

December 25, 2008

Thursday

Title: [When Allah Doesn't Answer Our Prayers](#)

DVD title: Between the Request and Its Granting is a Space for Reflection  
Tafsir on the 94<sup>th</sup> Aphorism of Askandari (ra)

I want to continue from where we left off last night and if you have not heard last night for some reason, you should hear last night, a *tafsir* on the Hikam [of Askandari (ra)]. I also want to address the question that was brought up last night, because it is directly related. I reminded you that the subject is like trying to hold water in the hand: all you get is a wet hand. It slips out of your fingers very quickly.

Imam Ali Hazrat Ali (ra) said: “*When we say something and it happens, we are made happy once. However, when it does not happen or occur, we are ten times more happy.*”

This is based on, of course, his faith and his knowledge and his state in ‘*ubūdīya*/servanthood, submission, to say and to understand that everything in this whole universe and in all the universes is by the *qadar* of Allah (Swt), pre-determined by Allah (Swt) and consequently our *qadr*, our faith, including what we are able to do and what we are not able to do, what we are capable of doing and what we are not capable of doing, all of our wisdom and all of our ignorance. Allah says: “**Surely We have created everything by pre-determined means/destiny.**” And He says: “**And you do not even intend except by the will of Allah, by Allah’s intention.**”

We find in the Shar’īah, in the complete Shar’īah, that there are things that are encouraged and things that are discouraged, things that are praised and things that are condemned, not because of some whimsical reason, but because of the eventual

consequences of those things, the results of those things. You may not see [the results of] them right away, but [they will be] in the reality, in the system that is Allah's (Swt) reality, or Truth, Haqq. [That is] when we say Allah knows the result of this, the consequence of this. So things that are withheld and not withheld (and we will talk about that more today, in the 94<sup>th</sup> aphorism of the Hikam of Ibn At'ala Askandari (ra)) are withheld, not to teach us a lesson directly (even though I gave you examples of parenting yesterday, like a parent teaches a child), but because in the interim between granting certain things and the hiatus between the request and the grant, the desire and the realization of the desire, there is an opportunity for reflection. There is an opportunity for changing of one's mind or state.

Allah says, “**Allah does not change a circumstance until a person changes their self,**” right? But there is predetermination. But there is a space. There is a time, hiatus, and there is a space by which choices can be made based on what has been revealed as that which will guide you to the good outcome. Call that Shar'iah. It will guide you to the good outcome because it is a path. It is a well-trodden path. It is a road through the wilderness. Because it is a road through the wilderness, and we have the choice to take it, Allah gives us the time/*zaman*, to make a decision, *maqam*, to act, in a way. If we learn, if we absorb the way of Allah (Swt), if we absorb the Haqq, if we are attuned, if we are in a state of remembrance of Allah (Swt), that hiatus and that opportunity is seized in a moment/*waqt*.

Every moment we are correcting our course, just like the GPS is correcting our course every moment “recalculating,” “recalculating,” “recalculating” Why? Because either we made a mistake or we decided to go against the will of the GPS, because we know better. Our sense of direction [tells us,] “I've done this before. I know another route.” We don't have faith in the GPS. I don't have faith in the Garmen. It screws up. But there are

higher levels of it, like the pilot works better ,and also it takes into account satellite information about traffic and accidents. You give it more trust because it has more knowledge. It has more information than I have. Prove to me. Right? Allah knows in the moment. But we are given a choice.

Things are withheld or given not to teach us a lesson. [They are] not to *not* teach us a lesson, because we should learn from everything, but that is not the motivation, if I can be so heretical to say the motivation of Allah. But we assume that this is not the motivation of Allah (Swt), to teach us a lesson, because all life is a lesson, including (as we talked about last night) the failures to adjust our attitude, because if you go here, this track goes there. If you go here, this track goes there. If you go here and there and then here and then there, this track goes there. And against the reality of time/*zaman* called life, you have only a measured amount of time to get to a certain place. But then there is also the Rahmat of Allah, the Raheem, the mercy of Allah, Who can give you a pardon, if you will, time off for good behavior. If your *niyyat* is good, that can all shift. But you cannot plan on that because the parole board or the pardon board are iffy kind of people.

