



TRAVEL BOTH OUTER AND INNER:
THE ROAD TO FULFILLMENT IN ETERNITY

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Bismi-Llaahi-r-Rahmaani-r-Raheem

Sura al Fatiha

AL-HAMDU-LI-LLĀHI, MUQALIBA-L-QULŪBI WA-L-ABSĀR.
ALLĀHUMMA ThABIT QULŪBANA °ALA SIRĀTIKA-L-QAWĪM,
WA-J°ALNĀ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHĪN,
WA SALLI °ALA-Sh-ShAFI°I-L-HABĪB,
RAHMATIL-°ĀLAMĪN,
WA MANĀRI-L-NAJIYĪN, WA MARSĀ-L-°ĀRIFĪN

Praise be to Allah, the turner of the hearts and sight.
O Allah, fix our hearts on the best of Your ways,
and make us face You in our way,
and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
the mercy of all the worlds,
the lighthouse of the survivors, the harbor of the knowers.

YĀ MAWJŪDAN °INDA-Sh-ShADĀĀ°IDI
YĀ KhAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YĀ LATĪFA-S-SUN°I
YĀ HALĪMAN, LĀ YA°JILUQDI HĀJATĪ
BI-RAHMATIKA, YĀ ARHAMA-R-RĀHIMĪN.
SUBHĀNAKA °ALĀ HILMIKA BA°DA °ILMIK.
SUBHĀNAKA °ALĀ °AFWIKA BA°DA QUDRATIK

O Existent One, O Thou who are Present in all difficulties,
O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle making,
O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need,

With Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the Mercifuls.
 Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
 Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

BISMI-LLĀH, AL-HAMDU-LI-LLĀH

ALLĀHUMMA ṢALLI WA SALLIM ʿALĀ SAYYIDINĀ MUḤAMMADIN,
 WA ʿALĀ ĀĀLIHI WA ṢAḤBIH

INTRODUCTION

The subject of travel is one of deep significance to the Muslim and the Sufi. In many ways, it is the subject that encompasses all subjects; it is the thread that can be found in every teaching, because it is the thread that can be found in every life. Travel holds a place of significance in the collective history and the individual lives of all Muslims. We are all enjoined to travel to Mecca at least once in our lifetime to make Hajj. It was the journey from Mecca to Medina, the *hijrah*, that established the Muslim community and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. And there is the ultimate journey, taken by our Prophet (*ṣalla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) in the *Israa' Mi'raaj*. As you can see, travel, both inner and outer, plays a pivotal role in our lives.

Travel symbolizes a turning point in the life of a community, a faith, from focus on the outer, to focus on the inner; travel in the outer, which leads to travel in the inner. Why would travel have such a central and symbolic role in the teachings and life of the Prophet (*ṣalla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) if it did not hold deep mysteries of creation and directions for our own life and purpose? In my talk today I will return to this point and these examples, but first let me take moment to place the concept of travel in a broader context

MAKING PROVISIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

We have all traveled somewhere in our lives. Most of us, in fact, traveled here today. We know that if you are going to go on a journey, to climb a mountain for example, you need to outfit yourself properly, and you have to know what you need. In any journey, you need a destination or goal, some understanding of where you are going, dedication and drive, and tools, like a compass or a GPS.

To make this journey—to prepare one's self to be on it—will cost something. For our 'mountain climb' we will need gear: tents, ropes, weatherproof coats and special shoes...and, even when we have all those tools, we don't necessary know how to use them. We can even have an instruction manual, and still not know how to use them. So we need to go with a guide, and preferably to have a little training ahead of time. It's good if we are climbing with fellow travelers, especially well-seasoned climbers. Even with all those preparations, it is still not totally safe; it's just safer. We don't know if we'll reach the top; yet, with all that uncertainty, something still drives the mountain climber on, some yearning to reach the pinnacle. Our journey is to reach the pinnacle of awareness and of knowledge.

For the spiritual seeker, this journey begins from some place deep inside of us, a yearning to know the answers to burning questions. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) provides us the names and the meanings, the means and the guidance. Allah tells us that we are *murid* and we are *salik*. We are seekers. Here is the road, the *tariqah*. Here is the path, the *suluk*. The journey is progressive, from *Shareeah*, to *Tareeqah*, to *Ma'rifah* to *Haqeeqah*...more and more refinement, step by step. This is the journey, and here is the fuel, the *himma* (yearning). In addition to that, we need to have patience, trust, compassion and mercy.

Even still, yearning is not a guarantee of anything. But, without it, we wouldn't survive on the mountain. Because the time will come when you are at 15,000 feet and you can't breathe without deep concentration, and then, perhaps, there will be a big crevasse. Your guide will say, "Jump" (while tethered to him), and everyone but the

most sincere and dedicated will say, “I’m going back to base camp.” In some sense, we are all climbers on the hills and mountains of life, but most of us do not see. This journey starts from deep within us, and it’s often hidden from us. The real secret of traveling is to see that we are traveling, to open our eyes and hearts and minds to the secrets that are around us, to the signs that are in this creation, in ourselves.

SANURĪHIM ĀYĀTINĀ FI-L-’ĀFĀQI WA FĪ AÑFUSIHIM ḤATTĀ YATABAYYANA LAHUM ANNAHU-L-ḤAQQ.

“We will show them our signs in the Universe and in their own-selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this [the Qur’an] is the truth.” (41: 53)

We are all traveling this life, but the *salik* is seeking the signs of the Universe, the inner meanings that reflect the countenance of Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ta’ālaa*). As Allah says to Prophet Muhammad (sal):

WA LĀ TATRUDI-LLADHĪNA YAD‘ŪNA RABBAHUM BI-L-GHADĀTI WA-L-‘ASHIYYI YURĪDŪNA WAJHAH.

