

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Hizbul Bahr: The Medium Is the Message](#)

Dinner blessing: The beauty of nature is telling us about the cycles of life and repairing to the infinite. I mentioned it in my *khutbah*, and I ask Allah Swt to make us conscious every day of the temporality and the opportunities that come, whether we are young or old. When we are young, we don't think much about this; but if we did, we might make some very, very smart and good decisions in life. When we are old, we look back on our decisions and we may regret what we didn't do and didn't think. So let's pause tonight and read 360 Hizb ul Nasrs beginning tonight. This follows Hizb ul Fath, which sets up for the change. Hizb ul Nasr gives it to us, *inshā'a-Llāh*. Just try to remember: this is not some game, some play, some fantasy. Many beautiful things happen in life: births, marriages, graduations, all kinds of wonderful things, grandchildren, babies, aunts, uncles, new houses, new cities, all kinds of things. But the one thing, Allah Swt, I ask You is to make us aware of what we are going to do with those blessings, how we are going to live them, and not to compartmentalize our life in anyway, lest we will be unhappy more than we are happy, and unfulfilled more than we are fulfilled. *Amin*.

Suhbat: I'm going to talk about two things. One is something about Huuu. I will talk about how you think when you are doing things. I suspect most people don't think when they are doing things, and that most of us do things sort of mechanically after a while. I don't know about you, but when I was young, as long as I had in my mind that I was a student, and not a teacher—indeed, after you become a teacher, the tendency is to lose some of this initiative—my personal, inner story is that I pursued understanding about what I was doing, and I abjured the idea of just doing something without understanding it. I don't think that's 24 hours a day, but I did a

lot of reading, a lot of research, and read a lot of footnotes. I love footnotes. You learn more from the footnotes often than from the text.

In that, as I did things, I would remember. I remember the *dhikrs* in the now-publications office, which used to be our *dhikr* hall. It was really nice; I liked that place. I remember making the *dhikr* and thinking about every breath, and seeing how long I could hold it. Breathing out *lā ilāha*, and breathing in *illa-Llāh*, trying different ways to make *darba* on the *latā'if*, and on the different names of Allah, trying to let my body and mind and soul absorb something other than some repetitions of names because you are supposed to do them. In fact, nobody ever said you are supposed to do them. You think I said you are supposed to do them. That's the difference between saying, who wants to be around a person, when you give them a gift, you have to tell them they are supposed to say thank you. They should know that. There are certain things you should know to say, like when someone says, "*asalaam aleikum*" you say, "*aleikum salaam.*" Or "How are you" "Fine..." No one should have to tell you, "Go ask so and so how they are, and if they ask you, say 'Fine.'"

You learn a lot by using the *dhikr / sama* as a laboratory. Just like if you do the exact same things in silence in your meditation, and you add to your meditation some *dhikr*, and some *darba*, and those things, which is the way you let the *shaykh* know you are really interested. You learn a lot. What is two-dimensional becomes multi-dimensional. You really learn to understand things and people. As you see, at times it builds frustration, such knowledge, depending on who you are hanging out with, of course. If I'm hanging out with Shaykh Khalil, or Shaykh Kaftaro, or Shaykh Osman Sirajuddin an-Naqshband, only one of which is still alive, then it's different than hanging out with you guys sometimes. If that's what you are doing, I will know it. I will know it from your attitude, from your *adab*, from the questions you ask,

from the work you choose to do. I will know it from the way you respond when you are asked to do something.

Life becomes a series of unlearning things, so I'm now embarked on the unlearning, grumpiness thing. Allah says in a *hadith quds*, which implies the Hu is a function of the sound of Allah, the ground note, the sound behind the universe. The essence of a secret is unveiled in this *hadith qudsi*: ***“My slave does not cease to draw near to Me through devotions of his free will, until I love him. And when I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand by which he grasps, and the foot upon which he walks.”*** It was reported by Imam Bukhari. It tells you a lot. It tells you about an interplay between Allah Swt and the seeker, one that is by the will of the individual. It's the link pin between the *tanziah* / transcendent and the *tashbih*/the imminent, between *fana*/ annihilation and the kind of seeming reality of life, of beingness.

