

September 13, 2008

Guest Retreat Dars

Title: Finding the Moments in Ramadan

DVD title: Seizing the Moment: Time and Time Again
Part I

Duas. O Allah, benefit me by that which you have taught me. And teach me that which will benefit me and provide me with that knowledge which benefits me.

My dear brothers and sisters, first of all let me thank you for coming. I want to thank Shaykh Nooruddeen and Hajjah Noura again. I like to think we have this little movement going between Charlottesville and Bedford, our extended family. Allah Swt has provided me with a brother who I never had, and sister. And another sister who brings so many benefits to us in our community and in Charlottesville, and all of you who are associated with the *shuyukh*, and who are associated with the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and who are associated with Allah, as the Shaykh so beautifully told us today.

There are two quotations of many in the Qur'an that we can talk about in my talk today. One is,

And he said, Say truly, death from which they flee is assuredly coming to meet you, and then you will be brought back to the knower of the concealed and the revealed, and he will tell you all that you have done.

Another quote I will give in English:

The sun and the moon move in a precise reckoning, and the stars and the trees prostrate themselves and he has raised up the sky and set the balance that you might not transgress the balance.

What I want to discuss with you in the context of our daily Ramadān, and in the context of what should maybe become a consciousness that carries over from Ramadān, is the subject of the passage of time, the inevitability. Both of these quotations tell us about things over which we have absolutely no control. We cannot control the universal phenomena, and we can't control when the time of death is coming. We know both are real as any real can be, to those who inhabit this world. With Ramadān here, we are extremely aware of the passage of time. Sometimes it creeps along, and sometimes it runs. It runs toward us sometimes, too fast, but it is of Allah. And Allah says, **“Come toward Me and I'll come running toward you.”** As far as I'm concerned, Ramadān is another name of Allah Swt who comes to visit once a year.

Allah Swt speaks of time in many different ways in Qur'an. It's a very nice exercise just to open the Qur'an and start to read it with time in mind. You'll find that the old song, “time is on my side,” may or may not be true. What we usually talk about is *zaman*, which is linear or passing time. But I want to talk about *zaman* and *waqt*. Sidi said he will talk about vertical and horizontal tomorrow. In my mind, *zaman* and *waqt* are vertical and horizontal. One way of understanding time is to look at the popular accepted opinion of time, the passing of years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds; the movement of the spheres accounted for in the repetition of time and the duration of that counting, and the solar and lunar spheres that are discussed in Qur'an, and of course many other natural examples.

Many people think time doesn't really exist, because the longest of those calculations are

in years or groups of years; those that have passed and those that haven't come yet. They are gone. We were just in the mosque; it's gone. When I started, it's gone. Nothing exists of them except our memory. You can't prove really that they were ever here. We can all attest to the fact that we were just in the mosque. We can take photographs of it, but you can doctor photographs, too. From another point of view, time exists eternally, making day and night, 24 hours in a day, the revolution around the sun and all the suns and galaxies and universes of which Allah is Rabbil 'Ālamīn—in the plural: universes.

If we look at time right now, it's 2:32. Do we all agree it's around that? Yes. Go tell the people in Chicago. What time is it in Chicago? California? China? It depends on latitude and longitude, and every 30 degrees it changes. The sun shines on half the earth at one time, the moon on the other. We say when the sun shines it is day; and when it is not, we call it night. Isn't this a great lesson I'm telling you. It's amazing what you can get away with if you are a Shaykh. You can tell people what they know from kindergarten. All these things evolve in a cycle, in a circle. We can spend a long time talking about circles from different viewpoints and from different heights, from different perspectives. But there seems to be a continuity in the passage of time, in the passage of day and night around the earth, and it has effects on us. We know that. It has an effect on our psychological state, our actions, our emotional state. There are more fires during the full moon. People feel differently. There are more crimes. The oceans respond differently. When you contemplate it, you see that there are many, many effects of time.

From one point of view, all is reflective, and all takes place within something that is timeless that we call Allah Swt. We give a concept called *tawhid*/unity, oneness. But there isn't anything that we can construct or measure but the passing of days and nights in any one place. We can see the effect of time on buildings, on plant life, on people. Just a few days ago the stream was absolutely dry. It affected both of these things: natural

phenomena and the passage of time. Things have changed. In our meditation, we contemplate in a certain way when we do a certain kind of dhikr. When we begin to ask questions (as I hope we all do), “Who created all of this? When was it created?,” we get very distracted sometimes. The question that really stays with us, at least has stayed with me for many years on many levels, is why? Why does this whole creation exist? That question seems to be timeless. “When” puts it in the context of time. “Where” puts it in the context of time and space. “How” again puts it in time and space, because it is an action, technically. But “why” [stays with us]: Why am I? Why do I seek?

