



Seeking and Finding Real Baraka/Blessings

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Allah in Surah al-Baqarah (2:30):

When the Lord said to the angels, I shall place upon the earth and emissary, they said, will you place upon it one who will corrupt it and shed blood, while it is we who hymn your praise and who sanctify you? Allah responded, truly, I know that which you do not know.

And in Surah al-A'raf:

“What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded it?” Iblis said, “I am better than him. You created me from fire and him from clay.” Allah said, “Get down from this station. There is no place for you to be arrogant. Get out, surely you are from among the lowly.” And Iblis said, “Reprieve me until the Day of Resurrection.” Allah said, “Surely, you are among the reprieved.” Iblis said, “Now that You have caused me to err, I shall lie in ambush for them along Your straight path, and then I shall fall upon them from before them and from behind them and upon their right and upon their left, and You will not find most of them to be grateful.” (7:12-17)

The Prophet (sal) said, *“Five people have left this world, but their files have not been closed. Reward continually is bestowed upon these five people. The first is the one who plants a tree, the one who digs a water well for others to use, the one who builds a masjid, the one who has taken down the Qur’an, and the one who leaves behind a worthy child.”*

I could talk on this for ages, right? *Subhāna-Llāh*. “A Muslim man is fortunate in these regards: his place of business is in a small city that he lives in so he can see his family after a day’s work.” This is from Imam Sajad. “His friends are worthy and pious, and he has a child whose help he can benefit from.” And from Qur’an, “**How blessed is a worthy child.**” And, “**God made them for your mates and companions of your own nature, and made for you out of them sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided them with sustenance for the best.**” Getting the drift yet? Imam Sadiq said, “In the hereafter, Muslim offspring will intervene on their parents’ behalf, and their intervention will be accepted.” Again, “A man who does not die until he sees his offspring is fortunate.” The benefit of having children is so much that the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali said, “A child’s illness is the penalty for the parent’s sins.” And the Prophet (sal) said, “**Worthy offspring are a bunch of sweet-smelling flowers which Allah has distributed among His servants.**”

I want to speak not just on the offspring / children, but the blessings/*baraka*. A person of piety is not seeking *baraka* for the benefit of having something. But one who is not selfish, and is able to submit and receive, is a worthy of *baraka*. Take *baraka* away from any act, and a person who talks about healing might be the enemy of healing. For example, a person who thinks they have capability to heal may pursue it not for healing but for ego, for their own selfish ends. People pursue *baraka* to have it, for their emotional response to that power, and to think they are blessed. But there is *baraka* that comes from the things that I have read to you from *Rasūlu-Llāh* and the *imams* of the Shi’a tradition, and from the Qur’an itself, and from the Sufis.

A person who seeks out love for their own sake is one type of person – a typical human being, maybe. A person who seeks out love for the sake of love, just to love love, is a person who might be on the right track but who can be easily distracted. But a person who seeks out love so they can serve the source of that love in relationship with other human beings, that person is a servant of love, a servant of Allah Swt. That type of

individual is in service of love, in contact with love. You can have the feeling and emotion of a blessing, but you haven't necessarily received the fullness of that *baraka*. Some people come to the *shuyukh* and ask, "Can I have your *baraka*?" They call them *baraka* seekers. They come just for the *baraka*, not for any practice or teaching, just for the blessing.

But to get anything, you have to give something. You can only have it, if you give the right thing for it. If you want love, that's one thing. You have to be the kind of person who can be loved, and who really has the capacity to love, and who has the capacity to be loved in return. If you want to go out and pay money to have the external appearance of love, then you have bought love and not really had it. Many things look like blessings, just like people have the appearance of being blessed. But they are not necessarily blessed. Just like a person can be *hafez* of Qur'an, but have none of the ethic, principle, or understanding of what's in it. Because of that, they accept that it is a real thing, and they believe they have it, and they dare not admit they don't really know what real love is. They don't know really what the real blessings and *baraka* are.

They don't see the real blessing, but it's in their face. The parents don't see the real blessing of the children, in the planting of a tree, or the digging of a water well; and the children don't see the real blessing of the family and parents they have. You have to then give up the appearance of what you think the real thing is going to be, in order to get something that is fake. Isn't that silly? But that's what people do. They don't know what the real blessing is in something, and instead of pursuing the real blessing, they go for the appearance. To gain real *baraka*, to be deserving of it, you have to give unstintingly of what you have: your capacity, your capability, your knowledge, your talent, what you have. That means you have to know what you have, and not demean it or denigrate it, or turn away from it. You also have to know the path to gain from it.