It says, *“Words that are written on the shore of the sea of non-existence.”* Shaykh Abul Hasan of Shadhili (ra) said, *“Tears shed on the shore of the seas of non-existence on the words He has written.”* This practice of inner contemplation, visualization, and study, and taking some responsibility during the *dhikr* for your state, while at the same time staying in harmony and balance is a unique process. Do you remember Marshall McLuhan from the 60's? He said, *“The medium is the message.”* The message is not the message. You are watching the television, the news, and you think the message is the news, but it's not the news. In fact, it's even much deeper than that. It's the cultural, historical, almost tribal way in which we receive information that gives value to what appears to be the message. But the medium itself is what people identify with.

He was a voice crying in the wilderness in the 60's. If you read it today, it would make perfect sense to you. He was saying that how you interface with the medium has a lot to do with what you are going to get out of the message. You know that. If you interface with Fox News, you've already made certain tribal mentality choices. It represents certain things to you. You hear someone through the medium say that Barak Obama is a communist, or a socialist, which someone said to Chris Mathews the other day. He said, "Okay, well, tell me what a communist is." "Well, you know what a communist is." He said, "I may think I know, but what you do think it is?" "Well, you know. Just study up!" "Where should I study?" "Just study up! He's a communist." "Where do you get that information?" "It's the truth!"

The medium is the message, because the message has no meaning without the medium you have bought into. In the same way, in a positive sense, if you understand the depth and profoundness of this ground note of Hu, and the medium of recitation, reflection, *muraqabah*, and what has been revealed in the Qur'an, the message becomes clear. When you see that the message is negative, you can understand that the people are listening to the wrong medium. They are listening to the Taliban or something. They are a medium, not a message. They have no message. Just like that lady on Chris Mathews. The message is she doesn't like black people who are President of the United States. That's the message. She's a racist; it's as simple as that. And it would be much better if that were what she said.

The manipulation of the medium is very important. Allah is telling you that when you draw near to Him through the devotions of your own choice... not through some teenage, immature, "I don't want to do it because I'm supposed to do it. My parents told me to do it, and I was raised this way, so I don't want to do it." That's our problem if that's what happened. We made a big mistake somewhere, because the medium of the *dhikr* and the community, of love and our faith should be a real

strong foundation for children or new students to say, “Yes, well, this is what I have been seeking.” We are neither MSNBC nor Fox News. In fact, we always speak from the Sufic point of view of being at the crossroads. Politically, you might be one thing; but spiritually, you are at the crossroads, the nexus.

The practice of inner contemplation, *fikr* and *muraqabah*, and visualization, watching the breath go in and out, seeing light in the name of Allah touching your *latā'if*, writing in gold light on *qalb*, these are not methodologies. It looks like a methodology, but you have to understand the purpose of it. The purpose of all of that is to re-establish your association with your essence, your *rūh*. For those who want to see themselves, or see for themselves, Allah is telling us that the way you do that is you choose to do the practice, and you give it. If you give 4 years, or 6 years, or 8 years to college and graduate school, or 10 years or more to a certain type of work, of 15 years to dance or piano playing or whatever it is, why not give that to your spiritual practice, because that's guaranteed by Allah? Simply said, “Say ‘Allah’ and you will see wonders.” “Allah.” I didn't see a wonder. Come on, everybody say “Allah.” Did you see a wonder? Or you commit yourself and say, “It's wonderful to see you, Shaykh.” Pfft. HOW do you say it? Where is it coming from?

Really, there has to be some *muhasabat*. You have to seek repentance. We have to ask Allah to forgive us and have mercy on us, because Allah knows what there is to know. It's as if there are two worlds. The Qur'an says, “**There are two seas that meet, yet between them is a barrier, a *barzakh*, that they don't pass through each other.**” Did you ever see the video of two seas meeting on Youtube? *Haa mim. Haa mim. Haa mim.* You win; you don't lose the meaning of life. You win over difficulties, because Allah said, “**Over Us they shall not triumph. Haa mim.**” Allah sends down the Qur'an from Himself, His might, knowingness, compassion, mercy, love, His forgiveness, His receptivity to our repentance, His forbearance, until

you realize that the foundation of absolutely everything is sent to us, or at the foundation of our own existence.

