother was looking for water. There are also the hills of Safa and Marwah in-between which Hagar ran in search of water. Most importantly there is the Ka'aba itself, the first house on earth to be built for the worship of the one God and is a monument of monotheism. The Ka'aba was built by Abraham with the help of his son Prophet Ishmael (PBUH).

In the last program we also touched briefly on the story of sacrifice which took place near Mecca where God directed Prophet Abraham to take his only son, Ishmael, and offer him in sacrifice. We compared this story with the Biblical story for the purpose of clarification.

5.11 Hajj: Rites and Significance

Host: People travel annually to make the pilgrimage in Mecca; what reflections can make regarding the travel associated with the pilgrimage?

Jamal Badawi:

When one reflects on it they see that this is a fulfillment of the prophecy made in the Quran. When Prophet Abraham built the Kaaba God ordained him "proclaim on people to come for pilgrimage and they will come to you on foot and every means of transportation." This was about three thousand years ago. For the first 1600 years the notion of pilgrimage was not perfected, till Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came and the prophecy made by Prophet Abraham was finally fulfilled.

When people travel all the way from Indonesia, South Africa, Central Africa, Europe, United States, Canada and all parts of the world this in itself is a reflection of devotion to God. In a way it is a reenactment of the frequent journeys of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham as the father of monotheism traveled to many places and experienced lots of trouble and difficulty in trying to spread the true faith in God. When the pilgrims come from all walks of life and all parts of the world they are following the steps of their father in faith Prophet Abraham in their devotion to God. The journey to the holy city is a reminder for us that our entire life is nothing but a journey. Our life is a journey that may be long or short, only God knows. We have to realize that we are passing through a journey in our life that has an end and that our ultimate destiny is to go back to God and stand accountable for our lives.

Host: When is Hajj or the pilgrimage made?

Jamal Badawi:

First we have to make a distinction between two aspects of pilgrimage. One pilgrimage is called Umrah which is translated as the lesser pilgrimage and can be performed at any time year round. This however does not fulfill the full duty of making pilgrimage. This makes it easier for many people who are not available or unable to travel during the specific period of pilgrimage in one year or the other to visit at any time. I know people who live in America and when traveling to their home they make it a point to stop and make Umrah on their way back. This is a simple pilgrimage and can be fulfilled in a couple of hours no more.

The major pilgrimage, Hajj that is mandatory on every Muslim male and female to do it at least once in their lifetime must be performed within a specified period. It usually takes about a week from the 8th day of the month of *Dhul Hijjah* to the 13th day. The month of *Dhul Hijjah* is the 12th month in the Islamic lunar calendar which is based on the moon and is about 11 days shorter than the solar year. This is why the pilgrimage keeps changing between different seasons just like the month of fasting.

In both cases, whether one is doing the lesser pilgrimage or the major pilgrimage, one always starts with the state of *Ihram* which is a state of intention and performance of special rites that mark the beginning of this pilgrimage. It is out of the compassion of God that He did not require one to begin the state of *Ihram* (at least the procedure and restrictions that must be followed) from the moment one leaves their home. Some people might be traveling for longer periods of time and the rules are quite restrictive as I will describe later as there are certain things that should or should not be done. For that reason the stage when one should really be in the state of *Ihram* or intention begins in a specified location called the *Mawakeet* ranging from 100 to 500 kilometers outside of Mecca. Depending on the direction one is coming from one can't pass this point, which is very close to Mecca, without wearing the attire and being fully in the state of intention to perform the pilgrimage. Some people start this in the plane or go to Jeddah which is far enough for them to begin after arriving.

Host: How does a person enter the state of *Ihram*?

Jamal Badawi:

The most important thing is the intention. In Islam every deed should be preceded by intention. A person should always think of why he or she is doing something and put the intention in their heart (doesn't utter anything). In this case one would have the intention that he is beginning to perform this required worship out of obedience and submission to the will of God and in the pursuit of his pleasure. It is also desirable for the person before putting on the *Ihram* clothing to take a bath and clean one's self thoroughly. After this a person should put away all their regular clothing because

during the pilgrimage, in the period of performing the rites, a Muslim is not supposed to wear their normal clothing.