So you try to do it right and stay on the *siratal mustaqīm*, the path that goes from here to there, and there and there and there, point after point after point after point ad infinitum in the realm of goodness, in the realm of contentment, in the realm of peace, in the realm of love, in the realm of mercy—Jannah. [It is] one unveiling after another of the beauty of Jamali Jalali of Allah, the continuum of beauty and majesty. However, it is not that Allah (Swt) or the system itself has no preferences. Allah (Swt) created us, and said that those who are the nearest and the dearest are those who in their hearts love Him. Why would an unfeeling God care? There is a preference in the system. It is not preference like human beings have preferences, but there is a preferred means, a preferred attitude, a preferred course. Because ease is part of what Allah (Swt) has imbued this reality or the

system with—the potential for ease. Everything is designed for that, even hardship, **“Inna ma’al usri usra.”**

What disrupts the measure and the balance and the harmony, the *mīzān* of the system, is when you or I do not agree with [or like] the plan/*tadbīr*. What that means is not “I like or I don’t like,” but what diverts us from that path, that goes against the system, just like when you are holding a gyroscope in your hand and you turn your hand this way and it tries to pull your hand that way. You feel the resistance of the system that you are now a part of. You are now part of the gyroscope’s system. You have attached yourself to the gyroscope, and you are trying to keep it straight, and it is turning your hand this way and it is resisting. But it is not really resisting, is it? It is trying to correct. It is trying to correct the movement to keep it balanced, to keep you level, to keep your horizon in front of you, to keep your horizon right, just like [the GPS,] “Recalculating.” Allah tries to disable us from doing those things that will be eventually destructive or disharmonious, inharmonious to us.

In the same way we can say that Shaytan is trying to disable us from doing the service of Allah (Swt) The lower nature, which is making these choices, which is not according to the Shar’īah, making these choices which are diversions, let’s call that the Shaytan. The lower nature, the *nafs ammāra* is trying to disable our gyroscope. And praiseworthy planning, *alhamdulillah*, with *hamd*, is that which keeps us in balance or leads us to the nearness, or to the happiness, or the joy, or the pleasure of Allah (Swt)—but not pleasure as we understand pleasure, but harmony. When we are totally immersed, totally engrossed in planning and choosing, we are putting blinders over our eyes. We are absent from the *basīra*, the insight. But when we execute our plan according to the will of Allah, to the guidance of Allah (Swt) according to the Shar’īah, for example (which we call making *istikhāra*), when you are trying to keep in balance and to the will of Allah, *istikhāra*, and

helped through reliance of Allah (Swt), then the eye is open, the insight is open. We see through the eyes of *basīra*.

We have all had the experience that we have wanted something that is right in front of our face. Or we have had the experience of looking for something that is right in front of our eyes. “Where did I put that? Where did I put that? Can’t find it. Can’t find it.” “It is right there!” “Oh. How did I miss that?” And we are born with it. The baby is crying, crying, crying. The milk is right there in front of his face. Crying, crying, crying, as if, “Where is the milk? Where is the milk? Where is the milk?” “Is it not chocolate milk tonight? No more cream?” These are bad choices. “Can I have Pepsi instead of coke?” Allah provides. That is why it is so sad when you see the baby that is crying and has no breast to feed off of, because human choice has caused the separation of mother from child. Or disease has caused this or poverty has caused it—things that are in our control and that Allah has given us control over. Poverty and food and safety and security Allah has given us control over.

But we have squandered the gift, striving for what has already been decreed for us and guaranteed for us. It was all provided only because of our own negligence, because what is demanded of us is adherence to that path. If you want this, this is the road that goes from here to there. If we are negligent, if we do not do that or follow that, the proof [of the need for the adherence to the path] is the loss of our *basīra*, our insight. It is spiritual macular degeneration. There is the swift kind and there is the slower kind. But when Allah (Swt) wants to open and illuminate a person’s inner sight, Allah engages us in life, engages with us in our external life. Allah, or the system, says: “Okay. I will help you. I will assist you.” All the assistance will be there for you if you make the right choices. Even the difficulties, even what appear to be the failures, you will begin to see are a means of correction and assistance, even though you feel resistance when you are holding

the gyroscope. If it is in the airplane, you do not feel the resistance to it, if you just follow it. You are going to feel a lot of other things, if you don't. Like fear.

If you engage in life in service to the Provider, then your choices are in alignment with the goal, the purpose of life. So you are planning not to plan for yourself, but you are planning only to plan in harmony with the plan of Allah (Swt). You are walking on the path, and the sign on the path says, "This takes you to wherever you want to go." "This path takes you to Roanoke" or to New York, or whatever. And you say, "I wonder if I can take a short cut this way or that way." You don't know [if there will be] swamps and animals, or people shooting you because you have gone on their property. But you say, "I am an adventurer." There are plenty of adventures on this path, things that make us make choices to continue, to build our character. It is not just about getting from one place to another. That is a metaphor. It is "who gets there."

Who starts off on this path and who is it that ends up there with our name and our experiences? Who is it? Not the person who started off on the path. "Whaaaa," Ahmed is a little baby now. He is going "Whaaaa." Forty years from now, he is no longer a baby. Twenty years from now, he is no longer a baby. He has his name, personality, character. Who is going from here to there? Who started on this journey, ten, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, thirty-eight years ago? Who started on this journey? You? Somebody with your name.