“And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in morning and in evening, seeking His countenance.” (6:52)

No one is to be forbidden from seeking or be driven away. Indeed, we must show patience and support for each person’s journey, for their search for knowledge from the cradle to the grave. Certainly, everyone has been tested and will be tested, but no one should be driven away from this journey.

WA-ṢBIR NAFSAKA MA‘A-LLADHĪNA YAD‘Ā-‘ŪNA RABBAHUM BI-L-GHADĀTI WA-L-‘ASHIYYI YURĪDŪNA WA J‘ĀHAHU WA LĀ TA‘DU ‘AYNĀKA ‘ANHUM TURĪDU ZĪNATA-L-HAYĀTI-D-DUNYĀ WA LĀ TUTI‘ MAN AGḤFALNĀ QALBAHU ‘AÑ DHĪKRINĀ WA-TTABA‘A HAWĀHU WA KĀNA AMRUHU FURUTĀ.

And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them, desiring adornments of the worldly life, and do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever [in] neglect. (18:28)

WE ARE ALL TRAVELERS

Most human beings seem to think that we have a choice of whether or not to travel, that seeking is an optional activity, or something that is just for “some people” but not for others. The reality is we are all travelers in time and space. Each one of us is traveling each moment. Every resident on this planet is traveling around the sun at a speed of 67,062 miles per hour. Not only that, but hardly a moment passes when we are not travelling between two or more dimensions/worlds. Neurologically, we are traveling every moment in thought, in quantum leaps through corridors and tunnels of time and space. Hardly a moment passes when we are not simultaneously in the *ḍbaabir* and the *baaṭin*. Yet, rarely is the average person, or even the spiritual person, aware of that state and that journey. We

are all traveling; where our choice lies is in how we are traveling, with what intention, what we are seeing, perceiving, journeying towards. We are told, again and again, about this in the Qur'an and in Hadith. There are hundreds of references to the 'seen' and the 'hidden' (the *dhaahir* and the *baatin*), countless indicators in the outer life of its inner origin and inner correlative. As Allah says in Surah al-Hadid:

HUWA-Dh-DhĀHIRU WA-L-BĀTIN.

He is ... the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden. (57:3)

We should not forget that the *dhaahir* and the *baatin* are two parts of a singularity, a dynamic whole we call Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaahu*), unity unbounded and ever extending. I will save the discussion about Singularity and *Tawheed* for my book, but let me stimulate your thinking on the subject of accelerating change, incremental and exponential knowledge and the light from the *aafaaq* with the endnote "Intelligence Explosion, Event Horizon, and Accelerating Change are three 'schools of thought' about Singularities..."

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“O Allah, You are adh-Dhaahir and there is nothing above You; and You are al-Baatin and there is nothing beneath You.”

So, while we may see and experience the outer as separate from the inner, they are in fact part of one dynamic continuum/whole. Every outer event has an inner correlative; and, for all we know, they can be, and often are, simultaneous though perceived as linear. One of the most recognizable of these correlatives between inner and outer, and our journey between the two, is one you have heard me reference many times: sleep. In sleep we periodically experience the reality of the physical body being 'present,' while the non physical-self, characterized by dreams, is also present.

Another way of understanding our constantly journeying state is in the fact that we are always accompanied by our thoughts, an inner dialogue that parallels our outer state, actions and words. How many times are we physically doing one thing, while our mind or our heart is elsewhere? When we are deeply absorbed in a thought or day-dream, where are we? Or, when we approach a decision and we ask our self what to do, to whom are we speaking? Our inner self is a complex world that can support many existences. We are cognizant of our virtually continuous state of flux between the inner and outer, or we are not. Such travel, as I have described, is a constant part of our lives. It originates from the horizon of the moment: *aafaaq*. As Allah tells us in Surah ash-Shura:

SANURĪHIM ĀYĀTINĀ FI-L-'ĀFĀQI WA FĪ AŅFUSIHIM ḤATTĀ YATABAYYANA LAHUM ANNAHU-L-ḤAQQ.

We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that this [Message] is the Truth. (41:53)

The horizon, just like the physical horizon, is the place where the inner and outer meet, where the love in our hearts finds its ultimate destination in its own Creator, where the urge to 'travel' takes place. Yet, it is endless; just like the physical horizon, it too recedes as we approach. The light that emanates from off that horizon calls us, calls our soul to return to its origin, yet that origin is inside us. Just as in a dream we imagine we are travelling from 'here to there,' the reality is that 'here' and 'there' are where we are. Just as in a dream an hour passes in a few seconds or minute while our body, asleep in 'real' time, lies in the bed for hours, so too, this inner travel takes places in

nanoseconds. In the blink of an eye we transcend time and space, and experience a totally different dimension of interaction with other travelers...some still in this physical world, others not.

What is important about this for today's subject of travel is what it shows us about our own nature and our capacity. It shows us that we are created for this bifurcated, dual capacity. We are designed by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) to be here and there, to be aware of both the outer and the inner dimensions of existences, through conscious choice. It is this ability, one of the most defining abilities of the human being, that allows us to turn from the world and the physical apparent reality and direct our attention to those other dimensions, utilizing our perceptive capacities, while continuing our duties in the physical world. As the Prophet (*salla-Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) reminded us, this world passes in the blink of an eye:

What is the world to me? I am to the world like a rider who sleeps a little beneath a tree on a summer's day, then departs and leaves it far behind.

And he also said:

Riches are not to be found in the transitory things of the world, but rather in contentment of the self.

This is part of our life and our purpose: to see beyond the exterior, the diversions of this world, into the inner meanings and messages. Some of us choose to be aware of and develop such capabilities, recognizing and embracing this journey we are on, while others do not. Why some do this, and others close their eyes to this reality is a very deep subject, which encompasses faith, submission, trust and destiny.

