

IBN SĪNĀ ON THE BENEFITS OF WORSHIP TO THE MASSES

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Khulasah

Dalam penulisan-penulisan utama Ibn Sīnā, beliau didapati memberi fokus lebih terhadap kebahagiaan individu. Untuk mencapai hal ini, beliau menjelaskan tentang kepentingan menunaikan ibadat seperti sembahyang, di mana melalui ibadat ini jiwa manusia dapat disucikan dan dengan itu hubungan dengan Allah SWT menjadi mudah. Ibadat ini boleh mengingatkan manusia tentang kewujudan Allah SWT dan nasib mereka di hari akhirat di mana sembahyang bersama-sama sifat pemurah adalah pelaburan untuk hari akhirat. Amalan ibadat ini perlu ditunaikan berulang-kali dan tetap. Dengan itu ingatan kepada Allah SWT sentiasa segar dan berfaedah kepada manusia. Artikel ini membincangkan tentang faedah ibadat kepada orang biasa (awam) menurut Ibn Sīnā.

Kata Kunci: Ibn Sīnā, ibadat, orang awam

Abstract

Ibn Sīnā in his most of his major writings focused more on the individual happiness. To achieve this, he demonstrate the important of performing ibadat (act of worship) such as *al-Ṣalāt*, where human souls are purified in order to ease the communication with Allah. This *ibadat* serves to remind people of God's existence and of fate in afterlife as the *ṣalāt* (along with charity) is the investment in the hereafter. The act of worship must be repeated frequently and constantly and by this the remembrance of Allah

becomes evergreen and beneficial to human being.
This article discussed the benefit of worship to the masses according to Ibn Sīnā.

Keywords: Ibn Sīnā, worship, the masses

Introduction

The Islamic philosopher Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdallāh Ibn Sīnā, known as Avicenna, was a Persian by birth. He was born in Afshana near Bukhara in the year 370/980 during the reign of Āmīr Nūḥ Ibn Manṣūr al-Samānī, and died in Hamadhan in 428/1037.¹ He was familiar with both the Persian and Arabic languages, and composed his works in these languages. His contemporaries, in acknowledgement of his extraordinary learning, often referred to him merely as al-Shaykh al-Rā’is.²

Ibn Sīnā’s father, ‘Abdallāh originated from Balkh, which now falls in Afghanistan. He was appointed by Āmīr Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr as governor of the district of Kharmaythan, and married a local woman called Sitara.³ Ibn Sīnā was a prodigy. By the time he was ten years old, he had memorized the Qur’ān and many works of literature. In his autobiography, Ibn Sīnā mentions that his father and brother had Ismaeli sympathies and that they used to discuss philosophical issues. This may have aroused his interest in philosophy, in which, later, he began to study systematically under the guidance of Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Natīlī, a man from Tabiristan, near the Caspian Sea,⁴ who was a philosopher. With him Ibn Sīnā

¹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A`yān wa Anbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1972), 5:214-217.

² V. Courtois, *Avicenna Commemoration* (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1956), 1:ix.

³ William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sīnā (A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation)* (Albany, New York: State Univ. of New York, 1974), 17-19.

⁴ V. Courtois, *Avicenna Commemoration*, ix.

learned Porphyry's Eisagoge, Euclid's Geometry, and some elements of logic. When al-Natīlī left him, Ibn Sīnā devoted himself to studying natural sciences, metaphysics, medicine, logic, mathematics, and other disciplines, and when he was eighteen years old, he 'graduated in' all of these sciences⁵.