All these questions come to seekers on the path. Those who are on the *sair ul suluk*, the Shaykh said, we in the Shadhili order don't think of the *suluk*. I am Shadhili, too. When we in the Naqshbandi line think of the *suluk*, I want to clarify that. We are talking about an internal journey, a vertical journey. It has a time factor to it, because we are doing it. But it's about what we call the seven levels of the journey; it's not the outward journey. We start to think about time as something continuous, *zaman*, the flow of time from the past to the future. Then we think of time perhaps as *waqt*. *Waqt* is a state you are in, either with Allah Swt so absorbed in the *dunya* you have forgotten the ocean you are swimming in. You have forgotten what the Shaykh was saying, which we have to remember, that Allah Swt is present: *hazari, nazari, mai*. He is present/*hazari* with us.

Either we are in a state of absorption in Allah joyously, or in a state of distraction in *dunya*. There is a great Sufi you may know called Tustari. He said, “*Sufism is nothing but the silence of the waqt.*” It's the changing state of the *waqt* in the heart of the believer, or the Sufi who is brought to a station (*maqam*) called ‘*ibn al waqt*, the son of time, the son of the moment. Think of *waqt* as this moment, this moment, this moment. That's the only place where we are, really. We are in this linear process, but really only in this moment. Who is with us in this moment? Yes: Hu is with us. How do we know?

He tells us, **“Wheresoever you turn your face, there is the presence of Allah.”** Anywhere, everywhere. When you can’t turn your face, because you can’t look at yourself except in your own mirror, He tells us that He as is near to us as our jugular vein. Just in case you want to forget yourself in that looking around. We move from, hopefully, a state of *‘ibn al waqt*, to the *‘abd al waqt*, the servant, the slave of time, but not *zaman*. Not the slave of time that says, “I have to be at the office at this time, and if I’m not, I won’t get this or that done.” Not that kind of slave of time that makes us go dimensional and be multi-taskers in time, but the servant of the moment.

In *zaman*, the passage of time is like “Ramadān is coming and all the things associated with it.” We prepare for it, and now it’s here and we are doing it, hopefully, *insh’allah* acceptable by Allah Swt. All the things that are associated with linear time may or may not be associated in the moment, like hunger. There was a big dinner last night. There was a big dinner continuing after dinner last night. There was a big *suhur* just a few hours later. Just enough time to go home, put your head down on the pillow, get up, and continue eating. But there are other things, too, like tiredness. We have to associate it with something adjectival: I’m irritable. Irritability, struggle, health: a situation our brother has, attenuated by the fast. It forces us to make decisions, when? In the moment. Those decisions need to be decisions that are going to keep us in the Divine presence or away from the Divine presence. Of course, everyone makes decisions moment to moment. That’s not the question, but that’s all usually in the context of *zaman*. The spiritual decisions are internal decisions, vertical decisions. They take us up, if you will.

In this linear concept of *zaman*, the past, present and future has an inclination to hide Allah from our sight, because we become involved in other things. We are involved in a religious, spiritual exercise called Ramadān, given to us by Allah Swt. If we contemplate it in terms of time, we are introducing to it this whole added attitude that hides Allah Swt

from our own self. That's because we allow ourselves to be very much involved in our own self during Ramadān. To the degree that we are involved in our own self, self-indulgent, fearful, anxious, worried, measuring the success or failure of our Ramadān by our health or attitude, and not by our nearness to Allah Swt, we move further and further away from understanding the essence of *waqt*. This is why we should be encouraging ourselves and each other to be involved with Allah Swt during Ramadān, why the schedule is what it is here, and why your schedule is what it is in Charlottesville: so much recitation, so much *muraqabah*, so much *dhikr*.

[This schedule is] built on another foundation (which I'll maybe talk about tomorrow) which is another pillar of our *tariqah*, *suhbat*/keeping in the company of good and righteous people. Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) said this is the cornerstone of our *tariqah*, *suhbat*. Why? People? Relationships; relatedness. Eventually it is (what Sidi was talking about) the *silsila*, going back to Prophet Mohammed (sal), that gives us our Islam in the proper understanding of *taslim*, not just surrender, not just peace, but safety and security. It's not that we just find safety and security with each other, but people obviously gather into social groups for that purpose. But we find safety and security spiritually with those who are related to us spiritually, *munasabat*, as we should have with our *shaykh*: a cordial relatedness, a cordial relationship with Allah Swt.