The male wears very simple attire during Hajj which is basically two towels; one can be wrapped around the waist a couple of times and twisted so that it holds (one can also use a belt if needed) the second piece is held on one side and placed above the right shoulder leaving the left shoulder exposed. In addition to this a person should not wear his regular shoes but rather a pair of sandals or something where the heel is exposed. Also a male is not supposed to cover his head unless he is sick or is in dyer need. None of the clothing worn is sewn, and nothing is worn under the towels/sheets.

Host: What do the women wear?

Jamal Badawi:

Women in Islam already dress more modestly than men. A Muslim woman is supposed to cover her body except for her face and hands. They are given a concession because if a woman were to have un-sewn clothing they can't really have complete covering of the body. A woman who performs Hajj can wear anything but she should not cover her face or hands. In fact Islam does not make it a requirement in Hajj or otherwise that a woman covers her face or hands. But to keep in line with the spirit of simplicity it should not be clothing that shows off the body or wealth. In other words it has to be a simple garment that is loose and covers the entire body except for the face and hands. It is preferable that they wear simple white material so that a sense of equality is felt by all who are performing the pilgrimage.

Host: What is the significance of this attire?

Jamal Badawi:

Clothes are usually used as a symbol of our individuality, our ego, our authority, power and wealth. When a person performs the pilgrimage which is a very high and pure act of worship and devotion to God egotistical things should be forgotten. This reminds the individual that one could be a king or a common man, rich or poor, male or female but that they should not forget that the essence is a person is their humanity. So by casting away the normal clothing that one has and all the false symbols that express superiority they are able to just being humans. This way one finds the rich, the poor, and people from different professions all wearing the same thing. This is a practical manifestation of the true essence of human brotherhood and equality.

Host: Are there other things that have to be observed?

Jamal Badawi:

One should abstain from any disruptive act and they should always watch themselves. There is a verse in the Quran that describes that beautifully as it says that pilgrimage is done in appointed times and whoever goes to the pilgrimage should totally abstain from any indecency in words or deeds (which is also required outside of Hajj). One has to make be particularly careful not to get into arguments or partake in violent acts. This is not limited to how humans relate to one another but even how they relate to the environment and other creatures. One has to be at perfect peace. During the period that one starts the rites of the minor or major pilgrimage one is not supposed to hunt, one can't kill an animal or even an insect with exceptions in life threatening situations. One must be at perfect peace with living and non-living things. One is not allowed to cut a tree or even the twig of a tree and there are penalties to atone for this if this is done. One is not allowed to trim their nails or cut their hair. In addition no marital relations are allowed. Also one can not put any perfumes. All the worldly masks and pleasures are put aside in order for us to go back to the basics and simplicity of humanity.

Host: What do people chant on their way to Mecca?

Jamal Badawi:

One of the highly encouraged acts during the pilgrimage, once one starts the state of *Ihram* outside of Mecca, is to repeat certain prayers or supplications to God. The rough translation in English is "Oh God here I stand, there is no partner with you here I stand, verily yours is the praise the blessing and the majesty, there is no partner with thee." This is a kind of response to the call of God and to the call made 3000 years ago by Abraham that everybody should sanctify and purify this house and use it for the worship of the one God. This chanting usually has to stop once one enters the precincts of the Kaaba, holy house, where other proceedings are done.

Host: What is the Kaaba like and what is its significance?

Jamal Badawi:

In recent years about 2 million people make the pilgrimage annually. During the day or night there are always people in the Kaaba. The Kaaba itself is a very simple cubic structure that is covered with material (not required but has become tradition) and there is nothing inside of the Kaaba or any inscriptions on the walls. In Islam there is no Image that one should take for God physical or otherwise so the Kaaba is kept simple.

It is very difficult to describe the feeling and excitement that one feels when they go there and stand before the very first house on earth build to worship the one God in response to the call of God. One feels a sense of attachment to Prophet Abraham who originally built the Kaaba. When one is there they identify with the whole caravan of believers and monotheistic prophets who preached the word of God. Once one is at the Kaaba one has a very peculiar sense of tranquility and peace.

Host: When an individual pilgrim reaches the Kaaba what are they supposed to do?

