



The Value of Abrogation:

Assistance Attaining Balance on the Journey

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm. Allah (swt) reveals in Holy Qur'an in Surah Ni'sa:

O people, take shelter in your Lord, Who has created you from one single self and created out of its mate and spread from these two, man and woman, in abundance; and guard yourself in Allah in whom you claim your rights on one another, and do not cut the kinship ties of the womb that created you. Truly, Allah is watchful over you.

It goes on to talk about property, helping the orphans, and not devouring the wealth. This is one of the statements in the Qur'an of the dynamism of life. What it means is an affirmation for change and transformation. It is not talking about something that is static. In Surah al-Baqarah, Allah says:

Any sign that We cancel or consign to oblivion, We replace with a better or similar one. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?

So the reference from Surah an-Nisā shows you the power and dynamism, and here is a statement of abrogation. It is very important to understand in Qur'an, the many references. In 72 *surahs* out of 114, there is something about abrogation. What Allah says here is a constant reference; for example, Allah forgives all believers. Something happens and there is forgiveness; there is a dynamic that is taking place. This is a very big subject and I don't want to spend a lot of time on it, but I want to remind you that Allah (swt) has made the world for us and it is made out of

opposites. Those opposites come to us as tests and trials; and they come to us as signs, day and night.

For example, the seasons come. We have moods. Not you, but people like me, we have moods. Sometimes we have happiness; sometimes we have sadness. We have ideas where we test ourselves, and we find that some ideas are good and some ideas are not so good. We come up with a thought; we test it out. We realize what is wrong with that thought, maybe. Allah has made the world with day and night, high places and low places, happiness and sadness, oceans and skies, beauty and ugliness, loss and gain, contraction and expansion, health and sickness. He has made it in a way where it reflects in our outer life, inner states and possibilities for change.

What we are striving for, in a technical sense in terms of meditation, is a way of sustaining ourselves amidst these opposites or these changes, to find the center, the place between them of neutrality in Allah. This is a neutrality for the world, a neutrality in the Hereafter—a neutrality, not where it is not dynamic. If there is a conflict and you want to create peace in the conflict, and you come to a state of peace, it is not necessarily a stable place, but [it is a place where you] try to maintain that peace and sustain that peace.

So Allah (swt) reveals in these passages, and in other passages, that Allah can change anything. In recent *dars*, we talk about how we come to that understanding, and I hope you have more clear understanding of that. What is the purpose of this *muraqabah* and *tafakkur*, what is the purpose of this life is to find balance and to keep finding the way to balance and finding the way to harmony. Allah tells us that even to the point of, where if He gives us a revelation, He can abrogate that revelation. He can change it. He says, “We abrogate” or “We cause to be forgotten.

We bring one that is clearer and better.” That is what we try and do in our own lives. We try to understand things in a clearer and better way. We try to help our children to understand things in a clearer and better way. That is a goal.

We can say that abrogating a revelation is to make it clearer, more understandable, and more amenable to the person, the place, and the circumstances. That is the way we should be. If we know and we believe that Allah (swt) is able to accomplish all things, that Allah (swt) is able to make mountains into dust, have air carry oceans, cause illness to become wellness, then all is part of that miracle that Allah (swt) has made available to us. If we really know in our hearts that Allah is able to do these things, and if we really believe that, then we surrender, we trust, and we don't try and control and manipulate. We try and do the best we can, and to find better and better tools to change.

We don't ultimately have to try to do anything, if we can put our lives and our trust in the hands of Allah (swt). Rather than say, “I am the doer,” [it is better] to say, “Allah (swt) has given me this tool, or this understanding, or this insight, or this opportunity, or this venue, or this direction; and I need to know how to seize this moment and take it, not to be unsure about it.” It is not to say, “Now, because things are good, because I made some change,” or “Now, because I wanted this and I got it so I want to keep it,” but rather, “I accept where Allah has placed me, and I want to do the best that I can do where Allah has placed me.”