It's not just because we become so involved in our self during fasting. But in fasting, we go beyond the idea of the self and become involved with Allah, and to try very hard to put our attention on Allah Swt, and in that, the annihilation of the self – when? In the moment, *waqt*, just even in one moment, or for short periods of time during Ramadan it is necessary to rid ourselves of this enslavement to time, *zaman*. After the *salat ul tasbīh* last night, I said something to Sidi, and he said, “I'm somewhere else; I am not here.” My students know, “Don't talk to me after meditation. Give me 30 seconds, one minute, or I

might bite your head off. Because I'm not here, and I don't like being yanked back." Where am I? Well, that's the journey of a lifetime. Insh'allah, I'm with Allah Swt more than I'm with myself. So the task of the seeker, which Ramadān gives us this great opportunity to do, is to refine, to tune ourselves.

The task of the *murīd* or seeker, who is not happy with their current state of distraction, is to undertake this challenge passionately, willingly, lovingly. How else should you involve yourself with the One Who created you, the One Who makes your existence relevant? He gives us many ways to practice that. We practice with our husbands and wives, with our children, the members of our society, with our community, and with the members of our *tariqah*. Sometimes it's not so easy. People get distracted. People practice with soccer, with football, that passion. They love their Bentley. That goes, of course, nowhere. There is no ability to respond. We have to challenge ourselves willingly and passionately, not just in the passing of time, but with the timeless, Allah Swt.

Allah helps us during this Ramadān, during this month that is passing in *zaman*, by giving us a night unlike any other night. It's described in terms of thousands of years. The implication is transcending time. Repetitious patterns, but somehow, they are vertical repetitions. It's not that they come down, but repetitious patterns [that go] higher and higher. Then He shows us, in the *'alam*, in all these symbols and *'āyāt*, not just in Qur'an, but like in the chambered nautilus. It shows us the repetition of time, in the rings in the trees, in the seasons passing. It tells us a lot. We begin to realize that external time/*zaman* exists, but every moment of it is an opening/*fath*, a doorway/*bab*. During Ramadān, we can try to guarantee ourselves these moments. We can make the *niyyat* for that, to have these moments. Recitation of Qur'an is the means of opening this door.

I gave an instruction to those who were sitting with me in meditation this morning: you

put the key in the door and you open the door. I was with our beloved Dr. Chang not too long ago, and I said, “Why do you put needles in and take them right out?” He said, “How many times do you put the key in the door? Do you leave it in the door, or take it out?” It’s like that, sitting in the *masjid*, breaking up the linear time process by doing prayer. Shaykh also talked about prayer and the evolution of *salat*. My admonition, my encouragement, is to try to create these vertical interruptions, these moments. Ramadan is very limited, from the first or second of September, to the first of October. But within that time, there are so many moments that expand, [so much so that] you can become lost in them. They can become more and more your default. Not that you become *majdhub*, that you become so out of time that you lose yourself, but you learn the means to be in that Divine presence through your *muraqabah*, your *dhikr*, your recitation. Certainly the fasting of over a billion people helps. Certainly the company of good people helps, and the fact of the physical fast helps. Many of these things help us to refocus our lives.

There are people who believe, and I’ve met them among the Sufis, that creation comes moment to moment. Everything is created and destroyed moment to moment, and the only thing that carries through is the memory of it. Just like you remember being in the mosque, but it’s not happening right now. This concept of *waqt* is really a very important concept. It overlaps those moments so we think there is a continuum. But if we stop thinking in terms of the continuum and start making the present alive, it will certainly help us, even in our secular life, in our day to day life. We won’t be people driven by the schedule, driven by what has to happen next, but how well we do what we have to do, aware that there is a schedule, aware that there is a linear process going on, like we are aware of Ramadān. But we want to savor each moment of it. This is self discipline. This is a training. It feels right when it happens to us. It is natural to us. But to make it happen again and again means we have to surrender to that moment.