Ibn Sīnā's literary output, which spanned a period of approximately forty years, was immense. He produced numerous works on logic, physic, mathematics, psychology, astronomy, metaphysics, ethics, politics, medicine, music, etc. Anawati's *Bibliography of Avicenna* published in Cairo in 1950, lists some 276 titles-consisting of *Kutub*, *Rasā'il*, *Ma'ājim*, etc. attributed to Ibn Sīnā.⁶

Maqālat al-'Ashīrah of al-Shifā'

The *Shifā'* is one of Ibn Sīnā's major philosophical works⁷. It is known as an encyclopaedia of Islamic-Greek learning in the eleventh century.⁸ According to Gutas the dated of the composition of the *Shifā'* can be established with relative certainty. The sources available in this regard are primarily the two reports by his disciple and his biographer Abū Ubayd al-Juzjānī in his *Introduction* to the *Shifā'* and in his *Biography*, and secondly the incidental chronological references provided by Avicenna himself in the work.⁹

Gutas also says that al-Juzjānī mentions no specific dates by only refers political events corresponding to the various stages of the composition of the *Shifā'*. However, both in the *Biography* and in his *Introduction*, al-Juzjānī

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 77.

⁸ Ḥannā Fakhūrī, *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-'Arabiyyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasah li Badran wa Shurakah, 1963), 150.

⁹ Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 103.

states that his master, Ibn Sīnā, started writing the *Shifā'* before Shams al-Dawla's death, which is known to have occurred in 412/1021-1022. Gutas concludes that Ibn Sīnā began his magnum opus sometime between 406/1061 and 412/1021. The *Shifā'* was completed at the latest by 418/1027. It took a period of approximately eight years. The *Shifā'* contains of logic, physics, mathematics and metaphysics.¹⁰

My focus here is his Metaphysics in which *Maqālat al-'Ashīrah* existed. Chapter three of the *Maqālat (Fī al-Ibādat wa Manfa'atuhā fī al-Dunyā wa al-Ākhirah)* discusses the Acts of Worship and their benefits in this world and the next.¹¹ The prophet, Ibn Sīnā says, wants people to remember God and to realize their fate in the hereafter. But how is it possible to make people always remember God and thereby attain happiness in the hereafter? What Ibn Sīnā argues here is that acts of worship do have a function. They serve to remind people of God and the Prophet, and they instill a discipline which is conducive to personal salvation. He uses his philosophical and rational approach to explain the subject. This chapter covers three major subjects as follows:

- a) Rituals as a reminder to the community of its Maker.
- b) The benefits of rituals to the community and to the masses.
- c) The benefits of rituals to the elite (will be touched later in other opportunity)

a) Rituals as a reminder to the community of its Maker

ثم إن هذا الشخص الذي هو النبي ليس مما 1.1

يتكرر وجود مثله في كل وقت، فإن المادة التي تقبل كمال

¹⁰ William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sīnā*, 31.

¹¹ Chapter three of the *maqālah*.

مثله تقع في قليل من الأمزجة، فيجب لا محالة أن يكون النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قد دبر لبقاء ما يسنه ويشعره في أمور المصالح الإنسانية تدييرا عظيما.

1.2 ولا شك أن القاعدة في ذلك هي استمرار الناس على معرفتهم بالصانع والمعاد، وحسم سبب وقوع النسيان فيه مع انقراض القرن الذي يلي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فيجب أن يكون على الناس أفعال وأعمال يسن تكرارها عليهم في مدد متقاربة حتى يكون الذي ميقاته بطل مصاقبا للمنقضي منه، فيعود به التذكر من رأس، وقبل أن ينفسخ يلحق عاقبه.

1.3 ويجب أن تكون هذه الأفعال مقرونة بما يذكر بالله والمعاد لا محالة، وإلا فلا فائدة فيها، والتذكير لا يكون إلا بالألفاظ تقال، أو نيات تنوى في الخيال، وأن يقال لهم: إن هذه الأفعال تقرب إلى الله تعالى، ويستوجب بها الجزاء الكريم، وأن تكون تلك الأفعال بالحقيقة على هذه الصفة، وهذه الأفعال مثل العبادات المفروضة على الناس.

Ibn Sīnā begins this chapter with the preposition *thumma*, indicating that what he wants to state here is a continuation from the previous chapter and not a separate matter. A prophet (*nabī*), he tells us, is not one whose like recurs in every period. The material substrate that accepts such perfection occurs but rarely. The prophet, who possesses a strong rational soul and imaginative faculty, manages to communicate with universal Active

Intelligence. Not many people can attain this height, so that such a man is rare. During the period of his mission, he must therefore prepare the people for the long subsequent period when there will be no prophet.

