

August 5, 2011

Khutbah

Title: [Qalb: Purifying the Vision of the Heart](#)

DVD title: Qalb: Purifying the Vision of the Heart

Opening duas. Allah (swt) gives us good guidance in the Holy Qur'an: **“Did We not open wide your heart?”** The month of Ramadan is a time for the heart to be opened wide, as I spoke recently about this *latīfa qalb*. It is extremely important that we understand the *dhikr* of *qalb* and the meaning of *qalb*, and what it means to be under the feet of Hazrat Adam (as). There is a great and simple statement that challenges us and asks us questions in Surah Sharh, but also in Surah Najm. He uses the word “*fu'ad*” for the inner meaning of the heart. **“His heart did not lie in what it saw.”** (53:11) This tells us a lot. The next line is, **“Will you then dispute with him as to what he saw? And indeed he saw him another time at the cedar tree of the furthest boundary.”**(53:12-16) And then it goes on and describes what the heart can see, if you train the heart to see.

We think of the heart as being just a kind of emotional enter, but it has an eye, the *'ain ul qalbi*, or the *'ain ul fu'ad* we can say also. The heart has eyes to see with. What is he seeing? The heart of the Prophet (sal) is seeing Allah (swt) in a way that no one else can see him. He is talking about the cedar tree. **“When they covered the cedar tree, his eye neither veered nor did it stray. And he saw the greatest among the signs of his Lord.”** We could spend weeks on that. What are the greatest among the signs of Allah that you see with your heart? We are so busy seeing with our eyes, busy being distracted with our self-importance. What is it we see with the eyes of our heart? That gives us surety?

Then in a brief, one-line ‘*āyat* in Surah al-Hajj, Allah (swt) says: **“Have they not traveled in the land? Do they not have hearts with which to understand and ears with which to hear? For sure the eyes do not become blind, but it is the hearts in their breasts that grow blind.”** Here again we are told that if we don’t see correctly with our heart, we really are blind. We travel throughout the land like we do every day, and we think we are seeing but we don’t see, and we think we are hearing but we don’t hear. Allah is referring to the heart, but it’s obvious that the physical heart is an indispensable part of the body. It works very assiduously and diligently, pumping blood throughout the whole system. As I’ve said many times, you can be kept alive brain-dead but you can’t be kept alive heart-dead. Nourishment and necessary supplies are given to the heart so it can supply the nourishment to the rest of the body. It’s a metaphor, but it’s also a *latīfa*.

As a metaphor, we say the heart has to also be supplied with proper nourishment in order for it to see and to hear the Divine, to guide us in the right way along this journey. It’s also a *latīfa*, a doorway. It means that in this doorway of the heart, to be kept clean and open, we will see another dimension of things. For those of us who are enthralled a little with science, one would think that the science of Sufism and the science of Islam and meditation would be a great challenge, a great opportunity. If you are in a science lab trying to invent something new or understand something, you spend hours, days, months, years, sometimes decades, getting nothing in order to finally get something. But the science of meditation and the science of Islam? We are very anxious. We want to get something right away. If we don’t get it, well, it’s not that important. But truly, your life depends on it. You could be doing a science experiment in a lab that nobody’s life depends on. You could be studying some paleontological thing from 5,000 years ago, and nobody is going to get anything (or very little) from that except more information and knowledge. But this is about life. This is about the meaning and science of life.

The science of life allows you to understand about neuroscience, the brain, the emotions, the way information is processed, the way it is coded. If you are interested in encoding in computers, meditation is a phenomenal thing. It reveals to you Allah's code. I'm not making a metaphor. What Allah is telling us here is that this stuff is right before your eyes, and you aren't seeing it. It is being told to you, and you are not hearing it. Your heart is trying to reach out to it. Traveling in the land, the land of life, you are not hearing and you are not seeing. That's what is happening, or not happening. So we are not nourishing ourselves properly.

These words in the Qur'an signify even more than what I've said. The symbols of the spiritual dimensions of the physical sense are referred to in the Qur'an often through the heart, as the heart. The axial point between the physical realm and metaphysical realm of a person are contained in understanding our heart and our *niyyat* in our heart. Once you have that understanding, and it's a preliminary understanding (most people go through their lives without that understanding at all), then the other doorway is opened of the other *latā'if*. The confluence of the spiritual intellect that is at the seat of *firāsa* / (discrimination), and the physical perceptions of *basīra* (of the eyes and the ears), the seat of cognition and emotions exist in the heart. We all know that from human experiences of the heart, but there is something more. This is how Qur'an looks at the heart.

Broadly speaking, in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (sal), there is a clear case presented that the heart is the focal point of the true self, of intentions, of affection, of inner dimensions and perceptive faculties, cognitive abilities, emotional transformations, of human sociological and ideological transformation. In Surah Imran, Allah says something you are very familiar with: **“Hold fast to the rope of Allah all together, and do not be divided.”** It talks about *jamat*, the *ummah*, and humanity. If you want success, hold fast to the rope of Allah, all those attributes, qualities and essences of truth together. **“And remember the favor of Allah upon you. And you were enemies and He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessings you became as**

**brothers.”** This is the power. But not just as enemies on the battlefield, but enemies working against the common good.