I just had a conversation with someone today on this subject, but I did not have this talk that I am giving now in mind when I had this conversation. It was a previous talk that I wanted to expand on and I let it sit on my desk. Now I am giving the talk and I realize that this is the subject of what I was talking about. This is the way it works. There is this harmony that takes place. What is that? That is an *'āyat* of

Allah. It is a sign to pay attention. I just made this happen. Not me—Allah just made this happen. We understand where Allah has placed us—not placed us in just the physical sense, like here sitting in this room right now—but placed us in our spiritual life, not just in the worldly life. But we also place ourselves in certain positions in the worldly life.

Of course, our conditioning, our likes our dislikes, our attitudes, mostly are fears, mostly our worries that inconvenience us and that intervene in our lives, apprehensions and anxieties that we have, have a tremendous effect on us. That does not mean that you are in fear most of the time, or in doubt most of the time. It means that they have a very profound effect on us when they come up. It makes it difficult for us to receive the *Fayd* of Allah (swt), to accept that help/*madad*.

Allah (swt) also says in Qur'an:

O man, surely you must strive to attain your Lord a hard striving until you meet Him.

Well, what does it mean 'to attain your Lord'? "Hey, Allah, I am going to catch You. I am going to get You." What does it mean, 'attain your Lord'? It means attain justice, mercy, compassion, understanding, love, tolerance, knowledge, gnosis, *marifat*. It means striving to meet Him until you meet Him, until you come to the realization that what you need in the moment you have attained, and now you have the power of that to use it. It does not say [to strive] until it gets difficult, or until you are too tired or disappointed, or [until] Islam stands in the way, or Sufism stands in the way, or the community stands in the way, or the Shaykh stands in the way (of course no one would ever think that).

It has to do with understanding that Allah (swt) never stands in the way. Compassion, mercy, love, tolerance, justice never stands in our way. These are the ways in which we can accomplish things. The Messenger of Allah (swt) never stands in the way. The messengers of the messengers of Allah (swt) never stand in the way. Many of us feel that striving is wonderful, and persevering, no matter, what is difficult. But we persevere until Allah (swt) reveals Himself to us. **“Inna Allaha ma’a (or yuhibbu) sabareen.”** He loves our persevering. He assists us in our persevering. I don’t even like to say He. Allah’s Divine Presence assists us. So if we don’t persevere, how do we get the assistance? If we don’t persevere, the love does not come in a way that will transform us.

When we see these statements that “Allah reveals Himself to us” or “loves those who love Him” or “is found in the heart of the believer,” it does not mean that He appears in some imaginary form or even as a beam of light; but from within ourselves, we find emerging confidence and tolerance, kindness and patience, mercy and mercifulness and love. As we go through our life, and we learn patience—whether we learn patience in our day to day events of our life, or we learn patience in fasting during Ramadan, or because of some painful thing, or because we really want to learn and accomplish something, and we will work at it and work at it because we love it and we want to accomplish it—it is the same truth that we are learning. Sometimes it comes in the form of something withheld, and sometimes it comes in the form of a great inspiration that we are trying to gain. Motivated from within to gain something, we persevere at it; or because of some difficulty, we have to persevere because we have no other choice.

These are all good tidings. Whenever there are good tidings, there is a greeting, there is a message. There is often also a warning. A parents says to a child who is going out, “Have a nice time, but be careful.” “Enjoy yourself. Call me and let me

know you are safe.” Or “It is dark to be walking through the woods. You ought to have a flashlight. Don’t trip. Don’t fall.” Later on, when the child has a driver’s license, we say, “Don’t forget when you get to Bethesda Road, just before the turn, look down the road on 714. And when you get to the end of Bethesda Road, turning to go onto 24, look to the right and left. Look to the left last, because that is where they are coming over the hill. That is where they will come suddenly, and you can get a longer view from the right. Then when you go down 24, and you are going to make a left hand turn up by the big farm, by what’s his name’s farm and that road going to Evington, make that turn wide and keep your eye there, because people come around that turn. Be careful.” Isn’t that right? That is what we do out of love.

