

Closeness: The Nigh Relationship

The Holy Qur'an deals with the issue of closeness in different verses. A close look at them will illuminate:

The First Stage

When the Almighty God invites the servants through different expressions, He uses different techniques. For instance, sometimes He makes use of the third person pronoun in referring to Himself and asks us to refer to Him in this way:

وَأَدْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

“And call on Him fearing and hoping; surely the mercy of Allah is nigh to those who do good to others. 7:56”

It seems as though there was a big distance between the Creator and the creatures and the earth-dwellers should remember God and then send their hearts towards the sky-dwellers and then, through the close angels, they reach the presence of God the Almighty. Then man should wait for the answer to reach him through certain means.

The Second Stage

Sometimes Allah would select a closer approach and would send the good news to the earth through his Messenger.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي إِذَا دَعَانِي فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ.

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way. 2: 186”

Due to much attention, man could feel deep in his heart the true meaning of the verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ.

“Most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people. 2: 143”

One can also fill his heart with the generosity of that Great Generous One. Imam al-Baqir (s) in this concern says:

مَكْتُوبٌ فِي التَّوْرَةِ الَّتِي لَمْ تُغَيَّرْ أَنَّ مُوسَى سَأَلَ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ: يَا رَبِّ، أَقْرَبُ مِنِّي
فَأُنَاجِيكَ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ فَأُنَادِيكَ؟ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَيْهِ: يَا مُوسَى، أَنَا جَلِيسٌ مَن
ذَكَرَنِي.

It is written in Torah which has not been distorted that Moses (s) has asked his God: “O God, are you close to me to talk with You, or You are far so that I may call You?” God revealed to him: “O Moses, I associate with anybody who calls on Me.”¹

The Great Prophet (s) in Sha'banieh Sermon says:

وَارْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِ أَيْدِيَكُمْ بِالدُّعَاءِ فِي أَوْقَاتِ صَلَوَاتِكُمْ فَإِنَّهَا أَفْضَلُ السَّاعَاتِ، يَنْظُرُ
اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهَا بِالرَّحْمَةِ إِلَى عِبَادِهِ يُجِيبُهُمْ إِذَا نَاجَوْهُ وَيُلَبِّيهِمْ إِذَا نَادَوْهُ.

“During your prayers raise your hands to engage in supplication because the prayer time is the best time. At that time Allah looks on His servants mercifully and if they call on Him, He will respond.”

Al-Koleyni, on the issue of the requirements of supplication writes: “First, say “ya rabb: O God” ten times and then say “rabb”. This is because man feels himself distant from Allah. He will call Him with vocative sign. Sometimes this sign is explicitly mentioned and sometimes it is deleted. But when he comes closer to Allah, he will use the vocative sign less and will resort to whisper.

The Third Stage

At this stage Allah is so close to His servants that He says:

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ.

“And we are nearer to it than you, but you do not see. 56:85”

This verse refers to the generosity and pardoning of Allah. The verse indicates a significant secret and discloses a strange hidden point: God has not employed distance as a measure; rather, He introduces His Closeness in such a way difficult to be comprehended. This verse notifies the one, who is embracing a dying man that Allah is close to him.

Concerning this, Imam As-Sadiq (s) says:

“Imam Hasan (s) was busy praying when somebody crossed in front of him. Some one of the attendants prevented him. When Imam Hasan (s) finished his prayer, he said to the man: why did you prevent him from crossing? The man said: “O son of the messenger of Allah, he crossed between you and your mihrab. Imam Hasan (s) said:

وَيْحَكَ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ يَخْطُرَ فِيمَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ أَحَدٌ.

“Woe to you! God is so close to me that no one can intervene between Him and me.”

Here, mihrab (praying-place) is used to absorb one's attention to one specific point.

The Fourth Stage

In the Qur'anic verse:

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ.

“And We are nearer to him than his life-vein. 50:16”

God refers to another secret and gives good news to the true believers and the monotheists, i.e., God is closer to man than his life. This verse depicts the relation between God and man. This shows firstly that if we comprehend the situation, we do not have any other choice than to resort to Allah and secondly it

clarifies the sacred tradition (O Moses, I am your necessary piety).

And let us know that the only resort at the time of depression is Allah. If man pays constant attention to God, he will be engulfed in the world of light and life will be of a different flavor to him and he will behave differently than the others. His world will change and life will be interesting to him since he will be surrounded by the infinite sea of knowledge. He will always be delighted as long as he is with his love. Every moment he adds something to his virtues.

Imam Ali (s) was one of those, who had conquered this mount of knowledge and tasted the flavor of being close to his love. Seyyid Ibn Tawus says:

Habbah al-Arani says: when Nouf and I were sleeping in the yard of the Governor's building we saw Ali (s) putting his hands against the wall like a distracted person. He was whispering: "Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are sings for men who understand...etc."2

Habbah al-Arani adds: "Ali (s) was reciting these verses and was walking about like one, who has lost his mind. Then he told me: Are you asleep or awake? I answered I was awake. "If you are in this condition, so what about us then?" Then Imam Ali (s) stared at the ground and begun crying. He, then, said to me: "Allah knows everything we do. O Habba, Allah is closer to us than our life-veins. He knows everything".