As a brief answer to this question, let me at least posit that we are so sure of our point of view and the habitual patterns that govern our thoughts and actions that most people are oblivious to, or fearful of, looking with a new perspective. Thus they deny the totality of other internal organs of perception (i.e. *laṭaa'if*) and their function. Spiritual journeying is not a 'vacation' or 'pastime;' it is a total commitment to inward refinement and reflection of that refinement in the outer. Turning toward Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) is not a religious formalism or customary act of apparent piety; it is refining seeing and hearing and feeling, without judgment, or preference, or fear, or ego gratification.

SEEING THE UNITY OF INNER AND OUTER

The *saalik* (traveler/seeker) is compelled from within to become aware of and attuned to the journey in the outer and the inner. Our goal is to be aware, in the moment, by choice and with intention and attention (*niyyat* and *tawajjuh*) that such a journey exists. If we are truly blessed, we will have the means, the time, the space and the strength of will to strive to be conscious of this journey, as a journey toward Allah, in Allah, by Allah. In our Order we begin our *sama* (*dhikr jahri* and *khafi*) with the following statement (among other recitations) that sets the immediate goal for this conscious travelling inner and outer:

*The principles are five: contact of the mind upon the Infinite; abstinence and restraint for the higher power; generosity in all things; **travel both inner and outer**; and belief in the unity of all blessings.*

The explanations of this recitation alone could form a long *dars*, but it is sufficient to say that, beyond the obvious, what is being affirmed and what acts as a context for what is to follow is consciousness of the Divine Presence and Its limitlessness. Travel, to be true progress, must be both within and without. An affirmation that all we experience and participate in is actually One/*Ahad* and Unity/*Tawheed*. Our physical being, and what most people consider 'reality,' is only the vehicle for understanding the real or true reality. The *tajalli*, or lucent manifestation, the light within the physical manifestations, carries the message of, or indeed the presence of the Divine to this physical world. This concept encompasses the repeating patterns of the inner and outer 'universes' that Allah is the *Rabb* of.

BADĪ'U-S-SAMĀWĀTI WA-L-'ARD.

"He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth." (6:10)

And later in Surah al-An'am:

**QUL INNA ṢALĀTĪ WA NUSUKĪ WA MAHYĀYA WA MAMĀTĪ LI-LLĀHI RABBI-L-
'ĀLAMĪN.**

Say, surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (6:162)

THE THREAD OF SULUK

I think it can be safely said that most of us here desire to be aware that we are on this *sair ul suluk*. I understand that the term may not be used in all Tariqa, but the reality of life as a journey is certainly universally accepted in some form. Most of us here have the *irāda*/will and the *niyyat* to be on this journey. More than that, though, we need *ikhlas*/sincerity. *Ikhlas* is like manna for the *salik*. This journey cannot be made without sincerity, yearning or desire to seek greater knowledge of the reality that we call Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), the universe that is Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). We know that we need *himma*/yearning and we need *sabr*/patience. We know that it requires striving and struggle/*jihad*, and *furqaan*/discrimination, *firāsa*/discernment, *islaam* or *tasleem*/ submission, *tawakkul*/trust or piety, and *adab*/courtesy. So many words we know, these are the tools, the signposts along the way, but what is the unifying concept?

This *sair ul suluk*, the journey of a *murīd*, is a journey in which each one of us is required to become aware of our self, be familiar with our self. As we become more aware of our self, we become more aware of that *niyyat* of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), which is like the space between the atoms, between the nucleus and the electrons. That space is not empty. That space is filled with energy. That space is filled with the components that comprise the essence behind those words. Or, to phrase it another way (returning to the world of quantum mechanics): instead of seeking matter as the source of information (i.e. gluons between quarks) we must look at intention and will as invisible forces from the *'alam al-amr* accruing lucence (light), as it manifest in the *'alam al-kehalq*.ⁱⁱ

Every word has power—not just meaning, but power. As we begin to understand this journey, we understand that many Sufis use this term *suluk*, but some do not. *Suluk* is not just the mechanism, but also the means. We make the distinction between *suluk* as a process and *tarbiya*. *Suluk* implies a journey, and *tarbiya* is usually defined as education.ⁱⁱⁱ *Suluk* comes from *salaka*, which means to travel or follow a road, and to enter upon a course. You can see why it is called a road. In that sense, there is a *suluk* for everyone because there is a means to the goal. The course could include a certain *wazifa*, (the Divine Names or Attributes of Allah that the Sufi contemplates) or *wird*,^{iv} but in reality it is more than that. It's a path. It also implies the behavior of a person who travels. It also means to behave. It's not just that you travel, but how you behave and comport yourself. This is what *suluk* is: to have good behavior, good comportment, good attitude. It is a means to move through the difficulties, temptations and distractions, and the impossibilities of life, as if you were threading the eye of the needle.

The word *silsila* also comes from the same root as *salika*. That is the thread from the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to us. In fact, the word silk comes from the same word. As we know, silk is extremely strong thread that is made

from a caterpillar, an animal. All the metaphors for silk are great metaphors for this journey. The caterpillar only eats mulberry. It's a very frugal insect. To get the silk, the worm has to die. Whatever the intention of the silkworm is, from our point of view, it only lives in order to die. And how does the silk maker get the silk? Does the silkworm just die and he pulls the silk out? No, he has to boil it and boil it. Then, after a long process of refinement we have a strong thread that keeps you warm in the winter and cool in the summer. A thread that comes from this one-pointed insect that has to die in order for us to find the treasure. That is the role of the silkworm. And we have to die to ourselves in order to find the treasure.

