



Our Responsibility to Know Allah Is Near
And not Delay in Calling on Allah's Guidance

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm. Allah tells us in the Holy Qur'an:

When My worshipers ask you about Me, so know that I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls Me, so let them respond to Me and believe in Me so that they may be rightly guided.

There are many interesting clues in here about our responsibility to ask about Allah Swt, and to know that He is near. He answers the call when we call to Allah, but first we have to respond to Allah Swt and believe in Allah Swt. In that way we get the response and hear the response to our own call. Allah Swt also in Surah al-A'raf says:

We never sent a prophet to any town without trying its people with misfortune and hardship so that they may be humbled. Then We replace the bad with the good. So that the community strived and said to themselves, "Our forefathers were touched with both hardship and affluent ease, so why should we worry?" Then We seized them all when they were least aware. It goes on and says: And if the people of the townships had believed and guarded themselves for Allah, surely We would have opened blessings from the heavens and the earth for them, but they denied every messenger and prophet. So We seized them because of what they earned.

And do the people of the townships feel secure from Our wrath coming in the form of a night wave when they are sleeping? Or do the people of the township feel secure from Our wrath coming to them while they are playing games in the light of the day? Then do they feel secure from the designs of Allah? None believe themselves secure from the designs of Allah save the people who are already lost.

Yes, I'm sure that raises a lot of questions. Some of whom we will begin to try to address, *inshā'a-Llāh*. It touches on the subject we have been talking about from another point of view, the awareness of the *naima* and the *fadl* of Allah, and the bounty of Allah, a concept of our choosing. The idea I want to put forward to you is, if you really want to understand why Allah gives us choice, and why none of our plans are worth anything outside the plan of Allah (the *tadbir* of Allah), and why He gives us the ability to plan for ourselves, it's only to see that none of our choices and plans are worth anything outside the plan of Allah Swt. That means also outside the capacities, outside the design of Allah Swt.

If you were an architect and designed a very fancy building, maybe one designed with the building smaller at the bottom than at the top, if you go outside the design, it might not stand up. Sometimes you have to create adjustments to the design also, but you have to get an engineer in there to do that. We had to do that when we built our house. We had to replace a beam in our house. The engineer said, "No, that's not going to work. It won't be stable. You have to do this kind of a beam, not that kind of a beam." So we had to replace the beam. You need expertise and knowledge; keep that in mind. By planning, and choosing, and seeing the results of that planning and choosing, even in the best of our plans, there are elements we have no control over and knowledge we don't have.

Even in the best of our choosing, there are aspects upon which we have to humble ourselves, and realize that Allah Swt has given us choice and abilities, if for nothing else, to make us humble, and to realize that we are ourselves in that design and in the context of Allah. Therefore, the things that add to our self-deception and complacency are many. One of which is the state of delaying, until delaying becomes the norm for us. There are two types of people who delay. The first one delays in involving themselves in obedience to Allah Swt. The second group delays in seeking the real truth about Allah and the message of the Prophet (sal) – indeed, the message of all the messengers. Both of these aspects of delaying are due to the lack of a real deep desire for what is true.

We would rather interpret what is true by our own prejudices and preferences. We put forward what we believe is true, and pursue that without any kind of delay – and I might add, with a great deal of energy and dispatch. We don't delay to do the things we want to do. When was a time you delayed something you really, really wanted to do, that you could do in that moment? We delay to do the things that we feel will take us away from what we want to do, what we prefer to do. So we pursue with dispatch our choices, and delay following Allah's will for us, out of the fear that if we are patient with Allah's will, we will find that it is the amount of time necessary to be patient, instead of pushing things too fast. When we are patient with the will of Allah, it's not delaying. When we delay being patient with Allah's will, that's when we are misguided. When we go to pursue with energy and dispatch what we want to do, we in a sense delay the will of Allah to be fulfilled.

Remember the story about Allah sending Jibreel to help someone who was crying out for help. He came immediately back, and Allah said, "Did you help him?" And Jibreel said, "No, because he was still throwing stones at the enemy while he was calling for help. He had not fully submitted." When we pursue with dispatch what

we want to do, and delay the will of Allah, then what happens is we are misusing capacity and capability and time. We've talked recently about *waqt*, *zaman* and *maqam*, and understand why those things are important. If one desires Allah, Allah says He desires the person who desires Him. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, ***"The one who loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him."*** In a *hadith quds*, Allah said: ***"If My servant approaches Me a handspan, I will approach him an arms' length. If he comes to Me walking, I will come to him running. I am the companion of one who calls Me. No matter where he asks for Me, he will find Me."***

This is not only due to the *naima*/ grace and beneficence of Allah, but these '*āyāt*' are an indication of the necessity of our action and intention not to delay. The question is do we have the courage to call upon Allah Swt for right guidance? Do we have the presence of mind to see in the moment what is possible, and then listen, and follow the response. People choose rather not to call, or to call in the form of saying, "O Allah, give me this right now." They make something happen, thinking Allah's imprimatur is on it. But Allah's imprimatur is on us making choices and providing for ourselves, until we realized that we won't get anything without His Will.

We don't have an existence beyond a small measure of time, and that small measure of time should have the blessings of Allah on it, and [we should] make it an eternal pursuit – that is to say, a blessing seeking out eternity in the process. If we abandon what does exist, what has been given to us, what does give us subsistence, what really is sustainable, even though it may be difficult for us in the world to sustain certain things, nonetheless it is the will of Allah that we try. And if we don't try, then we are really of the lost and we are really ignorant. Effort is extremely important: tethering the camel.