Jamal Badawi:

Once one reaches the Kaaba first they stop the chanting then a person is required to circle the Kaaba seven times with the Kaaba on one's left side. The circling starts at the corner in the Kaaba where the Black Stone is housed. While making the rounds one prays earnestly to God for guidance, support in one's life and for salvation in the hereafter.

Host: What is the significance of circling around the Kaaba?

Jamal Badawi:

All the rites of pilgrimage are done out of full obedience and submission to God with the willingness to do it as He ordained and as He communicated through the last Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH). An Austrian, Dr. Muhammad Asad, who embraced Islam likened this circling of the Kaaba to the atom and how the electrons and neutrons circle around the center and like the solar system that always has a center and something rotates around it. He says that as human beings we keep moving, dynamic change, but we should always have one clear objective in life, one central focus and that is to worship God and seek His pleasure in this life and His felicity and reward in the hereafter.

5.12 Pillars of Islam- Hajj: Rites & Significance Continued

Summary of 5.11 "Hajj: Rites & Significance"

First, we began by making a distinction between the lesser pilgrimage and the major pilgrimage known as Hajj. We said the lesser pilgrimage can be done at any time and constitutes visiting the holy house, the Kaaba, a doing a few rites which only take a couple of hours.

Second, we said that to go for any type of pilgrimage a person should enter into a state of consecration which is called *Ihram* and involves both the making the intention in obedience and devotion to God and wearing the attire that is made of two pieces of cloth (one is wrapped around the waist and the other covers the upper part while leaving the left arm exposed). We discussed the wisdom behind this and the fact that a person casts their ego, clothing as a symbol of wealth, race, nationality or prestige and becoming simply human beings dressed like one another in simple plain clothing. This state of consecration begins before one enters Mecca. We described the boundaries of Mecca and we said that depending on the area one is coming from the area of Macca can be from 6 to 16 kilometers. One should enter the state of Ihram prior to entering Mecca and there are specific locations allocated in the various directions which were specified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which rangers from 100 to 500 km away form Mecca.

We also mentioned that the state of consecration does not only involve intention and the dress but that one should be at perfect peace with other human beings avoid argument and violence, no animal or insect is to be killed (not even for food) unless there is danger to ones life, and make peace with other objects in nature as one is not allowed to cut down a tree, trim their nails or cut their hair.

When the person is on his way to the Kaaba they chant a specific prayer. Then once the pilgrim arrives at the Kaaba he circles it seven times with the Kaaba on his left hand side starting at the corner with the Black Stone lies.

5.12 Hajj: Rites and Significance (Cont.)

Host: What is the Black Stone and its significance?

Jamal Badawi:

The Black Stone is neither an idol nor an image. In Islam we don't have any images of God and stands very strongly against idols or anything that resembles idols. The Black Stone is simply a small piece of stone (that doesn't have a particular shape) which was placed in one of the corners of the Kaaba.

As far as the origin of the Black Stone there are all kinds of speculations about it. Some traditions say that it was a meteor that fell from the sky. It actually looks like a meteor as it is not totally black but rather dark grey. There is another tradition

that says that the angel brought the stone to Prophet Abraham about 3000 years ago when he was building the Kaaba, for the worship of the one God, to use as the corner stone of the building. However there is something certain about the Black Stone and that is that it is the only part remaining from the original structure that was built by Abraham. Throughout history because of natural disasters the Kaaba had been destroyed and rebuilt several times but the Black Stone always remained as a reminder of the origin of the Kaaba.

When Muslims go to the Kaaba and touch, kiss or point at the Black Stone it has nothing to do with adoration in a sense of worship, because a Muslim worships God alone. When one touches that stone they are identifying with Prophet Abraham who is the spiritual father of monotheism and the father of both Israelite and Ishmaelite prophets. One feels that they are part of a community of believers that descended throughout history. Muslims have a sort of emotional attachment with this relic from Prophet Abraham the grandfather of all monotheistic faiths. As a relic the Black Stone doesn't have any other significance.