In other words, the medium through which Allah Swt operates has been His creation. The message is given to His creation; yet, all of it is linked back. No God but Him, to Him is the returning. In the name of Allah, *Bismi-Llāh*, is our door (from Hizb ul Bahr). Bless the walls. Ya Siin is our ceiling, *kāf ha ya ain sād* is our sufficiency. *Haa mim ain siin kaaf* is our shelter. What does that mean? It's not just a metaphor. This is a structure, a medium through which you will receive if you pay attention. "Ah, well, it's late. I haven't had dinner yet. I'm tired. I just got back from a trip. What should I do?" I was running a slight fever tonight. I had some concern, since I just had surgery, but we did *dhikr*. I went back to the office, and my 99.4 became 98.9. *Alhamduli-Llāh*, you say. What does it mean?

I made a good choice. I made a choice consistent with what I try to speak. I may fail a thousand times, but if I make one good choice, and understand that choice, it may count for 900 of those thousand failures. Do you really understand that and believe that? The children understand that. You have a tool. A tool is not just a computer. There is a big difference between a computer and what it does, and the information in it. Allah is sufficient for us against them, 'the other.' He hears and knows all. We say that. Allah is sufficient; yet, a veil is dropped over us. Behind that veil, we say the eye of Allah is gazing at us. Allah is behind everything. Indeed, when we recite the Qur'an you are reciting what has already been written on the *mahfudh*, the tablet.

If we recite certain things, not one time, but remember to say it a second time; and then say it a third time, or enough times that we are having to choose to say it more, as opposed to just (snaps fingers) repeating it, you get to the point where you are choosing to say it. Do you know what I mean by that? You are not just saying it

because it's on a sheet of paper. You are choosing to say it, to spend more time with *durūd sharif* or with the *khatm*. "I put my trust in Allah." They have meaning when you repeat them. "I put my trust with Allah. There is no power and no force but with Allah." **There is no force and no power except with Allah, the High, the Mighty.** That's what Hizb ul Bahr does, as you know. The recitation is a medium through which these words are dynamic and organic, and they are open to receive intentions, and then distribute the power, and the beauty, and the force, and the *baraka*/ blessing of the names, which makes our recitation very distinct. Go back and do the recitation.

Someone goes to a doctor, and when the doctor's out of the room, the person looks up a drug in the Physician's Desk Reference (PDR). Then that person takes one of the doctor's prescription pads, writes himself a prescription, scribbles the doctor's name on it, and takes it to the pharmacy, because he thought that drug would fit him. If it was homeopathic, nothing would happen. But it's allopathic, so the person dies. What was the medium in all that? Ask yourself. There are attitudes. This is sort of 'systems theory' in a certain way. There are attitudes we bring into everything. If you would stop for a second and think, "What's my attitude? What's my prejudice? What's my bias? What's my preference, my desire, my inclination that I bring to this *dars*, the political circus I've been watching on tv, the people at work, the subject at school; if you really take the time to ask yourself where that attitude is coming from, [you would learn something].

You don't even think it is an attitude.... it's natural! But it's not natural. It may be your nature, but it's not natural. It's been created. That's why we say that putting ourselves in an environment that is created for refinement, *at-tazkiyat*, is a purifying environment. But if you don't believe it, even a little bit, you are never going to do it. You may sit in meditation. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, you do your practices or come to the *halkah*,

whatever you do, you have to come with a certain mind and soul that is alive. In the same way, your soul can die. It can become very ill with doubts and arrogance or preferences and desires. Think about living for one day this week without any preferences and desires, or at least noting every one of them. One day! Let's say you live a hundred years (36,500 days). One day you say, I'm going to live without my preferences. I am just going to note every preference, and weigh everything from the point of view of its value, of its efficacy, of its meaningfulness and purpose. I'm going to eat a good breakfast, because its purpose is to make me healthy. That's fine. Do you understand? See how many things stick out where you don't have an answer.

"Well, what's wrong with having preferences, Shaykh?" Nothing, if you know why you have them, where they came from, and what they are. Are they good preferences? Are they preferences that really give you freedom, and are going to provide you with what you need? And what you need correlates with what you want? And what you are going to use well? Try it. Who will try it? Anyone who is not going to try it, do you want to tell me why? You don't believe in what I'm saying? You don't believe it's right? You don't think you can do it? You don't think it's worth anything? The goal of it isn't what your goal in life is? What is the reason why you won't try?