Twenty thousand children died in the last 90 days in Somalia. You could say, “Where is God in all this?” Or you could say, “Where is man in all this?” I prefer the latter. Allah gave the birth of those children, and gave the control and the responsibility to all of us. Where is the heart in this? Where is the holding fast? Where is the togetherness in all of this? Where is the brotherhood, sisterhood, and humanity? Rather, we should be arguing over politics? 82% of the people in this country do not trust the Congress of this country. I’m surprised it’s only 82%! Where is the humanity? Twenty thousand! How many people live in this county or in the city? (46,000). Half the population walked out in 90 days. Think of it in that way. So indulgent! We stand and sit here and have our community, and what do we appreciate from it?

I’ll tell you a few things. One is you are sending ambassadors out every summer to promote good ideas and thoughts. What percentage of those become good ambassadors? I’d say 50 – 75% in some way or another. But if you don’t link it to your spirituality, if you don’t link it to your responsibility as a Muslim, as a Sufi, or as a really good Christian, Jew or whatever, then you miss the whole point. If you are only hearing a little, you need a hearing aid. If you only see a little, you need glasses. That’s the truth of it. Unless your life is oriented in that direction, and every choice you make is oriented in that direction, everything else is selfish. At the bottom line you really don’t care about those 20,000, or the next 20,000, or the next 20,000, unless you ask yourself, “How as a Muslim, Sufi, or member of this community should I be acting, thinking, planning and developing, choosing careers and courses I’m going to take in college, or work I could do, and how I can volunteer to what infrastructure here can support (forty years of infrastructure!)?”

What can it support? “I’m going to carry a big project here.” Can it support it? Yes. Do you understand? If a person makes decisions only on their own selfish urges and desires, 20,000 more will die who didn’t have to die. You could say, “Well, it’s not just me! O Shaykh, don’t lay that burden on me!” “*Inna mal usri yusra!* Yes, I will lay that hardship on you.” I was speaking with Shaykh Nooruddeen last night who was working on his *khutbah* for today. I said I was thinking about going to speak tonight. He asked me how I was, and I told him about the surgery and how I was feeling. I said, “I’m going to go speak tonight.” He said, “Good. *Inna mal usri yusra.*” That’s my brother. Don’t underestimate what this means.

Those are our brothers and sisters dying over there— not because they are Muslims but because they are human beings. They live in a place that has no government, no infrastructure, no support system, nothing, nothing, nothing—as if humanity and values and justice never existed. As if it never existed. But really, I ask you, is it that much different than the highly industrialized society in Nazi Germany in the 1930’s and 40’s? Where you have a totally corrupt and distorted government? It is that much different than we have today with so many people out of work? The only difference is we die slower here.

**“In their hearts is a disease, and Allah adds to this disease and painful suffering awaits them for those who have covered up the truth.”** This is against Allah for putting a painful disease in people’s hearts? Or, it is like saying, “Look here. Here’s this practice, here’s this opportunity, here’s this travel guide of life (lifts the Qur’an), here it is.” And you keep going, “Eh. I don’t want it. It’s not that important. I want to do what I want to do.” Allah says, “I created this world. In this world there are bacteria and viruses and healthy foods and poisons, and all kinds of things for you to choose.” If you live a certain way and don’t take care of your body and mind, you get certain types of diseases. Some are acute, some are chronic, some will disable you and all that, because this is all about a totality, and choices.

You don't wait until you are 21 to make choices like that – or 25, or 30 or 35. You should learn about nutrition when you are younger. You should learn about responsibility when you are younger. You should take on duties, so that as you get older, you can carry more of the weight. You don't want to carry the weight? Just think of it in this way: if you don't carry your weight, you are putting it on the back of someone in Somalia. They are going to die for you. Just think of it that way. How many people will you let die for you?

Doubt in the heart is also talked about in the Qur'an, and heedlessness in the heart. There are a tremendous amount of references about what transpires in the heart discussed in Qur'an. You could take this month of Ramadan and read about the heart in the Qur'an. One could say the heart of the Qur'an is **“And those who deny My Signs and the meeting of the final life, their deeds are worthless, and they paid for what they used to do.”** There's a warning, and it goes on. Allah (swt) reveals Himself in our hearts when He says to us: **“O you who believe! Answer Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, and to Him you will all be gathered.”** He gives us a design of the essence of worship and Divine Revelation. The essence of the value of human effort is in the heart.