Without recognizing this reality and our place in the larger patten of creation, we cannot make progress on this journey. Without the right attitude, we may gain many worldly things, but we will never see the inner dimensions, never be more than a caterpillar eating leaves. One has to have the right behavior, the right *adab*, and the right demeanor. When we use this word *suluk*, it has to imply to the *salik* all the inner meanings I have been discussing. There is a story that reminds us of the importance of seeing the inner, rather than the outer:

Several centuries ago, in a small village, a man selected to lead an austere lifestyle (called a Zabid in Arabic). He was a fisherman and he did not earn much; yet whatever little he would earn, he would give part of it for charity, and keep the rest for himself.

One day, one of the people of the village needed to go to the capital for some business. Upon hearing about the trip, the Zabid went and said, "A brother of mine lives in the Capital. Would you please convey my salam and ask him to pray for me, because he is a Wali of Allah (living saint)." The Traveler said "Sure, I will do that for you."

The Zabid gave the Traveler the name of the Wali. The Traveler went to the Capital and finished whatever business he went there for. Then, he started asking around if someone knew a man with the name he was given. He was told that a man with that name owns a huge house, and was given directions to that house. The Traveler found the house and was quite surprised. The house was so big and beautiful and it looked worthy of royalty. He was not sure he had found the right house, but he still asked the watchman about the owner of the house. The watchman told him that the owner was at the Sultan's palace and he should be coming back soon.

The Traveler was almost certain that this could not be the Wali he was looking for. But, he thought, since he had come all the way to find the man, he might as well wait a little more and make sure the owner of the house was not the man he was looking for. An hour or so later, he saw the man coming, wearing expensive clothes, riding a fine horse and surrounded by servants and guards, as if he was a king. The Zabid's friend thought, "There is no way this man could be a Wali." And he almost decided to go back without meeting the man, then thought he might upset his friend the Zabid if he did not do his best to find the Wali. So, he asked permission to meet the owner of the house, and was surprised that he was allowed in straightaway. He met the man and informed him about where he had come from and about the message of the Zabid.

The rich man said, "When you go back, tell him the following: 'How long are you going to be busy with worldly matters? And how much longer will you continue to seek them? When will you ever going to stop desiring such things?'" The Zabid's friend was totally speechless. He went back to the village and met the Zabid. The Zabid asked him if he had managed to meet the Wali, and the answer was positive. So, he asked him what did the Wali tell him. His friend did not want to hurt the Zabid's feelings, so he said "Nothing." The Zabid said "You have to tell me the truth." So, his friend told him the whole story.

The Zabid looked at the ground thinking silently. Moments later his eyes were filled with tears. A while later, he said, "My brother was right. Allah has washed every desire for worldly matters from his heart, yet gave him all that. As for me, I have very little, yet I still desire the things of this world."

ISRA MIRAJ: THE ULTIMATE JOURNEY

Like the man in the story, we are seeking a way to see beyond the outer and into the inner. The first step on this journey is to turn our attention to our heart. The inner heart, sometimes called *fuad*, is a place where the inner knowledge/*marifah* is found and accessed. It is also in the inner heart (sometimes referred to as upper chamber of the heart) where the *tajalli afaq* (light from off the horizon) is perceived. The lower part of the heart is where one finds their *iman*. And in the core of the heart, which we call the *huma al batin* and some call the *lubb*, is where one begins to sense *tawhid*/unity, the reality that there is only one reality, one truth.

Let me share with you a poem:

*“And He is the Manifest and the Hidden: Wa Huma adb-dhaahir wa-l-Baatin”
Indeed, in all truth, everywhere you turn, there is the Face of God.
But I am a man, and aye, a broken one at that.
And yet, I exist in two worlds.
I have a body; I have a soul.
Walk the Path: find the guide.
Yet, from where will this guide come?
Will I, like the Mevlana, find my Shams al-Din encloded in flesh?
Or must I seek for one hidden within?
I place too much trust in my own strength at my peril.
Yet, how can I distinguish a true guide from a false one?*

(by Abdur Rahman)

This poem speaks to the layers of knowledge, mirrored by the heart; layers that are activated one by one, as the seeker travels on the path. The more one engages their faith in Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*), turns things over to Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*), the more one accepts that Divine Presence, the closer one comes to the stage where real knowledge comes to you, through you. Or more correctly stated: one finds themselves aware of the *Haqeeqah*, the true knowledge. That kind of real knowledge turns to wisdom (*hikmah*); and that wisdom affirms, by our own experience, that there is really only one truth.

For most of us, this revealing of the truth, the inner meanings is a long, sometimes arduous, and certainly challenging journey. It is a step-by-step process, as we move from station to station, along the road of life. For our beloved Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), Allah brought him near with a quantum leap, revealing all the stages and stations, all the layers of knowledge and reality in one night: the *Israa' Mi'raaj*. As I mentioned in my opening, the ultimate example of travel, both inward and outward, is in the Night Journey of the Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). This event is not far away (10 days), so I will take a minute to revisit the *Israa' Mi'raaj* and its symbolism for the journeyer.

In Qur'an, we are told:

SUBHĀNA-LLADHĪ ASRĀ BI'ABDIHI LAYLAM-MINA-L-MASJIDI-L-HARĀMI ILĀ-L-MASJIDI-L-'AQSĀ-LLADHĪ BĀRAKNĀ HAWLAHU LINURIYAHU MIN ĀYĀTINĀ INNAHU HUWA-S-SAMĪ'U-L-BASĪR.