Allah (Swt) is constantly engaging us, saying, "I will engage with you in your life, if you provide service unto Me," meaning: if you continue to do the things that are consistent with this process, with this reality, with this system, with this truth. How do I do that? "Here is the gyroscope. This gyroscope is called love. I am going to put this love inside of you. Every time you deviate from it, you will feel the loss of that love. Every time you

don't deviate from it, you will feel that love grow, that attraction grow, that *jedhbah* grow. You are going to feel relatedness or a relationship with those who are also the lovers of Me, who are in My heart—*nisbat*. That is how you are going to know. You are going trust. You are going to have submission. You are going have joy. You will have pleasures, and loss, and separation, all the things that go along with that love because I am walking this path with you.” But if you make choices that are different from that, because you have the permission to do that, the consciousness and the choice, it is going to delay your arrival. Actually your arrival is really just a transfer. There is only one bus. If you get there too late, you can say, “I got here,” but the bus left. That is a hell of a mess. You are in limbo, in the *barzakh*.

It says that Allah brings disgrace His ‘*abd*, His servant by occupying that person with things of the world and serving the world. [He] places that person’s love only inside that person’s own selfish self, only inside their self. The servant stays in that position until Allah eventually destroys that person’s *basīra*, and now they are blind. Now not only do you have eyes and you are not seeing, you don’t have eyes. You are blind and you cannot see.

I am going to continue with that part later. I hope that is somewhat an answer to the question that was raised last night because I want to continue and go on to the 94<sup>th</sup> aphorism in which Ibn At’ala Askandari (ra) says, “*Depravation hurts you only because of the lack of your understanding of the God with it, or in it.*” You don’t see the Divine Presence in what you are being deprived or your state of deprivation. Things which are withheld cause us unhappiness because we don’t understand the meaning or the reason for why it is being withheld. Do you see the parallel here? We are thinking that we have to understand why it is being withheld, and so we become obsessed with what is being withheld and with the idea of it being withheld; whereas, if we are following along the

Shar'īah and the *tadbīr* of Allah instead of our own *tadbīr*, then we are not going to be so dismayed by that seeming withholding.

Comprehending/*fahm* the will of Allah is not intellectually understanding. It is something one acquires along the way, a comprehension of what the purpose is, of what Allah's (Swt) intention is, if you will. What the reality is, if I follow this way, if I go in this direction, if I walk on this path, if I submit to that direction, if I submit to the direction (not just North, south, East, West, but to the direction, the instruction), then I will understand why these circumstances are happening while they are happening, because they are correctives, and reminders. That is *fahm*/comprehension. It is not just understanding, but comprehending the meaning. Sometimes we are given things because of our acts of disobedience. Opportunities are given to us to gain strength, to gain character, to repent. All of these are to build character.

And sometimes we are given things because of our acts of obedience and trust. But when we start to think that the Shaytan or the *naḥs ammāra* or the *shaytans* in us are so strong that we are never going to make progress, we are never going to improve our state, then we are going to stop the journey. We are going to find all these reasons: "I think I will just retire here. I like this swamp. It really is a nice swamp. The mosquitoes are great. I am going to retire here." But sometimes, even an act of disobedience is a blessing by Allah (Swt), because the act of disobedience causes pain or difficulties; and those difficulties stop us from going further. They may cause fear in us. They may cause illness in us. They may cause second thoughts. They stop us from going further astray. So they are really blessings.

This helps us correct ourselves and get back on the path of our *taqdīr*. So we have to look at the long range view. I list a thousand mistakes I made and a thousand things I would

do differently. Would I do them different? Probably not. But do they have an effect on how I do things in the future? Probably do. When you look at the long range view, you see that you became more and more a servant, more and more a trusting, willing obedient servant. To the degree that you kept your *basīra*, to the degree that you kept on the path, to the degree you were not justifying everything and deviating, to the degree that you were not thinking you were in control of it, to the degree that you are in submission to Allah (or to part of that reality, or to part of that universal system, or truth) and trying and striving in your *jihad al akbar* to stay on the path, you find that your *adab* increased, your servanthood increased. With that, your love of Allah increased, because you realized that all of that and everything that happened is for your benefit. How do you know it is for your benefit? Because you want it to be. That is your *niyyat*. That is your intention. That is your will; really, that is what you really want, and that is what you are committed to even though you fail a hundred times or a thousand times.

The next time, *insh'allah*, I will speak on the next aphorism, which is “Sometimes He opens the door of obedience to you, but not the door of acceptance, or sometimes He condemns you to sin and it turns out to be a cause of arriving to Him, or afflicts you with sin and it turns out to be the means to reach to Allah (SwT).” *Asalām aleikum*.