The question that kissing the Black Stone implies worship is irrelevant. We all kiss our kids and loved ones and it doesn't mean that we worship them or take them for gods. Kissing simply means that it is something we cherish and appreciate and we definitely appreciate and cherish this relic of Prophet Abraham. It is also important to notice, as additional evidence that the Black Stone has no significance in itself I will quote two sayings. One was a statement made by a very good Muslim, Umar ibn al-Khattab who was the second Caliph after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he kissed the Black Stone he said "I know that you are but a stone, incapable of doing good or harm. Had I not seen the Messenger of God kiss you - may God's blessing and peace be upon him - I would not have touched you." The other quote says that it is desirable when one starts circling the Kaaba to reach or raise ones hand in the direction of the stone and say *Bismi Allah Wa Allahu Akbar* which means "in the name of God- God is the greatest." So even though one starts their point of movement there they remember that God is the greatest and no one else shares the divine attributes of God. One also says "oh God out of faith in You, acceptance of the book that You sent, out of respect of the oath (of faith) in You and following the path of your Prophet..." then one goes on to make supplications and all kinds of prayers while going around the Kaaba seven times. By the way the kissing or touching of the stone is not a requirement because it is impossible when there are hundreds of thousands of people to reach and it suffices that when one starts to raise their hand and say the words and begin.

The rites of the pilgrimage from A to Z and the whole life of a devoted Muslim is nothing but a continuous act of devotion to God alone.

Host: After the Kaaba has been circled what takes place next?

Jamal Badawi:

After the pilgrim finishes circling the Kaaba he goes to a place the Station of Abraham which is near the Kaaba. Currently this spot is surrounded by a small glass structure. This spot contains the foot print of Prophet Abraham when he was building the Kaaba (apparently the ground was moist and then it dried). Till today we can see the footprint of relatively big feet, it was said that Abraham was standing on that spot when he was trying to place the Black Stone. It is interesting to remember that Prophet Abraham did not build this house for himself, but in devotion to God to be used as the center of Monotheism and to be used by his son, Prophet Ishmael (PBUH), and all the descendents that came after him. Presently it is used by the millions of Muslims that come from all over the world to worship God and visit the sacred house.

Once this is done the pilgrim goes to a nearby place called Safa and Marwah which are two small hills about a quarter of a mile apart. The pilgrim is supposed to go from one to the other seven times (one way from one hill to the other). Those who are weak or sick carried back and forth (there are facilities available for the old or weak). After finishing the seven rounds most pilgrims can cut their hair (just a few hairs would do it) and then they move to the well of Zamzam and drink or make ablution from it. Of course considering the huge number of pilgrims there are facilities for men and women where the water is pumped out of the well of Zamzam. This is the same well that gushed from under the feet of Prophet Ishmael when he was a baby.

Host: What is the significance of hasting between the two hills?

Jamal Badawi:

This is actually a reenactment of what Hagar the wife of Prophet Abraham did after he left her and Ishmael in Mecca and she ran out of water. Hagar ran between the Safa and Marwah looking for any passer by who might have had water for her baby. After she finished the seven rounds she went back to check on her baby and she found miraculously that the well of Zamzam was gushing under his feet where he was kicking the earth with his heels.

There are a number of good lessons to be learned from this act and they all reflect the Islamic way of thinking. First of all, when Hagar was left in a desolate place with no plants or water and no other humans she did not sit down and cry and wait for her death and the death of her infant. She knew that there was nobody around to bring her water and that death was almost certain but she did not adopt a fatalistic approach (Islam rejects this attitude of fatalism and try to do something as little as it may be)

and tried to do something about it. Second, it is a great lesson in certitude and the trust in God. She is alone and there is nothing that can help her but still she ran on the hope that God's mercy would give her a way out of this difficulty. This should always be the attitude of a devoted Muslim no matter how much tribulation or difficulty they have a person should always live by the hope that God's solution and compassion may not be far away.

The third point is that for hundreds of years now since Muhammad (PBUH) came and pilgrimage became an institution in Islam we find that hundreds of millions of people from all walks of life have ran between the hills of Safa and Marwah following the footsteps of a poor simple African bond woman. This carries a great deal of significance as it shows in a conclusive way the true Islamic attitude towards human brotherhood and that all of those artificial barriers that humans created by way of racial superiority, ethnic superiority and sex superiority has nothing to do in the sight of God with the basic human and spiritual qualities. The basic human and spiritual qualities are really what count because from among all people Muslims commemorate and respect a woman and from among all women she was a poor bond woman. In a way it reflects the profound respect that Islam gives to women which is something that has been greatly distorted by many misinformed people. The fact that everybody including the Prophet himself followed the footsteps of this humble woman shows us this respect for women. In the Quran we find much praise of many saintly women and there is a whole chapter (19) in the Quran named Mary after the Virgin Mary the mother of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) which shows Islam's respect for women and particularly for motherhood. Motherhood in Islam is regarded as the cornerstone and foundation of society; destroy it and the society is set towards self destruction.

