

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 1: In Praise of God

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds (Fātiḥa 1:2)

Reflections:

If we saw a beautiful painting, our instinctual response—and the most correct one—would be to praise the artist. This is to recognize the perfections that lie within the painting and the role of the artist in producing it.

When we look out into the world, we find harmony and life; we find elegance and potency; we find similarity and distinction. When we praise God in the face of all these beautiful and awe-inspiring qualities, regardless of how they *seem* to come about, it is a recognition that all such qualities *essentially* emanate from Allah. The Name 'Allah' is the comprehensive name of God, which includes all of His Most Beautiful Names, and the source of all perfections. If all perfections culminate in God, then it is clear why all praise must belong to Him.

In the realm of becoming, where entities are nudged towards their perfections, God is also the nurturing Lord. He is the Lord of this world and the next; the Lord of the heavens and the earth; the Lord of angels, humans, animals, plants, and minerals; and the Lord of every single creature, each one being a “world” unto itself. As the Lord who takes each entity (and world) to its perfection, God is the possessor of all praise.

The noble Qur'ān, which is a source of guidance for us, begins with the Surah of Praise (Ḥamd), and it is this same surah that we are asked to recall throughout our day during our canonical prayers. Imbuing the moments of our life with the praise of God reminds us not only of our essential poverty (for we are not the source of perfection), but also how all perfections are connected to Him.

But praising God has other advantages as well. At a time when a part of humanity has used the gift of free will to descend into tyranny and oppression for the sake of paltry transient benefits, remembering to praise God allows us to notice the goodness that continues to exist and to foster hope. It reminds us of the path we must traverse if we wish to escape the limitations of imperfections, and prepare ourselves to meet the Source of all perfection.

In his du'ā for the Coming of the Month of Ramaḍān, Imam Sajjād (‘a) says, “Praise belongs to God who guided us to His praise and placed us among the people of praise, that we might be among the thankful for His beneficence and that He might recompense us for that with the recompense of the good-doers! And praise belongs to God who showed favour to us through His religion, singled us out for His creed, and directed us onto the roads of His beneficence, in order that through His kindness we might travel upon them to His good pleasure.” (*al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Du'ā 44)

To ponder: When we see Allah as the Lord of *all the worlds*, how does this affect our understanding of Him?

Discussion (with a scholar): Given that we are limited creatures, to what degree can we praise God?