Glorified is He who carried His servant for journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless in order that We might show him some of Our signs. Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Qur'an 17:1)

As we know, this was a journey of tremendous distance and speed. Some say it took only one third of the night. Some say it was the time it took for a pitcher of water, kicked over by the foot of the Prophet (*salla-Llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), to fall, with his returning before it fell completely over and spilled. Regardless of these details, the night journey of the Prophet (sal) is unique in its joining of *dhahir* and *batin*, inner and outer, physical and non-physical in one journey. The *Israa’ Mi’raaj* illustrates for us that there are some spiritual realities or concepts that are inaccessible directly, but for the interface of *majāz*.^v Without metaphor, without the ‘corridor’ or ‘tunnel,’ those spiritual realities won’t be revealed. This concept of a corridor that instantly takes one from one reality to another has already been found in laboratories; it is called the Quantum Tunneling Effect. Quantum tunneling is the quantum-mechanical effect of transitioning through a ‘classically forbidden’ energy state. (By ‘classically forbidden’ I mean ‘outside the apparent and widely accepted traditional laws of linear reality,’ such as the ability to be in two places at one time.)

The capacity of quantum tunneling is exemplified as a Reality in the *Israa’ Mi’raaj*, (long before the ‘scientific’ community discovered quantum mechanics). Thus the ‘reality’ of bending time and space, or being simultaneously in two distinct locations is comprehensible from the perspective of science, Islam, and most especially Sufism. Thus I return to where I began today, with the reality that we are all always traveling, and often in two places (mind and heart, body and mind) at once. This reality also effectively speaks to the Reality of the Journey. What we should know and remember is that knowledge from the *baatin* is always travelling through the metaphor/corridor (the *majāz*), from the *baatin* to the *dhahir*. As a part of the larger system, it is transformed as a reflection within our self, and indicated as ‘present’ in many ways that we take for granted.

TRAVELING IN THE SYSTEM

Certainly, the Prophet’s (*salla-Llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) night journey is the ultimate example of living and traveling beyond the measures of time and space, but how can we experience some part of the reflection of that Mercy in our own lives? To understand this, we must open our minds to the possibilities of an open ended universe and remind ourselves of the system of creation, of the ever-repeating patterns of inner and outer reflection that we are, and are surrounded by. Many of you have heard me speak for the last few years on the systems approach to understanding, not only Islam and Sufism, but the core purpose of both, which is to come to the personal experience of Allah’s Presence in our life and creation and beyond. This interplay, and indeed simultaneous ‘reality’ of the Divine Presence, is characterized by such statements as:

HUWA MA‘AKUM AYNA MĀ KUŅTUM.

He (Allah) is with you wherever you are. (57:4)

And,

FA-AYNAMĀ TUWALLŪ FA-ThAMMA WAJHU-LLĀH.

Wheresoever you look, there is the Presence of Allah. (2:115)

The process of seeking knowledge is one of opening our eyes to the ever-present Presence of Allah. It is a process that allows clarity and understanding to emerge from the apparent complexity and chaos of society and its institutions, as they exist both in the modern and postmodern modalities.^{vi} The seeker of knowledge is enjoined by the Qur’an to look anywhere and everywhere to find Allah—through observation and contemplation to look to the obvious and the immutable aspects of creation, seeing the interrelatedness of all. As Allah reminds us in Surah an-Nahl:

HUWA-LLADHĪ AÑZALA MINA-S-SAMĀA'I MĀA'AL-LAKUM MINHU SHARĀBUÑW-WA
MINHU SHAJARUÑ FĪHI TUSĪMŪN.

YUMBITU LAKUM BIHI-Z-ZAR^cA WA-Z-ZAYTŪNA WA-N-NAKHĪLA WA-L-'AⁿNĀBA WA
MIÑ KULLI-Th-ThAMARĀTI INNA FĪ DhĀLIKA LĀA'AYATAL-LIQAWMIÑY-
YATAFAKKARŪN.

It is He who sends down rain from the sky; from it is drink and from it is foliage in which you pasture [animals].

He causes to grow for you thereby the crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and from all the fruits. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought. (16:10-11)

While we appear to be surrounded by independent phenomena, upon closer observation and understanding, they are at the same time inter-related, if not also inter-dependent, on a higher scale. All is existent for a purpose, within which human beings have not only a direction and purpose, but also a quintessential role. Although we are quite familiar with statements like 'as above so below' or 'the whole is greater than the sum total of its parts,' few of us, if any, were guided to understand this as the core principle by which we can see and understand the inter/intra relationship between creation and the Creator. The reflective nature of the Creator throughout creation opens a door for us to look deeply enough to truly grasp that we are at the axial point in that Creative Will (*iraadah*), and that is our *qadr* (destiny). If we look closely, we see that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*) is revealing again and again, in what some believe are successive cycles of time, different yet similar means to achieve the objectives of human life and awaken to the Reality ...Islam...Allah.

PATTERNS OF SUJUD

When we look, we can see these repeating patterns in everything. I was looking at my rose bush the other day after a big rainstorm, and all the roses and branches were bent over, almost touching the ground. I was reminded in that, that even a 'lowly' plant remembers what we forget, to bow down and remember our Creator. As Allah reminds us in Surah ar-Rahman:

ASH-SHAMSU WA-L-QAMARU BIHUSBĀN.
WA-N-NAJMU WA-SH-SHAJARU YASJUDĀN.

The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation,
And the stars and trees prostrate. (55:5-6)

Everything in this universe is working through certain rules laid down by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*). Everything comes into being and stays for a certain period of time, and then everything perishes. The sun rises and sets, the moon follows the sun. It appears differently to us at different times of the month, but it is all part of a greater pattern. What we have in front of us are constant reminders and examples that everything is traveling. Things are created; they live; they grow; they evolve; they perish. As a backdrop to that is the rising of the sun and the moon,

and the planets and the stars. All this is in the outer and all this has an inner correlative. Every day that we see this process of birth, life and death, the Sufi thinks, “What is the inner message in that?”