To receive before you give in a way is an illusion and kind of sinful thought. “If I’m rich, I’ll do this.” “When I’m married, I’ll do that.” “When I own my own company, I’ll do this.” “When I’m at peace, I’ll finally be able to do this.” So we barter with Allah. But if you have something that is all ready, you build upon it. You realize that the wealth you have now is the relationship you have with your family, your children, your brothers and sisters, your community, [even] the food on the table. The peace you have comes from bringing peace to others. The generosity you have later on lies in inviting someone to your home for tea, and having a good conversation. The peace you can have from the *muraqabah* opens up doorways for you. So, you don’t have to barter with Allah.

Then you realize that once you give in this way, you want to give more. You give again and again and again, and one day you realize, where am I getting all of this I am giving? Before, I was living a very self-centered life, ego-centered life, thinking about me, and my career and my work, and my money, and my family, and my children, my this and my that. Then I started giving, and it was endless. Then you realize that the *baraka* is coming from the giving itself. Whether a person is in need from some kind of healing or special blessing, or some kind of guidance in their life, you give – not just the words and wisdom, but trust. You are giving from your account of trust and what you have acquired of your dedication and of knowledge you didn’t even know. The children sitting in this room have knowledge they don’t even know they have. Just from living here, hearing me talk, hearing you talk, listening to what the parent’s values are, they have knowledge they don’t know they have. Maybe it hasn’t been called upon yet. And it is deeply linked with love.

The language of the Sufi is deeply linked with love. I remember a long time ago, someone burned their arm very badly. That person had a lot of trust and a lot of faith. She came to me for a blessing for her arm. She sat in front of me down by the pond, a long, long time ago. The blessing, before her eyes, reduced the burn almost immediately. Something was given, because the person gave first. What did they give? Their trust,

their belief, and their dedication. Where did they get it from? That person practiced and practiced and practiced. Even in that situation, where at times there are doubts and uncertainties, which we say, “are to be expected, which I will overcome once I know why they exist.” This is one of the recitations of the Khwaja Khwajagan: “*Doubts and uncertainties are to be expected. These I will overcome once I know why they exist.*” Doubts and uncertainties rose in that person’s mind over a number of years, but still a deep center of love existed in the heart. Because of circumstances and other things, there was vacillation. But many times that person returned to their center, again and again and again – their heart.

Why? Because of the touch of that *baraka*. Why? Because they gave. And when we give, we receive. Every Christian knows that teaching. Every Jew knows that teaching. Every Muslim should know that teaching. Why? Because it is the truth. That’s why the love of Allah, the love of the *shuyukh*, the love of the Shaykh, the love of *Rasūlu-Llāh* (sal) is not removed easily from the heart of the individual. But there are things that block it: greed, possessiveness, self-importance, lack of understanding of self, self-denigration, fear. So we say, if you seek *baraka*, seek the people of Tasawwuf. If the person seems sharp or straightforward, the *baraka* has come in that form. If the person seems quiet and gentle, the *baraka* has come in that form. If the person speaks a lot, the *baraka* is coming through the words. If the person is silent and only sits in *muraqabah*, the *baraka* is coming in that way.

We have expectations. In our minds there are so many illusions, so many that honesty and truth are sometimes only recognized because they appeal to us and support our existing belief. We think something is true because it fits our definition. But the *baraka* is the ability of the Sufi to assist in the transformation of their self and other individuals. For that to happen, a person has to be able to perceive what is in front of them, to see what is truly there, and to perceive their selves honestly. Only by seeing oneself honestly can they perceive the patterns and realities that make up life. If you have an image of

yourself that is not right, and then you only see the things that support that image, then you are not seeing the truth. So we need certain things that help us truly to see ourselves. There is a big difference between self-denigration and humility.

In humility, a person sees their value and feels blessed by it and unworthy of it. Self-denigration is putting yourself down, because you don't know who your self is. Most people support the illusion of their own self-deception, by seeing only those things that reflect or illustrate to themselves what they already think. That's why it is important to see, what does the Shaykh think of you? What does *Rasūlu-Llāh* say about the person? What does Allah say about the believer? What do the good people say about you, not the bad people? Not the people who live a life that has no ethic or morality in it. I'm not talking about people who want to hit you over the head with this Book, or shove it down your throat. I'm talking about the good people, the people who strive, who fail, who repent, who give good advice, who love you, who sacrifice for you, beginning in your home.

Self-deception, unfortunately, can be very comfortable. As long as something fits into one's illusion, it's acceptable. If you decide your friendships or relationships are about someone who supports your illusion, then you have a really difficult life ahead. But someone who will tell you the good things, and give you the good direction, that person will help you lead yourself out of self-deception and delusion and illusion, into the world of blessings / *baraka*. You can have a low self-image and think you are oppressed, and accept things that show you that. If something shows you when you are really oppressed, but it doesn't fit into your self image, you might find something terribly brutal, so it supports your concept of oppression, and shows you that you are oppressing yourself.