To ensure his mission be continued, the prophet must plan with great care (*dabbar*) to ensure the continual existence of the legislation he enacts concerning man's welfare (*al-masālīḥ al-insāniyyah*). For Ibn Sīnā, this is a necessary task. The word *fa-yajib*, repeated throughout these paragraphs, exhibits his serious concern in the matter. It is in fact related to the question of providence (*al-`ināyah*) as touched on in Chapter 2, for the prophet, who receives truth from the Active Intelligence, must come forth to humanity at large with a religio-social mission and must legislate in the best interests of human society.¹²

In paragraph 1.2, Ibn Sīnā states that the fundamental principle, without doubt (*wa al shakk*), is that men must continue in their knowledge of God and the afterlife (*istimrār al-nās `alā ma`rifatihim bi al-ṣāni` wa al-ma`ād*). This is clearly, a continuation of the previous matter. Any cause for forgetting these things (*wuqū` al-nisyān*) with the passing of the generation which witnesses the mission of the prophet, must be eliminated. In order to achieve this, the prophet, Ibn Sīnā tells us, must (*yajib*) lay down certain acts (*af`āl*) and practices (*a`māl*) incumbent on people. Then he must prescribe them to be repeated at frequent close intervals so that by this practice, Ibn Sīnā states, the memory of God and resurrection will emerge afresh on each occasion and will not disappear.

In paragraph 1.3, Ibn Sīnā explains more about the nature of these acts. He says they must be linked (*maqrūnah*) with that which reminds people of God and the afterlife. Otherwise, they have no value (*wa illā, falā*

¹² Fazhur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 52.

fā'idah fīhā). This reminding (*al-tadhkīr*) can be achieved through words (*al-alfāz*) that are uttered or intentions (*niyyāt*) made in the imagination (*al-khayāl*). Moreover, the prophet or the lawgiver must tell the people that these acts bring them closer (*tuqarrīb*) to God and are richly rewarded (*wa yastawjīb bihā al-jazā' al-karīm*). He must always stress that these acts are in reality of such a nature. Ibn Sīnā then explains that the acts he means here are the acts of worship imposed on people (*al-'ibādāt al-mafrūdah 'alā al-nās*), i.e. religious rituals.

Ibn Sīnā repeats this matter in *al-Najāt* which is also his major works. Rahman translates as follows:

Now such a man is a prophet, does not recur at all times for matter recipient of such perfection rarely constitutes such a temperament. It is thus necessary that the prophet establish certain (religious) institutions for the perpetuation of the law he has promulgated for human welfare. Undoubtedly, the benefits of this are the perpetuation of people in their continued knowledge of the Maker and the hereafter and the removal of the causes of forgetfulness (on their part) after the end of the generation immediately succeeding the prophet. It is therefore necessary that the prophet should institute certain acts which makes incumbent upon people to perform constantly...so that they should remind them afresh (of the purpose of the law). These acts must be such as keep in people's hearts the memory of God the Exalted and the hereafter, else they would be useless. Now, "reminders" can be either words uttered or intentions made in one's mind. It should be said to people, "these actions would bring you near unto God and would cause the blessed good to come to

you"-and indeed, they should be really such. These are like the several forms of worship made incumbent upon people.¹³

It is probable that Ibn Sīnā's theory of why acts of worship are rationally necessary follows the path laid down by al-Fārābī. In effect, acts of worship have a secondary or merely instrumental role. They serve to remind people of God's existence and of the afterlife. In philosophical terms, that reminder has its prime use in eliciting from a rational human being primary acts which are conducive to so perfecting the intellectual faculty of the soul that human beings may expect some form of eternal (non-material) existence. For those human beings who do not have a fully developed rational faculty, these same acts will tend to instill awe and fear and to elicit a disciplined approach to life.¹⁴ This in turn will serve the purposes of (is in fact necessary to) the organization of a political state, which is the only means whereby man in general may hope to achieve salvation.