Instead of developing all these causal relationships – and those of you who know me, know I like to get involved in complexity theory and chaos theory and non-linear time frames – instead of thinking that such and such happened because of ‘this and that’ in those kind of causal relationships, we have to start to understand and contemplate what the meaning of *qadr*/destiny is. The Shaykh said something I like to say, “Why are you and I sitting in this room, right here?” Why? Who but Allah Swt has brought us together? There are plenty of Muslims in the world who aren’t sitting here. Why are we here, together? Why am I here in this moment, and what is it I can drink from this moment? I know that somehow I am potentially sharing with every other person sitting here, no matter what name I call them: my brother, my sister, my friend, my new friend, my husband, my wife. It doesn’t matter what I call them, because those names disappear in the shared moment. So part of our destiny is to experience this.

I was talking the other day about the speed of light also. We know from the astronomers who affirm what we know from Qur’an, that from the curvature of space, eternity is a possibility. Where are *we* in all that? Are we in the eternal something? When we become involved in things, which by their nature are not limited to time, those aspects of our self that are unlimited resonate with it. For example, truth is not limited by time. Compassion is not limited by time. The mercy the Shaykh was talking about is not limited by time. They happen in time, but they are not defined by time. Love is not defined by time nor forgiveness. When we engage in things that are timeless, that gives us opening to *waqt*; therefore, when we engage, when we develop our capacity for love, for forgiveness, for patience, for tolerance (even patience is defined by time to some degree) that puts us in resonance with this vertical process of *waqt*, the moment. We are involved in the moment, totally free for a moment from the physical world, even for a short period of time. You see it in the Qur’an every day.

You have this book. It has a cover. It seems that the information in that is contained within those covers. Sometimes you read a novel that has a cover on it, and you finish it, that's the end—finished. You will not get any more out of it. But every word, every page, every letter, every concept in Qur'an takes you vertically. It's not contained by the cover at all. It's dynamic. Again, I challenge you: open the Qur'an and read it for time. Open it again and read it for movement, in its dynamic context. There is very little that is static in the Qur'an. It might talk about the creation of the stones and rocks and mountains; it's dynamic. If it has 975 pages in the Tajwidi Qur'an, how many moments are in it? You go to it, you open it up, you are reading it; time is passing—*zaman*. You decide to recite an hour every morning and every afternoon. In that are timeless moments. I'm not speaking in metaphors: it is an experiential reality.

Just like Sidna Musa tells Prophet Mohammed (sal) to go negotiate with Allah Swt about the number of prayers, that's all very well and good. Just like the Shaykh said, we are doing 40, 50 prayers a day anyway. It's about moments. I remember in Turkey, outside of Istanbul when I was with Shaykh Osman Sirajuddin Naqshband (ra) there was one of his older students. The Shaykh was maybe 103 at that time, and one of his older student who was maybe 85, 90 was *majdhub*. If he would ever lead prayer, it was like an experience you never had in your life. You could remain in *julus or ruku* for 10 minutes, or jump up in a second. Sometimes it was out of order. Now, technically, it wasn't exactly *salat*. But I don't have any problem with thinking that Allah accepted the prayer. He took you to those moments you couldn't get in 50 years of praying, maybe, just by his company. First you think, "Who is this crazy man leading prayer? I'm not doing my prayer. When is he going to bend over? When is he going to stand up?" Then all of a sudden, you surrender to the moment. You surrender to the moment. And then the prayer has become something you never experienced before. And probably will never experience again in that way. Do you have to live his life exactly to get there? That's

like saying, “I had a great meditation last night. I remember that I took my left shoe off first, then my right shoe. I scratched myself here, I have a bug bite over here and scratched that. I yawned, stretched my arms, and coughed three times. I took a sip of water, and snorted a little water. And I had the greatest meditation I’ve ever had, so I’m going to repeat all those things tonight. Just so I can have another good meditation.”

That’s the absurdity of living in *zaman*. We live in *zaman* because Allah Swt created it that way. He tells us, He put things in cycles and in repetitious patterns. The sun comes up. (I heard a news report about a politician saying something about the sun rising in the west. Maybe he is prescient that the end of time is coming.) But the sun comes up and goes down and the moon follows it, just in case you weren’t sure. Obviously, we have to live in time. For what purpose? To find those moments, to find the exit, because we are going to exit. That’s why I quoted to you what I quoted in the beginning. We have no idea when that time is coming. It is written, but we don’t know. This is, on one hand, preparation for the *akhirat*. On the other hand, it’s a way of saying how you die before you die, how you live fully in the moment, and not in the goofy-Sufi moment, but the real Islamic, Sufic moment, the creative moment, sometimes people call it An, the creative moment.