It's not always something that makes you feel good, or supports your idea of how right you might be; hence humility becomes a very important factor of Islam and in life.

It's very interesting that the word straightforward is used at times. It's the job of the Muslim, and the person of Tasawwuf, to tell what is the *siratal mustaqim*, what is the straightforward path. Notice that Shaytan said, "I'm going to harrass and deceive and try to steal the people who are on Your straight path." Not just people, but the ones who are on the *siratal mustaqim*. You think you are safe because you are on the *siratal mustaqim*. But you are not safe because of your own mind. Were Hawa and Adam on the *siratal mustaqim*? A circular one all around Paradise. Straightforward is different from just saying truthful. Anything else is pandering to the desires, and giving them what they want, and not what they need.

This is another one of our recitations. "*Do not pander to the desires of the immature, giving them what they want instead of what they need.*" This is another one of the eleven recitations of the Khwaja Khwajagan. Yet, how many people want their desires pandered to? It's obvious that Allah Swt is compassionate and merciful; otherwise, why would He create beings, like the angels said, that would create this bloodshed on earth? Why would Allah tolerate human beings who constantly make the same errors, and constantly abuse one another, and constantly accuse one another, and constantly attempt to destroy one another and creation itself? Either Allah doesn't give a darn, or He's very patient, or a tremendous amount has been put in our hands. That's the position we take. Think about the inherent patience that is programmed into this universe. How long does it take for a star to cycle from birth until its death? How deep is a black hole? How expansive is dark matter? How do things transition from one form to another? The atoms that make up the blood cells in our bodies – where do they go when they are done? Do the atoms die? Of course they don't.

Then there is the reality of being in the world and not of it. For the Sufi, it is a matter of *ihsan*. To know that you are part of a reality that is always being overseen: act as if you are seeing Allah; and if you do not see Allah, know that Allah is seeing you. You are always being overseen. Why is the word *ihsan*? Why does it come from the root of

beauty? Allah said in Qur'an that He made us in the most beautiful of ways. We are, in that sense, the members of Khaled's family: we are all Hassounas. We are the *hasana*. Allah made us beautiful. If you try not to see your own beauty, what is the purpose of having it? If you don't look for the beauty in others, what is the purpose of this life? It's like putting cataracts in your own eyes, not waiting for old age to bring them. I know. I'm told my whole life that I like everyone. My father used to tell me, sitting at the breakfast table or dinner table: "Why are you not eating? Who are you in love with today?" But this is related to something else.

There is a *baraka* / blessing to know that there is such a thing called *dhikru-Llāh* – remembering Allah. Remembering Allah on Saturday night, or Friday night, during meditation? No, with every breath. Breathe out: *lā ilāha*. Breathe in: *illa-Llāh*. Or breathe in Allah, and breathe out Allah. Seeing the fact that we breathe is a constant cue. We are being cued with every breath. Allah could have created it easy, and put a lot less strain on the heart, and have the heart beat once an hour. We could have been 8 feet tall, and been like seals or whales and held our breath for 20 minutes. We see it. Allah said, See? I made whales. They can go under the water for an hour. I could have made you like that. Not only that, I gave them the most complex language. If aliens from outer space come, and if they want to communicate with beings on this planet, who are the strongest and largest, and have the most complex language and hence the most intelligent, they would communicate with the whales. And we would be dead because of what the whales would tell them about what we did to them, the genocide. And the whales would say, and don't forget our cousins, the dolphins.

But gaining new perceptions in knowledge comes from watching this breath, sitting in *muraqabah*, living a good life, being positive, being grateful for who you are, what you have, and understanding the role we play from the time we are children. We find ourselves responsible for things we didn't understand before. It's very hard to become responsible for something you are in the midst of. It's very hard to learn on the job: life,

responsibility, duties, ethics, morality. It is very hard to learn in the moment or after the fact. Why were Hazrat Adam (as) and Hawa (ra) admonished not to eat that fruit? They were admonished to make a distinction between Allah and His creation. We are admonished not to eat the fruit because inherent in the plan is the human being has to submit, and has to trust. If we are able to eat all the fruit, there wouldn't be any need for faith, or trust, or repentance; therefore, there would be no need for compassion, for mercy, even love, because love is to be tested.

Submission and faith are two elements that create excellence. What's the word for excellence in Arabic? *Ihsan*. Beauty / excellence. 'Being seen' is the interpretation. There wouldn't be any opportunity for submission and faith unless something was prohibited. Just one thing was prohibited, and all this comes out of that. You can do anything you want; just don't clip your fingernails on the ground. The first thing human beings would do is clip their fingernails on the ground. Why? Because we will not learn what comes after that without this prohibition. The fact that there has been programmed into the human being the potential to defy, to resist, to not listen, to be disobedient, to hide, to sneak, whatever is necessary to separate the "I" so the ego can be seen. But the I-ness has to be linked with Allah, with the Truth; otherwise, there is no gratitude, no humility, no real love, and no real capacity for learning. You become totally wrapped up in the negative aspects of it.