The answer is that we are a part of that system, we are attached to that eternal cycle; all those planets and stars that are revolving and turning, galaxies and the black holes, and an ever-expanding universe...we are part of that system. We have an inner part, our soul; and we have an outer part; our body. Everything has an inner and an outer. Everything has its place. Allah has rules for everything; plants, fruits, animals, insects... For the things of the *‘alam al khalq*, there are definite laws. So exact are these laws that if the lion doesn’t eat meat, he’s going to die. Even though he is surrounded by grass, he won’t eat the grass. He’ll die before he eats the grass. The rules are precise, as is our place in this complex system. Even in the vastness of many Universes, each one of us is on our own journey.

Each one of us is important, and we have each been given choice. We are the only part of creation that has been given choice. We have the choice to travel consciously or unconsciously. But the rules laid down by Allah will not change. Even the human being is forced to obey them. We have choice and we have no choice. Like the rest of all the creation, even though we have choice, the only way that we are really going to achieve peace and tranquility is to obey Allah – to obey Allah with sincerity, to bow down, and make our choices with that in mind.

OUR DESTINATION: SEEING THE INNER IN EVERY OUTER

I began today by asking you to imagine you are going on a journey; asking you to reflect on why you are going, how you are traveling, where you are traveling, and what you will need. I have spoken about many subtleties of the reality of travel both inner and outer. I have spoken about the tools of the traveler and the means of travel, but what is our ultimate goal? Where are we going?

Most simply put, we are traveling inward toward a state where everything is *dhikr*; toward a place of complete submission, peace; where we see in everything the inter-connected systems that are Allah; where we can see beyond the apparent realities of the external, and into the beauty of the internal, we see our place in this universe and see our place-less-ness in the Unity of Allah.

Allah says:

ALĀ BIDHIKRI-LLĀHI TATMA’INNU-L-QULŪB.

Truly, in remembrance of Allah do hearts find their rest. (13:28)

That is what *dhikr* is. It makes your heart tranquil. But it is not just saying, “Allah, Allah, Allah.” It is making the connection that everything is part of a journey, a journey to Allah, by Allah, in Allah. This may seem an unattainable reality, but do not forget where I began today. Allah has already created us with the inclination to be in “two places at once,” to be here and not here, to know what it means to be seeking and finding simultaneously. We are already half way there without being conscious of it. Mentioning, remembering, simply thinking of Allah is also a form of *dhikr*. Praising Allah is a form of *dhikr*. When we look at a beautiful flower, and we say, “Oh, that’s so beautiful!” we are praising Allah. All we have to do is to make that connection. If we do this enough it becomes part of our cellular, spiritual reality, not just a habit, but it becomes part of our perception. When we say:

FA-AYNAMĀ TUWALLŪ FA-ThAMMA WAJHU-LLĀH.

Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah,

it means you are remembering Allah. Unfortunately, there is the tendency for this to become a mechanical process, letting words like “*al-hamduli-Llaab*,” “*inshaa’a-Llaab*” or “*maa shaa’a-Llaab*” roll off our lips without the sincerity or gratitude or remembrance that they are due. Allowing ourselves to let remembrance be mechanical is like being a traveler on the train, getting off for a cup of coffee, and then standing on the platform while the train leaves, then waiting while the next train leaves, and then the next train. Someone asks you, what are you doing? And you say, “I’m waiting for the train because I’m on a journey.” But you are not journeying. It has become a mechanical process, over and over again.

Just like those trains that keep pulling into the station, Allah keeps giving us opportunities to see His Signs – from the enjoyment of the freedom one feels in nature to the company of ones we love. Quiet moments, reflections on the beauty of the world, the power of the sea, the vastness of the mountains, the tranquility of the forest, the abstraction of a book, the fragrance of flowers and the peace that comes from longer moments alone – each of these has an inner door. Is this not in some way the correlative to other states of consciousness, of deeper perceptions of what is near to us or around us, but which gets sublimated by the ‘worldly’ duties, responsibilities, distractions and physical necessities? Yet each of these physical manifestations that I have listed are potential doorways to deeper and profoundly rich experiences, deeper understanding, reminders if you will of a previous state of purity, of simplicity, of focus inward. They are doorways and experiences that give life new meaning and counter the fear of death.

Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta’alaahu*) always provides for us these doorways (*fath*/openings) and they are most often right in front of us. All we have to do is look around to see the stars and galaxies, the microscopic worlds upon worlds, the fragrances of the flowers and the miracles of life, the love between people and the joy of *jam’at*, of gathering. The journey to the beloved is a journey of embracing compassion, embracing love, patience and all the things that come along with that. Sometimes this means embracing your disease and tiredness, embracing your energy, embracing the people you serve, embracing the service of the people toward you. Just like the *derwish* traveling on the road, we embrace everything that Allah puts in our path, understanding that this is a wonderful journey. Every step and every breath is a blessing and an honor. But, unless we take the time to really contemplate what this life has to offer us, and what we have to offer life, we are not going to find much success in this traveling. Yet the success is right in front of us. Lest we forget, Allah is

AQRABU ILAYHI MIN HABLIL-WARĪD.

nearer than our jugular vein. (50:16)

TRAVELING IN THE HOMELAND

Like any journey, the spiritual journey has its ups and downs. Sometimes you eat and sometimes you don’t. Sometimes you like the food; sometimes you don’t. You have to put up with things: you sleep in a bed that is uncomfortable; you can’t drink the water; maybe you bought the wrong clothes, or your traveling companions are being difficult. There are challenges in your relationships. Whatever it is, most people put up with things for only so long, knowing they will soon be returning home. But the Sufi is a traveler who knows they are already home; wherever we appear to be, we are traveling in our homeland: *safar dar watān*. This is one of the principles of the Naqshbandi path:

Traveling in One’s Homeland: The path is within, the journey within. You are traveling in a familiar setting, thus do not be distracted.