The realities of *zaman* are a lot similar, too. You pick up that novel and you have emotions and feelings. You forget yourself for a minute, and you are flying over oceans, diving into oceans, and meeting people. You have forgotten this self for a moment, and this self has become involved in that drama. It’s very similar. Only it’s appealing to another whole dimension of our personality that takes us away from Allah Swt. The same kind of feeling, emotions, traveling distances is experience in the Qur’an which tells us the truth, not fiction. Sometimes they say there is no fiction; that fiction is a distortion of the truth. Nobody can make up something that doesn’t exist, or have the potentiality for

existence. It's fiction because it doesn't exist in that form or with these people. But the reality of Qur'an is not fictional. Therefore, you stay always in the realm of the truth, of the Haqq of Allah that is Allah Swt. Maybe you can hold onto this as an example of *waqt*.

When you are reading through the pages of the Qur'an linearly, you are also having non-linear experiences. I gave a talk recently up in Washington at IIIT on the systems approach to Islam and all the complexities in it. When the description of all the complexities of the creation is there, it is also telling you about the absolute simplicity of it, the non-linearity of it. When we come into contact with things that are not limited by time and space, then you begin to realize how language may distort things. Then you begin to realize how important the language of Qur'an is. For those of us who are not that able in Arabic as we should be, and could be maybe, we can at least take a dictionary and glossary, and look at the depth and breadth of all of those words, the morphology. All it does it take you on this vertical journey to another book called a dictionary. The morphology is incredible. It's exactly the thing you need in the moment. Sometimes the words have opposite meanings, because in that moment, that's exactly what you needed because you are in the Divine presence in that moment.

I like to think that in the dynamic design of this universe, which is also represented in Islamic architecture, when you go to Al Azhar, or *qaraween* in Morocco, or to Sultan Hamid, or to Medina to the Haram of Prophet Mohammed (sal), that every one of those pillars is a doorway to *waqt*. Perhaps we know that the Prophet (sal) leaned against the pillar. It's not just a metaphor or symbolic. But there is energy that is not diluted by linear time within us. That's why we, in our meditation, try to understand it from different perspectives of *latā'if*, from *qalb*, *ruh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfah*, and *nafs*. And *bad*, *mar*, *khak*, and *nar*. We try to understand it from the *'ālam al amr*, the world of command, and the *'ālam al khalq*. That is an interesting word: *khuluq/khalaq*. *Khuluq* means your

demeanor. What does that have to do with *khalaq*/creation?

What I want to accomplish today and tomorrow is to give us pause. We talk about time pause in the Naqshbandi-Mujadeddi *tariqah*. I want that we look at this Ramadān differently. We look at the moments in Ramadān, just while you are here. Understand that those pillars in those *masājid* are holding up the domes and the arches, which are symbolic of the universe, and their interconnectedness. Everything is connected. You look at some of those and say, how do they do that? Even in the new *masjid* in Casablanca, they had to find these old artisans (maybe 10 thousand) and retrain them. How did they make these interwoven arches? Everywhere you look there is the truth, the repetitive truth again and again. Learn to look. Learn to see. **“O man, you have eyes but you don’t see. You have ears but you don’t hear,”** Allah Swt tells us in Qur’an.

Get something different out of Ramadan this year, different than the normal fasting, different than the *iftār* and the *suhūr*, different than the pride in ourselves that we got through it again this year, or the embarrassment or disgracing of our self to our own self because we cheated a little or said we couldn’t on a day when we could have. Or we disgraced ourselves by saying we could when we shouldn’t have, and put ourselves in danger. It’s an opportunity for many moments, an opportunity to witness the unfolding of many changes within our own self. And the more these changes occur, these gifts of Allah Swt, the better chance we have for attaining this *maqam*. A *maqam* is a station we don’t fall back from. Wouldn’t we all like to know that we are up one level?

Inayyat and I can do that on Second Life, but I’m talking about here in First Life. Really, this is Second Life and that’s Third Life. First Life is before we got here. This is in a sense an opportunity to ascend to new heights, new dimensions, *insh’allah*. That means we have to look at things differently, and at terminology different. When you say Islam,

don't think of religion. Think of *taslim*. When you say Allah, don't think of some one, some god, sitting over there somewhere else. Don't think of God; think of all the attributes that are in this moment. Why did you think of Allah in this moment? Because I had fear, because I had awe, or because I had compassion/*rahmat*. Re-train, re-train.