Let me tell you the medium for a great message. It's called "*hizb*." Are you familiar with that word? All the *ahzab* have a quality and a purpose. They cause a spiritual well-being in the person who recites them or who is directed toward them. They eventually affect one's *nasm* / light / aura. Hazrat used to say that if you do Hizb ul Bahr at the same time every day, and you do it sincerely, after 1 year you start to become an *alim* of it. Then you start to do the recitations. What is this *nasm* / aura? It means you are adorned with lights, *nūr*. These lights are *baraka* / blessings. They glow with a kind of attraction that draws from within ourselves something that

Allah placed in us of reason and understanding, of faith and trust and submission, of gratitude and humility. They begin to be drawn out by the light, just like the moth is drawn to the light. They are seen in the unseen world. You see with these lights, like you see with a flashlight. You see things differently. They attract you with a kind of meaningfulness. Even though you read each of the *‘āyat*, you don’t know how they fit together. But when you put them together, it’s like the filament in the light bulb. It makes it glow when you put the electric charge through it. They attract the beauty; they attract you, and they make you attractive.

In fact, even if Hameed or Emad would do any of these *hizbs* really seriously, with real *iman*, girls would find them very attractive. Then we would be telling them how to beat the girls off! Or if you want a husband, or a wife, or something. That’s not the reason to do it. That’s just what happens; the light is so bright it attracts. This is the light of Sidna Yusuf (as). This is the light that attracted me to my Shaykh, and hopefully you to me. Your *nasm* / aura begins to glow, because you have a cause. If you are a synthese, like Safiyya seems to be partly, you can smell the light. You can taste it. Look at Sayyida Musa (ra) after he came from Mount Sinai. First came the Jamal, then came the Jelal. What happened is that *nūr*, what we call a heavenly light, makes the *rūh* glow like fiber optics.

That light, that Divine light, is not just light; it’s words. If the oceans were ink, you still couldn’t write anything as beautiful as the Qur’an. You can look at it and say, “Well, it’s just letters on a page.” In fact, Allah said that the day will come when the Qur’an will just be words on a page. It loses light because there is no one with light attracting the light from it. You may think, it should be the other way around, that the Qur’an should attract the light from the person. The person has to be open to it. They have to be willing, not controlling, not deciding this or that. “I want the light

that only attracts beautiful, dark skinned Indian girls, who are 5'6" and wear dangly earrings." That's not light. It is stupidity.

Give it to Allah! You think Allah doesn't know what is in your heart? Allah is your heart. It's like going to a perfume shop, and spraying perfume all over yourself, and a beautiful smell comes. But you walk out, and someone starts gagging (especially if you came here with it, with all the allergies to perfumes). You don't go into a perfume shop and spray everything on you, do you? What do you do? When I go to buy perfume, I take some coffee beans in my pocket. I ask them for a little card, and carefully spray on the card, and I smell it like this. Then I put it away, and I take some coffee beans, and smell the coffee beans, because coffee beans negate the smell. You don't spray yourself with all kinds of perfumes...in dunya, maybe.

When I went to university, and I was pledging a fraternity (before I went through hell week, decided it was hell, and didn't want to be with crazy people like that), Larry Levy had the answer. If you wear Canoe, the girls go absolutely crazy. They love Canoe. Do any of you remember Canoe? Did you girls like it? Yes, girls go crazy for Canoe. I'm not sure what the medium was or the message in that was, other than the fact that if you believe the girls were going to go crazy, you might have been halfway there. Larry Levy used to bathe in Canoe. I guess he did that so he would outshine anybody else wearing a little bit of Canoe. Jay Fingeret also wore Canoe, and I remember very distinctly that he stole Ellen Edelstein away from me in my freshman year. I'm still angry at that...! (Laughs, some more memories). It was the worst Christmas I ever spent in my life, and I didn't have my Canoe. What's the point? I have no idea!