So, I began with one of the principles of the path, *travel both inner and outer*, and I will end with another, *traveling in one's homeland*. In this case, *watān* means homeland. You have heard the expression in English, 'the heartland,' meaning the center. Homeland can also mean heartland. In this case, *safar dar watān* means traveling within one's own self. This is different than traveling outside one's self. "*Watān*" has a very special meaning. You might use it as it is used in Farsi, "This is my homeland." But it also means the feeling you have for it, the attachment you have. Traveling in your own self means observing the feeling you have for your own self, the attachment you have for your own self. We understand that there are moments of happiness and sadness, and things that are difficult and things that are not, but as a traveler, we are watching it all. Traveling in the homeland, *watān*, is the place where you feel at home inside your own self.

Traveling outside oneself for the purpose of learning may mean that you travel outside yourself to meet people or visit places, or learn about places, or to get the *bāraka* from some place. But traveling within one's own self, or in the homeland, means you observe yourself, but with a detachment, in a non-critical way, in a peaceful way. You are able to observe and critique yourself, and you learn from your errors. You are watching the steps you'd like to take, watching your thoughts, watching what you say. Travelling in the heart is travelling in the abode of Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ta'ālaa*), as we know from the *ḥadīth qudsī* in which Allah declared, **"Neither My Earth nor My Heavens can contain Me, but the heart of a Believing Servant can."**

Traveling in one's homeland is learning when to act and when not to act. Think, for example, about your own home and family; in that setting you know better than any stranger how to act, how to speak, what certain subtle signs mean. Similarly, we know best our own spiritual homeland. As travelers in this homeland, we are also observers. As travelers in the physical world, we are usually careful to observe things: the flowers, the animals, the houses, the weather conditions. So you observe consciously, purposefully. In this case, you are traveling within your own self, and you are observing in your own self these manifestations of the self. You are observing yourself, how you are, against the backdrop of certain characteristics and qualities. Ask yourself: Do I have *shawq*? Do I have contrition? Do I have *tawbah*/repentance? Do I have *rahmat*/compassion? Do I have *shukr*/gratitude? The traveler is not overly critical, but honest and open.

It is also important to watch what parts of your being, even parts of your body, are determining your attitude. Am I operating from my head, from my heart, from somewhere else? What is determining my actions, and my thoughts? Traveling within one's own self implies a kind of examination of the self, an observation of the self and all its levels. It is said that first Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (*radīya-Llāahu 'anhu*) learned the language of the vegetable kingdom, and then he learned the language of the animal kingdom, then he learned the language of the human kingdom, and then he taught.

THE INTUITION COMPASS

As we unveil the layers of self and become content within our self for where Allah has placed us and what He has given us, we see that the whole pattern is already there. The process of seeing and recognizing the patterns develops our intuition. The pattern becomes clear so we can intuit what is going to happen next. Intuition is like a compass for the traveler. If you look at the compass all the time you would be walking into trees, but you check the compass periodically to see if you are going in the right direction. If you don't check that compass and you are off half a degree, over time we get further and further away from that path. A ship traveling in the ocean that is off on its course by even one degree can be off by fifty or sixty miles over night, depending on how fast you are going, and can miss its destination. Take that as a metaphor and a reminder to keep looking at the compass.

A child has an easy compass. They can ask, "What would my mother or father want me to do in this circumstance? This person said such and such to me. This person tried to do something with me that was not proper. What would my mother have me do?" And the answer is usually quite clear. As adults, we must plot our compass points in the outer: the Qur'an and Sunnah, our guide/*shaykh*, the people we love and trust. Our compass points in the inner:

to our intuition, to our deep inner heart, and to our connection to what is right and good. As we act on these things, our intuition develops. We begin to see things coming before they come, our insight develops. Thus, we reach the *maqam* in which we are familiar with our own inner self, traveling in familiar circumstances:

Traveling in One's Homeland: The path is within, the journey within. You are traveling in a familiar setting, thus do not be distracted.

“Do not be distracted,” is the last part of the recitation. Do not be distracted from your intention, from the goal, from your place and role. Why are you traveling at all? You are traveling because you have to, because life is a journey.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me remind you of this: travel in the physical world is often an opportunity to start things fresh, make new intentions, rid oneself of old habits, a time to get out of the confines of our outer environment and reflect on our inner. I often tell my students to take the opportunity of travel to make changes in themselves and their lives. We have all traveled here to the Center today. While we sat here, our planet has traveled 402,375 miles through space (6 hrs at 67,062 miles/hour). Our minds have traveled in quantum episodes, and hopefully our hearts too have traveled into inner meanings.

Let us take this opportunity to make new *niyyat*, to break old habits, to turn our attention more and more toward the inner in every moment. Especially as we travel, through time, toward the month of Ramadan, let our path be straight, our hearts clear, and our minds open to seeing the inner message of Allah in everything. The beauty of being a being that is always traveling is that we are never stagnant, there is always change, always another chance. With repentance and the right intention, we can always start fresh, as Rumi wrote:

*Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, worshipper, lover of living, it doesn't matter
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come even if you have broken your vow a thousand times,
Come, yet again, come, come.*

(As quoted in *Rumi and His Sufi Path of Love* (2007) by M Fatih Citlak and Huseyin Bingul, p. 81)

CLOSING DU^{AA}

*Allaahumma j'al hubbaka ahabba ilayya min nafsee
Wa-sam'ee, wa-basaree, wa-maalee, wa-ahlee,
Wa- min-l-maa 'il-baarade li'l atshan*

**Oh Allah, make Your love dearer to me than myself
and my hearing and my sight and my property
and my family and more than cool water for the thirsty.**

O Allah! Have mercy on me in the name of the great Quran.
Make it for me a guide and light, And guidance and mercy.

O Allah! Make me remember that of it which I have forgotten,
Make me know of it, that which I have become ignorant of,
And make me recite it in the hours of the night and day,
And make it an argument for me, O sustainer of all the worlds.