Host: Many say that the rites of the pilgrimage were practiced by pre-Islamic Pagans and were integrated into the Islamic tradition, how would you respond to this?

Jamal Badawi:

This is a half truth which are very harmful. Yes, it true that before Islam even the Pagan Arabs observed some of the rites of the pilgrimage but they did not invent it. The Pagan Arabs were simply following what remained in their traditions (they did not invent it) of the original rites that were done during the days of Prophet Ishmael. Islam did not adopt any of the Pagan practices. The Pagans were imitating the practices of Prophet Ishmael who was a monotheistic Prophet like his father Abraham. Islam simply restored the Kaaba to its original purpose and restored the rites of the pilgrimage to its original pure form.

For example, the Kaaba was originally dedicated by Prophet Abraham for the worship of the one God; the pre-Islamic Pagan Arabs corrupted the Kaaba by placing Idols inside it. When Islam came it destroyed and removed those Idols. There were certain reforms that Islam introduced to the pilgrimage. For example, in pre-Islamic days they used to make they would make the rounds around the Kaaba naked, men during the day and women at night and Islam forbade that because it is contrary to the rules of modesty.

Host: Give us a description of what rites are involved in the greater pilgrimage, Hajj?

Jamal Badawi:

The same state of consecration and dress that I explained before and everything I mentioned about the lesser pilgrimage also applies. Hajj starts on the eighth day of *Dhul Hijjah* the twelfth month in the Islamic calendar when the Muslims move to a place called Minah which is about 15 kilometers outside of Mecca. The Muslims wait there till the following day which is the ninth day of Hajj which is when the climax of Hajj takes place. After they pray the noon prayer the pilgrims enter the Plane of *Arafat* where they spend the whole day in utter devotion to God. The term *Arafat* is etymologically derived from the word for knowledge, Arafat. The Plane of *Arafat* is a vast empty plane which is surrounded with dark lava peaks which are covered with soft sands. Standing in the Plane of Arafat is indeed a unique experience which has the mount of mercy where Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon before his death (the farewell sermon). The feeling that one has while there is amazing as 2 million people (in recent years) stand there in devotion to God, both males and females of all ethnic backgrounds from all walks of life and professions from all corners of the earth. This shows that social origin, race, ethnic orientation, wealth or profession has no bearing on the basic spiritual and human qualities. Indeed this particular experience was the primary thing that moved the late Malcolm X to change his ideas about racial superiority and that all humans are equal whether black or white.

The other thing that is noticed when one looks at the seen is that it reminds people of death and resurrection and the standing of all people before God for the final judgment. It is indeed a very powerful profound experience.

After leaving *Arafat* the pilgrims go to a place called Muzdalifa which is again a simple plane where they spend the night in vigil while relaxing a little. At dawn they make the morning prayers. Then after sunrise they go to a place called Minah where they collect small pebbles and throw it at a stone pillar which symbolizes victory over Satan and evil prompting from within ourselves. After this one should cut a little bit of their hair to symbolize the end of most of the restrictions of *Ihram*. After this they

go to a place which is half way between Mecca and *Arafat* where they sacrifice an animal. After this the pilgrims go to the Kaaba another circling called *Ifada* which is the end of the procedures of the pilgrimage. If people stay longer than that pilgrims should make a farewell circling of the Kaaba.

It is recommended for the pilgrims to stay a few more nights after Hajj in Minah and on each day to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil which symbolizes collective victory by the community of believers. Finally, if the pilgrims have time they can go visit the city of Madina and they can pray in the mosque, which is not a requirement of Hajj. When a person goes home they hopefully are reborn with new inspiration and a sense of purpose in their lives. Prophet Muhammad said that a person who does the pilgrimage properly comes back from it clean from sins as the day his mother gave birth to him.