People use terminology slightly different, even among the Orders. We do the same thing in slightly different ways. We do Hizbul Bahr, but slightly differently than Shaykh Noorudeen. Hizbul Bahr itself is the same; but all the things around it are different. But it's all recognizable to be the same thing, and for the same purpose. The other thing I want to encourage you to do is to make sure you understand the terminology in different ways, not just in one way. Understand how other people think they understand or don't understand. It builds humility and patience and tolerance. Let's not forget when you hear the word *sabr*, please don't just think patience. **"Inallaha ma' saberin: Allah assists those who are patient."** Try it this way: **"Allah assists those who persevere."** It has a different quality to it, doesn't it? Patient means what: patient with circumstances, with things that are happening. Perseverance means in the moment, in the moment, in the moment. Can you say, "I will persevere from now until 1:00"? Now until 5:00?" You can say it: "I'm going to be patient.... I'm going to be patient."

The other thing is to understand the terminology we use among ourselves, those of us who walk the path of Tasawwuf, Sufism, and create the kind of language that is respectful language between ourselves, and with each other. When we don't, we have to repent of it. I have to repent already today. I'm anxious to end this so I can repent. Use the kind of language to articulate the concepts of Allah Swt that you know and understand now, in a way that tries to reach the height of how you learned it from Qur'an, from your Shaykh, from the *anbiyā*, from the *awliyā*. Don't disrespect knowledge. Don't disrespect the truth. One of the things that has happened in the US is this "dumbing down." Listen to

the way people speak, the words they use. You teach public school. How do they speak? “Hey, man. Yo, bro.” And things you cannot repeat here. How do we talk to each other? Short speak.

Yet, we are willing to sit down and spend an hour in recitation in the morning, an hour in recitation at night, and read Qur’an on top of it all. Is it like water? We are in the desert and we get water in our hands and want to drink it, but it runs through our fingers and all we wind up with is wet hands. We have to have more than wet hands. Articulate properly. Speak with respect, not just about Allah Swt. When I was growing up, we used to say (excuse me), “Jesus Christ!” One of my friends hit me over the head with a book (he was a Christian). “Don’t use the Lord’s name in vain,” he said. So I was a wise guy, 7th grade. So I said, “What should I use, some profanity? Should I say that instead?” He said, you didn’t mean it that way. How does he know? We say, “Allah,” when something happens. Don’t we? “Ya Allah!” We have to respect the language of the Qur’an as it lives in us. Respect the language we speak to each other. When we don’t, we have the wonderful opportunity to repent.

The problem when you repent is, when you repent to someone, you are afraid they will take advantage of that repentance. So the *nafs* wants to protect itself. Then you are back in the whole thing where I started. In the same way I ask you to protect the practices that you do. Ramadān gives you an opportunity to do certain practices you don’t do normally or that intensively, like Tarawīh, or like the Salat ul Tasbīh. Honor them, respect them, and protect them. Those are all doorways to the *waqt*, the moment. They are entrances; openings. Aren’t we all looking for openings? Even the worst people are looking for openings: how to get what I want, to where I want to go, get out of someone what I want, how to convince this person of that, how to get out of this, to explain my misbehavior. It’s an opening. There are other kinds of openings we look for also. I don’t have to spell it

out. These are also repetitive cycles that allowed all the cousins to marry the cousins and all that. One of the openings we have to watch the most is this month. Because if we get this all in line and resonant, we are fine-tuning ourselves. This is the month for fine-tuning, *taskhīr*.

Rajab to now is the time for fine-tuning. Shabān gives us the boost into the next month (Ramadān), and six days of fasting in Shawwal just to remind you, just a touch. Then we are heading towards Hajj. Which is what? Another required pause. A pause filled with lots of opportunities and difficulties and many things. Contemplate it in this way: when you put people who are getting an operation to sleep, it is because you value their lives and you want them to live longer and help them. You want to leave your students with something, you climb mountains with them. Day and night you do it, as do my teachers and students here. Aliya is working in spinal cord regeneration at Johns Hopkins. Amina's trying to leave the world a better place for Muslims through CAIR. We're trying to work all over the world in our organization. Why? So that people can experience moments of truth, moments of understanding and acceptance, moments of knowing that someone cares, someone listens. And they do it because Allah Swt has told us: this is what you care about in this moment. May Allah protect us from our own ignorance.

Let's not forget, as we disperse from here, on this property, some of us going east, some going west, some north, and some south, what Allah Swt tells us. All of those directions belong to Allah Swt. Whatever direction you turn, Allah is present. But it's followed. He knows everything and He is beyond containment, vast. We'll continue, *insh'allah* tomorrow if you like, or something else if you like, *insh'allah*. Thank you very much.