O Allah! Set right my faith which is the safeguard of all my affairs,
 And set right for me my world affairs wherein is my living,
 And set right for me my hereafter on which depends my after life,
 And make my life a source of abundance of every good,
 And make my death a source of protection for me, protecting me from every evil.

O Allah! Make the best part of my life the end of it,
 And the last of my deeds the best one,
 And the best of my days, the day I meet You.

*Allahumma allif bayna quloobina
 wa asleh dhata baenena
 wa ahdena subulassalaame
 wa najjena mina-dh-dhulumaate ilaa-n-Noor.*

O Allah! Create mutual love in our hearts
 and make peace between us (or set us straight)
 and guide us along the path of peace, safety and harmony
 and bring us from darkness to light.

Endnotes

ⁱ Accelerating Change: *Core claim*: Our intuitions about change are linear. We expect roughly as much change as has occurred in the past over our own lifetimes. But technological change feeds on itself, and therefore accelerates. Change today is faster than it was 500 years ago, which in turn is faster than it was 5000 years ago. Our recent past is not a reliable guide to how much change we should expect in the future. *Strong claim*: Technological change follows smooth curves, typically exponential. Therefore we can predict with fair precision when new technologies will arrive, and when they will cross key thresholds, like the creation of Artificial Intelligence. (*Advocates*: Ray Kurzweil, Alvin Toffler, John Smart)

Event Horizon: *Core claim*: For the last hundred thousand years, humans have been the smartest intelligences on the planet. All our social and technological progress was produced by human brains. Shortly, technology will advance to the point of improving on human intelligence (brain-computer interfaces, Artificial Intelligence). This will create a future that is weirder by far than most science fiction, a difference-in-kind that goes beyond amazing shiny gadgets. *Strong claim*: To know what a superhuman intelligence would do, you would have to be at least that smart yourself. To know where Deep Blue would play in a chess game, you must play at Deep Blue's level. Thus the future after the creation of smarter-than-human intelligence is absolutely unpredictable. (*Advocates*: Vernor Vinge)

Intelligence Explosion: *Core claim*: Intelligence has always been the source of technology. If technology can *significantly* improve on human intelligence – create minds smarter than the smartest existing humans – then this closes the loop and creates a positive feedback cycle. What would humans with brain-computer interfaces do with their augmented intelligence? One good bet is that they'd design the next generation of brain-computer interfaces. Intelligence enhancement is a classic tipping point: the smarter you get, the more intelligence you can apply to making yourself even smarter. *Strong claim*: This positive feedback cycle goes FOOM, like a chain of nuclear fissions gone critical – each intelligence improvement triggering an average of >1.000 further improvements of similar magnitude – though not necessarily on a smooth exponential pathway. Technological progress drops into the characteristic timescale of transistors (or super-transistors) rather than human neurons. The ascent rapidly surges upward and creates *superintelligence* (minds orders of magnitude more powerful than human) before it hits physical limits. (*Advocates*: I. J. Good, Eliezer Yudkowsky)

ⁱⁱ *Tajalli* (Lucent Manifestation) and its accompanying veiling in the physical world. *Tajalli* means the *kashf* (uncovering) of the Sun of the *Haqq's Haqiqah* (Allah's Absolute Reality & Truth), the sun of sublimity and sanctification away from the human attributes that have been covered/absent/blocked because of human-ness. *Istetār* means veiling the light of the Divine *Haqiqah* (Absolute Reality & Truth) by means of the human attributes—a shadow cast by humanity. Some say: *tajalli*

is the removal of humanity's veil. Nothing resembles/renders the *Dhāt* (Divine Essence), i.e. nothing of the cosmos or humanity. And *istetār* is humanity blocking the view between you and the *Ghayb* (Divine Transcendental Unseen)." (Dara O. Shayda)

ⁱⁱⁱ The word "*Tarbiya*" is an Arabic word that linguistically means the increase, growth, and loftiness. Conventionally, *Tarbiya* means the development and the training of people in various aspects. The word is commonly used to describe children upbringing as the parents provide them with physical, educational, moral and spiritual needs to help them grow up and become useful parties in the society. *Ta'lim* : seeker of knowledge or to actively learn.

^{iv} *Wird*: literally means a set portion of the Qur'an, or any other specific act of worship, which the worshipper commits himself to recite or perform, either at a particular time or occasion or on a regular basis. But according to Sufism, the *wird*, or *dhikr*, is a practice of repeating the name of Allah, and a set of invocations assigned to the *murid* by his *shaykh* or deputy as a liturgy of communion.

^v 55:33 – **"O you assembly of Jinns and men! If you can *nafadha* (pass) beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, do *nafadha* (pass)! You shall not be able to *nafadha* (pass) except by authoritative-control (from Allah)!"**
Nafadha: pierce or bore or penetrate or go through, if used in conjunction with min.

Majaz is a 'place,' a pass-through place like a corridor, made up of spoken or written words plus their corresponding semantics and 'aql (intellect). Passage through this corridor allows for the 'aql (intellect) to realize new semantics in another realm, thus effectively replacing the semantics of the original words with the new semantics, all together to mean something new in another realm. The new semantics may not be cognitive in nature, e.g. could be feelings/cognizances/visions/memories/ presences induced within the 'aql (intellect) or within the *wujud* (being).

^{vi} Postmodernism is a movement away from the viewpoint of modernism. More specifically, it is a tendency in contemporary culture characterized by the problem of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative or meta-narrative. It involves the belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. It emphasizes the role of language, power relations and motivations. In particular, it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. Rather, it holds realities to be plural and relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and what their interests consist in. It attempts to address problematic modernist overconfidence, by drawing into sharp contrast the difference between how confident speakers are of their positions versus how confident they need to be to serve their supposed purposes. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, visual arts and music