b) The benefits of rituals to the community and to the masses

2.1 وبالجملة يجب أن تكون منبهات، والمنبهات
إما حركات وإما أعدام حركات تفضي إلى حركات،
فأما الحركات فمثل الصلاة، وأما أعدام الحركات فمثل
الصوم، فإنه وإن كان معني عدميا فإنه يحرك من الطبيعة
تحريكا شديدا ينبه صاحبه أنه على جملة من الأمر ليس

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

هزلا، فيتذكر سبب ما ينويه من ذلك أنه القرب إلى الله تعالى.

2.2 ويجب إن أمكن أن تخلط بهذه الأحوال مصالح أخرى في تقوية السنة وبسطها. والمنافع الدنيوية للناس أيضا أن يفعل ذلك، وذلك مثل الجهاد والحج على أن يعين مواضع من البلاد بأنها أصلح المواضع لعبادة الله تعالى، وأنها خاصة لله تعالى، وتعين أفعال لا بد منها للناس وأنها في ذات الله تعالى مثل القرابين، فإنها مما يعين في هذا الباب معونة شديدة. والموضع الذي منفعته في هذا الباب هذه المنفعة إذا كان فيه مأوى الشارع ومسكنه فإنه يذكر به أيضا، وذكره في المنفعة المذكورة تالية لذكر الله تعالى وملائكة، والمأوى الواحد ليس يجوز أن يكون نصب عين الأمة كافة. فبالحري أن يفرض إليه مهاجرة وسفرة.

2.3 ويجب أن يكون أشرف هذه العبادات من وجه هو ما يفرض متوليه أنه مخاطب لله تعالى ومناج إياه وصائر إليه ومائل بين يديه، وهذا هو الصلاة. فيجب أن يسن للمصلي من الأحوال التي يستعد بها للصلاة ما جرت العادة بمؤاخذة الإنسان نفسه به عند لقاء الملك الإنساني من الطهارة والتنظيف، وأن يسن في الطهارة والتنظيف سنا بالغة، وأن يسن عليه فيها ما جرت العادة بمؤاخذة نفسه به عند لقاء الملك من الخشوع والسكون وغض البصر وقبض الأطراف وترك الالتفات والاضطراب،

وكذلك يسن له في كل وقت من أوقات العبادة آدابا
ورسوما محمودة.

2.4 فهذه الأفعال ينتفع بها العامة من رسوخ ذكر
الله تعالى والمعاد في أنفسهم، فيدوم لهم التثبيت بالسنن
والشرائع بسبب ذلك، فإن لم يكون لهم مثل هذه
المذاكرات تناسوا جميع ذلك مع انقراض قرن أو قرنين،
وينفعهم أيضا في المعاد منفعة عظيمة فيما تتره به أنفسهم
على ما عرفت¹⁵.

Throughout this section Ibn Sīnā gives examples and explores the function of ritual acts. The examples are clearly derived from Muslim religious structures. Ibn Sīnā's apparently rational assessment of the requirements of human society leads him, unsurprisingly, to a defence of Islam.

In paragraph 2.1, Ibn Sīnā stresses these acts must always be reminders (*munabbiḥāt*). He explains that reminders consist of either motions (*al-ḥarakāt*) such as prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) or the absence of motion such that it leads to other motions (*ʾIdam ḥarakāt tafḍī ilā ḥarakāt*) such as fasting (*al-ṣawm*). He does not define what he means by the word 'motion' and 'the absence of motion' in this context. However, his examples clarify the matter. Ibn Sīnā says that although fasting is an absence of motion, it so greatly moves one's nature (*al-ṭabiʿah*) that he who fasts is reminded that what he is engaged in is not just a jest (*ḥazlan*).

Then he states how the benefit of this worship lies in the fact that the faster will recall the cause of his intention of fasting, which draws him close (*al-qurb*) to God. For

¹⁵ Chapter three of the *maqālah*.