We have to heed the warnings. We have to be able to look down the road. We have to be able to understand what Allah (swt) is offering to us. Just like what parents offer the children, or what the *shaykh* offers the *murīd*, or what the brothers and sisters offer to each other has the goodness in the heart, and goodness in mind. Also, we have to understand that you get what you deserve. If that is true, if we are going to operate by that premise, then try to deserve only the best; then you will only get the best. Remember to ask the questions: “What I am doing now, how I am acting now, is it doing good or doing ill? Is it causing happiness, pain or suffering?” If it is causing difficulty, if it causes someone to suffer, not intentionally, then you have to say, “*Astaghfirh -Llāh.*” It is not easy to change your ways overnight. Sometimes it takes time. So you persevere and you assist one another in doing that, help others to understand something.

These are ways of abrogation also. When Allah (swt) tells us in Qur’an that He gives one instruction, but later on He is abrogated that to something else, it is because it reflects the reality of life, and lets us know that things can be abrogated. Does it mean that the Qur’an is imperfect? No. It shows us the perfection of its dynamic.

That is why not everything is spelled out exactly – “Do this. Do this. Do that” – rather, in general. It is somewhat in specific, but in general so as to leave room for this dynamic to take place. Well that is the way life is also. So why are we going to impose on ourselves or others the inability to change when Allah does not impose it on us? Why do we create an impossible standard for others to live by, when Allah creates a standard for us to live by that is not impossible? But it is possible in affirmational possibility.

We have to stop and look at ourselves, and carry the right message. We have to understand what our responsibilities are. When we have these opportunities to speak kindly, and be sincere, to be serious, to seize the moment and sit down with somebody, telling them honestly about something but also listening to their point of view. This is the same thing that is happening in the Qur’an. It is the same thing that we are being asked that Allah (swt) has designed for us. Even on the subject of Paradise and hell, there were abrogations on that subject; there were dimensions to that subject. There are those people who spend a period of time in hell and then they become free in the Paradise. So too, there are people in life who spend a time in “hell” and then they repent and become free—misery one day and popularity the next. My God! Who would have ever thought that Bill Clinton would be at a 59% approval? It happens in the political sphere, in the social sphere, so many spheres.

This is a kind of resurrection. So the universe balances like a balance scale. Something goes here and it gets weighed. Then it goes here, and it goes there, and then there. It is not just all balanced [in a static way]. Balance [is not,] don’t breathe, don’t talk, don’t do anything; rather, it goes in and out of balance all the time. We need to put effort here, or effort there, and remove something from here, or something from there, so that we give value to harmony and balance, instead of value to the thing that imbalances. If we are upset about something, and we don’t

strive to overcome it, then we are giving value to the thing that upsets, not to the harmony.

This is what is behind these teachings on abrogation, *inshā'a-Llāh*. This is how we make progress in life. How we remember that I spoke about last night and the night before that—through the practices and remembrance, through being grateful for where Allah has placed us even with the problems that come along where we are placed, through being able to say, “A sincere human being is always trying to change, even if you don’t see it.” You are always dealing with things that are left from behind, so you have to be able to put them aside, whether it is in business, or in community, or in relationships, or in your own self. You have to be able to move forward, go forward from this point on.

We had a meeting today on a subject, and the first conclusion we came to at the beginning of the meeting that I offered was, “Forget the past. We have to move forward.” We have things from the past that we have to work with, but we have to move forward from here; otherwise, we will be tied down to the past. We have to move forward. So, *alhamdulillah-Llāh*. It does not mean that the past does not exist; it just means we are not caught by it. So this is a message, a brief message for today. *inshā'a-Llāh*.