It is also what is needed in order to give: we need some asset in order to give. So we say, "By the grace of Allah, I have gained wealth. By the grace of Allah, I have gained some power. By the grace of Allah, I have gained some knowledge. I have something." Now, what is the impulse to give it? We give the one thing we ultimately have. The allegory is that one can live in Paradise unaffected, and the state of perfection is attained when the only thing we can give is that which comes out of that defiance. That's a little subtle. What does it mean? It means that when you face a barrier, whether it's a parent saying, "Don't do that!" and curiosity builds. "Don't do that. Avoid this. Be careful of

that.” As you build that knowledge, you realize that understanding the barrier is your liberation. That’s what really frees you and gives you control over yourself, not the defiance. It is the fact that a barrier was pointed out, and you begin to understand what it is a barrier to. Or you could say that which is the liberator is also the barrier to separateness.

It doesn’t make Adam any less of an individual to obey, to give. He’s choosing the freedom that lies in obedience. Allah doesn’t say, “You can’t eat of the apple because I willed it.” He says, “Don’t eat this apple. If you choose it, a lot of other stuff is going to happen.” The idea is to come to a definition or understanding, if you will, of self. You can choose to eat the apple, and then more and more difficult choices come. Who do they come to? The children of Adam. Who are the children of Adam? Christians, Jews, everyone knows who they are. Who got the sores and suffered so much? Who is Job in the Qur’an? Ayyub. Who gets swallowed in the whale? Jonah / Yunus. What happens to Sidna Musa? He can’t enter into the promised land. What happens to Sidna Harun? He got caught up in a deception, *shirk* and idolatry. What happens to Isa (as)? These are all the children of Adam.

Who else are the children of Adam? Everyone. The man who killed 17 Afghans in their homes? The man who killed Trayvon in Florida? The misguided people who blow themselves up? The people who burn the Qur’ans by blowing up Sufi shrines and Shi’a masajid? They are all the children of Adam. What is the difference between that, and when you say to your own child, “Please avoid this.” And the child thinks, “Well, it’s okay. It’s just my parent talking. That’s what parents are supposed to say.” They have no knowledge of what can come as a result of that. But if you have trust and faith in Allah, and you know that the intentions are good and right, you pause and think, “Wait a minute. This could set off a chain of events that is more than just separating me from my family and my friends. It’s a chain of events that can cause many pains and many hardships.”

The story is there and the example is there. Remember the story of the young boy who appears with Hawa in the Garden.

Hazrat Adam was off gathering fruits and vegetables for dinner. They were going to have some friends over, but there weren't any friends yet. This beautiful little boy appears, and Hazrat Adam comes home and says, "Where did this boy come from?" Hawa said, "Oh, he came. Isn't he beautiful?" And Adam looks at him and says, "No! Get out of here!" The next day, he comes home and the boy is there again, and he sees that Hawa is being affectionate to him. Oho! Now he beats him, and sends him away. The next day, the boy is there again. Now he takes him and throws him off a cliff. (These are apocryphal stories.) But the next day, he is there again. So Adam kills him. The next day, he's there again! Adam kills him again, turns him into ash, and spreads the ash in the wind. But the next day, he is back again. So he cooks him and he eats him. (Don't worry, children. It's only a story). And as he ate him, he heard a voice inside of him say, "O Adam! Finally, I have you where I want you. I am Khannas (Iblis) and I am now inside of you."

That's what we do. We eat each other up. We consume the darkness. You have to be careful of your choices. You choose to eat, and more choices come. It goes on forever. But every once in a while, there are crossroads that can lead you back to the *siratal mustaqim*, or you can make another choice. Or you are on the *siratal mustaqim* and you come to the crossroads, and you greet the others who are there. It goes on and on. My dear brothers and sisters, I remind you at the end of this *khutbah* the quotation we had at the beginning.

Five people have left this world, but their files have not been closed. Reward continually is bestowed upon these five people: the one who plants a tree, the

one who digs a water well for others to use, the one who builds a masjid, the one who has taken down the Qur'an, and the one who leaves behind a worthy child.

By extension, that means the one who serves the environment, the one who provides for others water to drink, the one who preserves and builds places of worship. The Prophet (sal) preserved the worshiping homes of the *ahl al kitab*. And it means the one who believes the Holy Words of Allah and follows them, and the one who leaves behind a worthy child. Maybe that's the hardest of them all. *Asalaamu aleikum*.