Ibn Sīnā then, at this stage in his argument, the whole purpose of religious rituals is caught up in the notion of reminding. At the most general level, the constant repetition of rituals acts will remind worshippers of the existence of God and of an afterlife-to which the worshipper must aspire. Several acts of abstention, like fasting, have the added function of simply reminding the worshipper that life is not a frivolous matter, but a serious one, and that the purpose of these rational acts is to bring the worshipper close to God.

What Ibn Sīnā is doing in this paragraph is working towards rational conclusion about the nature of the prophetic task. For him, a rational consideration of man's position and needs points to the necessity of a prophet, a necessity that must be fulfilled by heavenly providence. Rational considerations point to the nature and duties of this prophet. One of his duties is to provide a pattern of activities that will keep his community in constant memory of God and salvation, even after he, the prophet, has disappeared. This is all necessary for man's good, and for that reason, must be fulfilled through heavenly providence. Ibn Sīnā argues that the acts and absence of acts that will serve the purpose required are of a limited kind. They are in fact of the type which has been in reality implemented by real prophets. Ibn Sīnā is demonstrating that the actual activities of real prophets (including Muhammad p.b.u.h.) is consistent with a rational consideration of what human society requires if it is to flourish (and, flourishing, to permit individual human salvation).

Ibn Sīnā urges in paragraph 2.2 that if possible (*in amkan*) these basic acts of worship must be mixed with other useful matters (*maṣāliḥ ukhrā*) for the purpose of strengthening and spreading the law. This mixture will also be beneficial to men's worldly interests (*al-manāfi` al-dunyāwiyyah*). Then he gives examples of these useful

matters by mentioning *jihād* (holy war) and *hajj* (the pilgrimage), which relate to man's worldly business. By this he means the preservation of the community in the first case. In the case of *hajj*, he explains that certain areas of land (*mawāḍi' min al-bilād*) must be designated as best suited for worshipping God. These lands will be deemed to belong solely to God, but he does not specifically mention the places or locations he has in mind.

In addition to this, he goes on, when certain areas of land have been set-up, certain acts (*af'āl*), which people must perform, must be specified. These acts will belong exclusively to God and will serve the same purpose in relation to him as sacrificial offerings (*al-qarābīn*). These additional acts, he suggests, help greatly in remembering God. His meaning is that these worldly matters are useful to the people and can also be used to strengthen and to spread the law.

Ibn Sīnā then offers something which has its own place, value and function in strengthening and spreading the laws. He states that it is much better if that place or area which is determined for the special worship of God also contains the legislator's house and abode (*ma'wā al-shāri' wa maskanuh*). One of the benefits then is that it will also be a reminder of the prophet. The remembrance of him will also be a reminder in relation to the above benefits, and is only next in importance to the remembrance of God and his angles. However, Ibn Sīnā acknowledges that it is impossible to accommodate the whole community in one place (*al-ma'wā al-wāḥid*) and so he emphasizes that it becomes fitting to establish a law of migration (*muhājir*) and a journey (*safar*) to that place.

Thus it can be seen once again Ibn Sīnā adduces rational considerations to establish the necessity (or desirability) of a particular community's having a specific geographical focus for its acts of worship. He attempts to make a rational argument to the effect that it is for the

good of the community (and of the individual believer) that this should be the case. Ibn Sīnā is probably thinking about Makka, but since his description is intended to be general, he is also thinking about Jerusalem and all other areas where flourishing communities have a focus of loyalty. He is providing a rational description of the ideal community and it fits with the actual Muslim community (and other major communities) as they existed in the Middle East.

In paragraph 2.3, Ibn Sīnā distinguishes these acts of worship. He says that the noblest of these acts of worship are those in which the worshipper considers himself to be addressing God (*mukhāṭab Allāh Ta`ālā*), conversing with him (*wa munāj iyyāh*), drawing close to him (*wa ṣā`ir ilayh*), and standing in his presence (*wa māthil bayn yadayh*). This is prayer. These characteristics make prayer different from other religious acts. Ibn Sīnā does not mention such characteristics as these when he talks about fasting, *jihād*, etc.