What attracts us toward Allah, and what brings the light out in us, and what brings the light out in the Qur'an, not just studying it (yes, you should study it), not just reading it (yes, you should be able to read it), not just reading *tafsir* of it (yes, you should read *tafsir* and get that intellectual understanding), but the light of the Qur'an is not in the words. The words are the medium through which the light reaches you, each letter, each brush stroke. Then that light comes on in you, and you become a medium of light for others. The words become very powerful words. When one of the *shuyukh* or *ambiyā* speak, the words are powerful words because they were given in a state of *hal*. They came to the point where they were in the presence of Allah, and these *hizbs* that we do (Hizb ul Fath, Hizb ul Nasr, and then Hizb ul Bahr and others), these *ahzab*, come from that Presence.

The *awliya-Llāh* are beautiful to look at. Their *dhikr* is beautiful. The *hizb* shines in their faces. We used to go to one saint in India. They used to say that his body when he was alive, when you stood next to him, you would smell roses. Also, now you smell it at his tomb. Many people say that of these *wali* of Allah. These lights and smells attract the angels, as well as the good *jinn*. If you are not connected, if you don't have the connection between yourself and the *awliya-Llāh*, and the *ambiyā*, you are not protected. You are not protected in the *ghaib*, in the unseen part of the world, in the inner part of yourself. Hizb ul Bahr is very, very powerful, as we know, because in it is contained Allah's hidden name, as well as other very powerful words and '*āyāt*, that give off a special spiritual light that affects the reader.

Hizb ul Bahr calls upon the unseen world for help and protection. Now you understand that you are not just reading something. There are things buried in them, if they are buried, or obvious, if they are obvious to your eyes. It becomes very complicated, in a way, if you make it that way. But if you gratefully open up the Hizb ul Bahr, or the Hizb ul Nasr that we are going to start today, or the Hizb ul Fath, and

you come to it understanding that it is a medium for a very subtle message it will transform you, and provide for you, and make light come out in you, and attraction in you, then you have to be careful what you attract. I said to the girls over the years, and I said to Saara at the beginning of her relationship with Mansur: you have a lot of light. Be careful. You have to know the other person, and understand what they believe, and who they are. You have to try hard to understand what is at the core of their being. Where do they get light from? If they are getting it only from you, it will drain you, because you are not the source of the light.

Yet, that light, when it comes through you, gives you such strength. How many months now have you ladies been serving Khadija? How many years now for your mother, your wife? How many months serving and helping Musa? You think you are the source of that light? No, and what I am afraid of is depleting the bank account. Because just being, like it or not, in *suhbat* in this community [you receive light]. We know it's true, because hundreds of people have come down that driveway (even the UPS man), and seen the light and felt the light, and they don't even know what it is. So don't poo-poo it. Ask yourself: how am I keeping my bank account filled? Where is my source?

By the way, nobody can just pick up the Hizb ul Bahr and read it. Even if you can buy it off at Shaykh Nooruddeen's table at his lectures. We don't do it. He knows and I know, and all the *shuyukh* know, you have to be given it. You can go to a shaykh and say, "I just bought this, Shaykh. How do I do this?" Then maybe you will be given it. We have more restrictions on it. *Alhamdulillah-Llāh*. What are you plugged in to? When you have a disease or an illness, when you have to go through surgery like I did, believe me, the energy shifts, and patterns shift, and you use up a lot. *Alhamdulillah-Llāh*, I'm very excited about this talk tonight. *Alhamdulillah-Llāh*, I don't think I have a fever now. But I never had to think about it before for 40 years. I get

sick every once in a while, you know that. But I always show up if I physically can, don't I? Why? Is it just my job? You should ask yourself why [I do that]. That's why you ask yourself, if for no other reason, then to remember what you already know. The Sufi path is the path of *dhikr*, of remembrance, not just saying "Allah, Allah." But understanding: "**Am I not your Lord?**" What does that mean? We will come back to that.

Take this *hizb* very seriously. If you are reading it once a day, because the Shaykh said we must do 360, *alhamdulillah*, do that. Try to be open to its light. Try to see who you are. Try to see where your preferences are tomorrow. See if you can make space for the Hizb ul Bahr and the Hizb ul Nasr, from a new point of view, and see what it does. You may be surprised who will call you, run into you, bump into you, remind you. "Oh, who's that person? Why are you like that?" I'm not just talking about the young men and women here. I'm talking about even some of you old fogeys. You will be surprised who is attracted to the light. *Asalaam aleikum*.