We can't spend enough time looking at the Qur'an and seeking the heart. There are a number of references with endless ways of looking at them. Allah knows the secrets of your heart. Mevlana Rumi said, *“Everyone sees the unseen in proportion to the clarity of their heart.”* The Roman philosopher Seneca said, *“I will govern my life and thoughts as if the whole world is seeing my life and reading my thoughts. For what good is there in keeping secrets from the people when God, Who is the Searcher of our Heart, all of our privacies are open to Him?”* Allah says in Qur'an, **“None of your faith will be correct unless your heart is correct.”** How do you make a correct heart? I don't know. Let me see. I think I've spoken about it a couple of times in the last forty years.

You also have to be aware of the fact that humility lies in the modesty of the heart, not just in the way a person appears outwardly. Sidna Umar reprimanded a person who bent forward in prayer, due to what he claimed was humility. Umar responded by pointing to his heart and saying, “My brother, humility is here (pointing to the heart), not there (pointing to the place of prostration).” Humility is in your heart. Another of our brothers said, “*Be careful of hypocritical humility where the body appears humble, but the heart is arrogant.*” What is an arrogant heart? It is not one who says, “I don’t care about anything.” It is the heart of a person who acts like they have no responsibility, no duty, no care. In the West, our children grow up and they don’t have any responsibility, really. Very little. “Clean up your room.” “Wash the dishes.” “Take the garbage out.” Tell me about the Somalian children, picking at the dirt to get a grain of rice, carrying water (if they can get water) to the rest of the family on bony bodies. What about them? Are you better than them? Are we better than them? How about their responsibility? Should responsibility only come out of such terrible necessity? Isn’t it amazing what a bony, dying body can do?

The Prophet (sal) said, “*The person who has an atom’s weight of pride in his heart will not enter paradise.*” The Prophet (sal) also said, “*Successful indeed is a person who is sincere in faith, whose heart is pure, whose speech is truthful, and whose character is upright.*” I thought there was another line here. Wasn’t there one that said, “and who has a Phd and who does what the wants to do in life.” I must have forgotten to type that one down. “And who gets what the wants out of life.” In fact, the affection and the love and compassion, considered to be the most positive aspects of human relationships, are always associated with the heart. Success is associated with the heart, not with the money.

At this point, Allah says in the Holy Qur’an, “**And yet after this, your hearts are hardened like stones or even harder than stones.**” How is that possible? Just look at

your own ego. Look at your own arrogance. We all have to look at our own arrogance, our own desire nature. Believe it or not (and many people lean toward the not), if you could just totally surrender to Allah, Allah would put you in the right place, with the right job, with the right person, at the right time, doing the right things for the right reasons. So you can see that most people's lives resist that, because they confuse choice with ego. A person sees a person fall off into a creek or stream off a bridge, and without hesitation jumps in and rescues that person. What is that? Total absence of 'I.' In that moment, there is no ego. There is only the best of human nature. So you derive from that "if you save the life of one person, it's like saving all of humanity." Why? Because there is no hesitation.

If everybody felt that way, would there be 20,000 children dying in the last 90 days in Somalia – if everyone felt that way and operated that way? We have enough food in the world. We have enough transport in the world. We have enough people in the world to distribute it. So, how is it happening? It can only happen because of selfishness. There is no other reason for it to happen. We have to overcome this illness. We are exhorted to emulate the prophetic example of being compassionate and forgiving. I spoke about the example of the Prophet (sal) the last two evenings. Perhaps very important to us on the subject I have been talking about is the *tasfi al qulub*, the cleansing of the heart. And there is the promise from Allah (swt) that no condition of a people will change unless the people change themselves. Unless they purify themselves, there is no hope.

*Tasfi al nafs*, cleansing of the self, begins with cleansing of the heart. The Prophet (sal) defined faith as internal commitment in the heart, outwardly manifested in action. If there is anything we should put on our door, I guess that should be it: that we have an internal commitment in our heart, and that commitment is manifested in our actions. Don't worry about the future; worry about your heart. Take the practices that have been given to you, the blessings that have been laid upon you. What will it take for us to listen? The Holy Qur'an emphasizes the most valuable assets we take from this world:

the permanency of good actions in *qalb* and *salim*, the pure heart. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, ***“Allah surely does not judge your appearances, nor your physicality. Rather, Allah looks into the sincerity of your hearts and of your actions.”***

So we have to ask ourselves: is my heart worthy of the gaze of Allah? Am I worthy? We have to take note of these things and pray, **“O Allah, let not our hearts be swerved after we have been guided, and grace us with Your Mercy. Surely, You are the Dispenser of Grace.”** *Asalaamu aleykum.*

SECOND KHUTBAH. In this Ramadan there are many things to pray for. But for your own selves, don't settle for anything but clarity in your heart. Ask Allah for that. There are a lot of words like duty, responsibility, and infrastructure. Those words are not burdens. They are not bad words; they are not bad concepts. Opportunity abounds, but to whom? A person who changes themselves like a chameleon, or a person who knows who their self is, proud of who they are and where they came from and what they are, and then serves Allah by serving humanity. Nothing is greater than that, nothing. That's not my opinion; it's the opinion of Allah. So I enjoin you to see beyond the fasting in this month. *Amin.*