Only after this Ibn Sīnā comes to next discussion of how prayer ought to be performed. With regard to this important matter, Ibn Sīnā insists that the legislator should prescribe for the worshipper in preparation for prayer those postures men traditionally adopt when they call on their kings—such as purification and cleanliness (*al-ṭahārah wa al-tanzīf*). Ibn Sīnā asserts that the legislator must prescribe fully in these two things, laying down or worshippers the attitude and behaviour traditionally adopted in the presence of king, i.e. reverence, calm, modesty, the lowering of the eyes, the contracting of the hands and feet, the avoidance of turning around, and composure. Again, says Ibn Sīnā, the lawgiver must prescribe for each time of prayer praiseworthy manners and customs.

These are duties which must be done by the legislator to ensure that prayer be properly fulfilled. It may be

presumed that just as the actual duties associated with prayer are explicable as re-enactments of familiar relationships of subservience, so also the form of other ritual acts will be susceptible to rational explanation.

Among various religious acts mentioned in this section, Ibn Sīnā gives prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) the highest ranking (it is *ashraf al-`ibādāt*), but he does not give details of how to perform it! His arguments indicate that the main focus here is the vulgar (*'amma*), not the learned people. He wants the vulgar people always to remember God and the afterlife. Prayer, in this respect, is a necessity for them. Then Ibn Sīnā mentions the great benefit for them in the afterlife. The message he gives is that those who conform to these practices, fulfill their religious duties, and keep firm to them will attain some kind of happiness in the hereafter, as he stated in Chapter 2.

The key point here is about the obtaining of individual happiness or salvation in the afterlife in which acts of worship, especially prayer, play a vital role for man. In his treatise *On Prayer* Ibn Sīnā states:

A man is rewarded according to his acts; if he is perfect in works, he obtains an ample reward, but if his acts are imperfect and fall short, in like measure is his felicity imperfect and his reward falls short, so that he remains forever sorrowful and downcast, nay, forsaken and damned.¹⁶

In this work, Ibn Sīnā distinguishes two kinds of prayer: inward prayer and outward prayer. Gutes says that outward prayer is proper to the body and inward prayer is proper to the rational soul.¹⁷ Of the two, the latter one is

¹⁶ Arthur John Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (London: John Murray, 1951), 54.

¹⁷ Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 181.

the 'real'. In the same work, Ibn Sīnā offers his explanation:

The outward part of prayer is that prescribed by the religious law and recognized as a fundamental duty of religion: our lawgiver imposed it as an obligation for every man, calling it *ṣalā* and making it the foundation of faith, saying, "There is no faith in him who has no *ṣalā*, and there is no faith in him who is not faithful".¹⁸

We may note that Ibn Sīnā is referring only to ritual prayer, or outward prayer. To mark the difference, it will be useful to pursue the matter of inward prayer a little further:

As for the second or inward part or truth of prayer: this is to contemplate God with a pure heart, and a spirit abstracted and cleansed of all desires. This part does not follow the way of bodily numbers and elements, but rather the part of pure thoughts and eternal spirits. The prophet himself was often preoccupied with the true apprehension of God, and was thereby prevented from following the numerical order of formal prayer, which he sometimes shortened and sometimes prolonged.¹⁹

Therefore Ibn Sīnā insists, "This is the kind of prayer that is exclusively the concern of the intellect; reason confirms this statement, bearing in mind the prophet's word, "The man at prayer is in secret converse with the Lord".²⁰ Walzer, comments on the nature of the philosopher's payer according to Ibn Sīnā as follows:

¹⁸ Arthur John Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

He gives to this part of the rite a completely new meaning by making it the specific prayer of the philosopher and identifying it with philosophical contemplation, as the final result of intense and protracted philosophical studies. To quote a few sentences: 'prayer is the foundation stone of religion – worship is knowledge, that is to be aware of the existence of One whose being is necessary and absolute – the real nature of prayer is therefore to know Almighty God in its uniqueness, as a being wholly necessary'.²¹

Then he states:

This prayer is silent, far beyond the world of the senses, it is an inner vision, with the eye of the mind: "Reason's ambition and striving all through life is to purify the sensual impressions and to become aware of the world of intelligible truth. Reasoning is the speech of the angels who have no speech or utterance, reasoning belongs to them especially, which is perception without sensing and communication without words. Man's relation to the Kingdom of Heaven to the world of the mind, is established by reasoning: speech follows after it. If a man possesses no knowledge of reasoning he is incapable of expressing truth".²²

Ibn Sīnā himself engaged in such acts of worship, particularly in his times of study. He tells us that when he faced difficulties in his study, he would pray to God: "*I used to visit the mosques (al-jāmi`)* frequently and

²¹ Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic: Essay on Islamic Philosophy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1962), 249.

²² Arthur John Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, 56.

worship (wa 'uṣallī), praying humbly to the All-creating (mabda' al-kullī) until He opened the mystery of it to me and made the difficult seem easy".²³ But Gutas, in his commentary to this prayer says:

At that time, when Avicenna was studying, he may not have held this particular interpretation of the efficacy of prayer, since the specific reference to prayer in connection with middle terms in the Autobiography is meaningful only in the context of Avicenna's theory of Intuition as it developed later.²⁴

When we turn back to the text Paragraph 2.4 Commences with phrase *hādhih al-af'āl* ("these acts"), indicating that Ibn Sīnā now wants to make some remarks covering all types of worship including prayer, fasting, *jihād*, *ḥājj* and sacrifices. He does not specifically mentioned *al-zakāt* and *al-sadaqāt*. The question here is what benefit these acts may have for the people. We must not forget that Ibn Sīnā has distinguished the masses (*al-'āmm*) from the elite (*al-khāṣṣ*). For former, the benefits are as follows:

- 1) They will instill in them remembrance of God and the resurrection (*min rusūkh dhikr Allāh Ta'ālā wa al-ma'ād fī anfusihim*)
- 2) Their adherence to the statutes and laws will continue (*fa yadum lahum al-tathabbut bi al-sunan wa al-sharā'ī bi sabab dhālik*)
- 3) If there is no reminder, they will forget all of these – God and resurrection – with the passing of a generation or two (*fa in lam yakun lahum mithl hādhih al-mudhakkirat tanasū jamī` dhālik ma'a inqirāḍ qarnin aw qarnayn*)

²³ William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sīnā*, 29.

²⁴ Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 182.

- 4) It will also be of great benefit for them in the afterlife in as much as their souls will be purified in the manner known (*wa yanfa'uhum ayḍan fī al-ma'ād manfa'at 'azīmat fī mā tanazzah bih anfusihim 'alā mā `arrafat*)

These benefits will ultimately fulfil the objective of the laws laid down by the prophet, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Men meanwhile will realize that their in this world is beneficial and that their acts here will affect their fate in the world to come. Acts of worship, i.e. rituals, become important even though they do not perceive the truth in it. Ibn Sīnā points to the importance and usefulness of acts of worship in sustaining the multitude's remembrance of God and the resurrection in the hereafter, which are essential for the continuance of political life. In contrast, al-Ghazzali, according to Ahmed Sherif:²⁵

Finds in the acts of worship very little of political and social values, and his apparent aim in dealing with them is to stress their importance for the individual and part they play in helping him master his passions, schooling him in virtue, and above all, enabling him to seek divine assistance in order that he may attain happiness.

Conclusion

According to Ibn Sīnā, the acts of worship plays an important role to human being. The prophet or the lawgiver have the responsibility to tell the people that these acts can bring them closer to God. These acts, he explained, are the religious rituals. They serve to remind people of God's existence and their fate in the afterlife. These deeds can be performed either through motions

²⁵ Mohammad Ahmad Sherif, *Al-Ghazali's Theory of Virtue* (New York: State University of New York, 1975), 86.

such as prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) or absence of motion such as fasting (*al-ṣawm*). The religious rituals, at the end, will bring them to the ultimate objective of life of every human being that is, happiness.

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