When we understand the role of poor people, in terms of *rizq*, for us, we don't want to go empty-handed to the grave or to eternity. We want to make provisions now. The Prophet (sal) was very noted for not storing up food. He was storing up for the Hereafter. He knew that all of the *rizq* came from Allah, so he didn't have to store up. Not because he lived around the corner from some kind of a good grocery store or Trader Yusef's. We don't want to be ignorant and under the control of our *nafsi*. If you know what you have in your hand is gold, then why would you trade it for a stone? If someone tells you the worthless stone is worth something, you would throw the gold away and take two handfuls of what is worthless. It's the way human nature works. If we see all the time in ourselves and others this kind of mentality and behavior, we are the ones who have to change it. You can't know the value of something until you learn the value...sometimes until you lose it.

If you don't see what the value of the nearness to Allah is; if you don't see the gifts / *fadl* / bounty that have been bestowed upon us; if you don't see the honor that has been placed upon us, like a crown on our own heads, how will you accept that eH is as near to you as your jugular vein? How will you accept that Allah is present whenever you call? Do we really think that Allah is like a dispensing machine, that we put in a few quarters and get a drink we want? "O Allah, I need You now. Come to me now. Okay, thank You. Now I don't need you anymore, please go away." Or "See what I'm doing? See how good it is, O Allah?" Or, "O Allah, don't look at what I'm doing right now." That's not the way it is. Allah Swt is present and we can accept that Allah is present, and it comes to you according to your sincerity and it comes to you quickly. The real is nearer to our self than our own self.

Allah is nearer to us than our *nafs*, but our *nafs* becomes more real to us. The quality of the seeker, of the sincere human being, the *murīd* or *murīda*, by whatever title

they are called, delaying their search for the attunement to that Divine Presence is like the lazy person who says in perfect Arabic, "Mañana. Later. Tomorrow." What they want from their *nafs*, though, is right now. Don't you think sometimes you are going too fast, that you are pushing too hard? Don't you think there are times when we could be more patient? "I've been patient for 22 years! I want it now!" Thirty years is how much of a day. Do you want to do that calculation based on the formula I gave you the other night – a blink of an eye? In one day, that tomorrow is the end of our days. If we go to our grave patient, it's better than if we go to our grave demanding something.

"Allah Swt desires the servant more than the servant desires Allah." Ghaus Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani said, *"The Real told me, 'I am an excellent invoker, and the invoked is an excellent man. If man knew his dwelling with Me, he would say with each breath, "To whom does this kingdom belong today?"'"* What stops us from arriving at that point, if nothing but our own delaying? We think we have plenty of time. We think we control time. We think we understand what we need and when we need it. We think we understand how to provide for ourselves, yet everyone of us would deny that. "Of course I don't control time! Of course it's all given to me by Allah." But it ticks by, and we think we have time. How can we have it, if we don't control it? How can we have it, if it's not our time that we own?

There are those who delay by clothing themselves in obedience and rituals and rites. There seem to be those who are in conformity with their destiny to some degree. But it's only in conformity sometimes with the desire of their own *nafs*. The fact is, the quotation from Surah al-Baqarah is very important: **"And when My servants question you concerning Me, surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls Me."** Be patient. You know the story, "I came to your door, but you didn't give Me water." Maybe the answer comes in the voice of

someone else. "I called but I didn't hear Allah's answer." But your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your friend, your own conscience answers you. And that is Allah's answer. They all will be consistent if it's really the right answer. The good people, and your heart, and your soul, and your dear brother and sister who love you, will always give you the same answer if it's a true answer.

We should read Qur'an every day. We should read a good *tafsir*. It tells us the position Allah has placed himself in us. We should make our *du'ā*, and try to question where we are against what our destiny is or should be. But in Islam we have many ways of doing that. It tells us that by asking, praying, or supplicating, we can come near to Allah Swt who is as near to us as our jugular vein. The more we pray, the more we supplicate, the more our life becomes obedient. The less we delay. Indeed, we find that the most pious people, especially those who do a lot of supplication, find it very, very efficacious and easy and important to do that, as well as being in the company of believers—not to wander away from those who are believers. To keep good company, in other words.

If we see an opportunity to better our material life, the tendency is to rush toward that opportunity. When we sit in community, with the opportunity we have to do things, we see how we want to grasp those opportunities. We find that we rush here and there for many things. We think we are doing good work, and that everything we are doing is going to work out just fine. We prepare, we plan, we provide all the time with information and effort, and then something changes. And we have to come back again with the same energy, and the same intention, and the same love. It can be a postponed trip for Legacy. It can be a plan that has to change because of someone's health, or a plan for something that needs to be done in the community, but there are no finances for it, so we have to adjust and be creative.

What else can we think when we make *muhasabat*? We ask ourselves, “What credence did I put in my planning? And what credence did I put in Allah? How can I follow the path in a way that is totally consistent with His Will? What am I banking on in this situation?” In seeking the Real, the least we can do is rush as fast to the Real as we do to things of this world. In seeking the company and awareness of Allah, the least we can do is to exert ourselves in the same way we exert ourselves for material things, the things of our desires. The truth is we had better find some balance inside and outside of ourselves. Remember what Ibn Araby (rah) used to say: “*If you read one hour, pray two hours, and meditate four hours.*” There is a formula. Who of us can do that?

We have to seek to exert ourselves in the manner of these *awliya-Llāh*, in the manner we know in our heart and soul we should be. It may not be until today, or tomorrow, or next week, or next year; but we should be exerting every day the effort. If we are secure with that effort in the same way that we try to find security in the material world; if we are secure in the idea and principles of what is right, then Allah will help us and assist us and answer our call. The people who deny that are told very clearly, they are the ones who are of the lost. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, we will find that sufficiency ourselves and make the effort to understand how to best fulfill our destiny and our capacity. *Asalaam aleikum.*