Then he added: "O Nouf! Are you awake? He said: "Yes, I am awake". Imam Ali (s) then gave them some advice. He advised them to fear God. Then he said: "O God, I do not know whether You care for me or not. I wish I knew how I should be with the amount of sins that I have committed. Nouf says: "Imam Ali (s) was still in this state until the dawn."3

The Fifth Stage

A verse, which is more exciting than the previous verses, is the one, whose comprehension is in the domain of the believers and the sincere gnostics, who are really rare in the creation system. In this sacred verse we read:

أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ.

"Allah intervenes between man and his heart. 8:24"

Thus man belongs to God and he is in direct relation with the Great love. Hafiz, the Iranian poet says:

"There is no wall between the lover and the loved one,

You, yourself, Hafiz, are the hindrance, get vanished.”

In this process, if a person could, by good luck, stay on the right path and delve deep inside himself, he will realize that he is a servant of God before becoming an independent being and that he does not possess any prestige and identity except being a servant to God, the Almighty. At such a stage he will find the necessity to submit to God. Since he may not separate himself from the great love, he is proud to be permanently at God's presence. He is not ready to lose such a status. This is such a great honor for him that he does not wish to let it go. Imam Ali (s) says:

اللَّهُمَّ كَتَبْتَ الْآثَامَ وَأَطَّلَعْتَ عَلَى السَّرَائِرِ وَحَلَلْتَ بَيْنَ الْقُلُوبِ، فَالْقُلُوبُ إِلَيْكَ
مُصْغِيَةً وَالسَّرُّ عِنْدَكَ عَلَانِيَةً.

“O God! You have registered our sins, You are aware of the inners of people and You are between man and his heart. The hearts are submissive to You and the secrets are open before You.”⁴

Hafiz says:

*“I asked her why your beautiful face is hidden from us,
She said: you are a curtain yourself, or else my face is visible.
I asked: how much more separation! She replied: as long as you live,
Is said: I have the last breath. She said: I won't change my decision.”*

The Sixth Stage

This stage corresponds with the following two Qur'anic verses:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

“And Allah's is the East and the West, therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose; surely Allah is Ample-giving, knowing. 2:115”

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ
تُرْجَعُونَ.

“And call not with Allah any other god; there is no god but He; everything is perishable but He;

His is the judgement, and to Him you shall be brought back. 28:88”

At this stage, a well-informed subject of God, sees the world as God's presence and recognizes a will-power dominating the whole creation. This is because man is familiar with the attributes of the Great Initiator.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ

“As for those who believe and do good, a good final state shall be theirs and a goodly return. 13:29”

لِمَنْ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

“To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer of all. 40:16”

خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

“The sealing of it is (with) musk; and for that let the aspirers aspire. 83:26”

The Seventh Stage

This is complete self-denial and believing in the content of the following holy verse:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ

“He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (over all) and the Knower of hidden things. 57:3”

Conclusion

These seven stages are, in fact, the natural direction for human perfection which is clearly depicted in the Holy Qur'an. Meanwhile, the ignorant ones are going away from the right path. It is as though there is nothing in this world except superficial pleasures.

Being away from God is the most hazardous of all calamities of mankind. It is so misleading that it

causes man to disconnect from God and concentrate wholly on material issues. What a losing deal! Our heart, which, by nature, is the place for God's secrets, is filled with wishes and whims.⁵ Imam Husayn (s) says:

أَنْتَ الَّذِي أَزَلْتَ الْأَغْيَارَ عَنْ قُلُوبِ أَحِبَّائِكَ حَتَّى لَمْ يُحِبُّوا سِوَاكَ وَلَمْ يَلْجَأُوا إِلَى
غَيْرِكَ.

“You have removed the others from the hearts of Your lovers until they have not loved other than You and have not resorted to other than You.”

If anybody paid sufficient attention to this issue, he would not stop weeping and would regret his wasting time. Then he would start all over again paying full attention to the way he has selected.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

“Surely the vilest of animals, in Allah's sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.

8:22”

In fact, the verses of the Qur'an cover all stages of human development, from the very lowest stage of human fall to the highest degree of human status. These verses want us to move in the right direction. A cursory comparison between the following two verses Clearly shows the distance between two ways of thinking:

أَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ.

“Whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose. 2: 115”

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

“Surely the vilest of animals, in Allah's sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.

8:22”

The ambitious, self-centered man, who interprets everything in the light of his own desires, at the time of dying suddenly becomes aware of the great loss of having wasted his time and realizes that he has not

done anything in this world for the hereafter. This state is depicted clearly in the verse of the Qur'an:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ.

“And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls. Such are the transgressors. 59: 19”

At this time they regret what they have lost.

أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَا عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ وَإِن كُنتُ لَمِنَ السَّخِرِينَ.

“Lest a soul should say: O woe to me! For what I fell short of my duty to Allah and most surely I was of those who laughed to scorn. 39:56”

1. Al-Jawahir al-Saniyyah, p. 40.

2. The Holy Verse reads: الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ. إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ. الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ. “Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men who understand. Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire. 3: 190 –191”

3. Falah as-Sa'il by Seyyid Ibn Tawus, p. 266.

4. Al-Sahifah al-Alawiyah, p. 56.

5. Imam As-Sadiq (s) has said: “The heart is the sanctum of God; therefore, do not let anyone else dwell in this sanctum.” (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 25)