

February 19, 2009

Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Be Present In the Moment: Remember.](#)

DVD title: Four Ways of Finding Oneself  
with Guidance from the Qur'an Revealed for Us Today

*Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem.* In the Shadhili path, Abul Hasan Shadhili (ra) said that there are four times in which a servant may find himself, of which there is not a fifth, he said. He said that the four ways of finding oneself are: blessing, affliction, obedience, and disobedience, meaning [finding oneself] through blessings, through affliction, through obedience and through disobedience. And in each one of these, there is an aspect of servanthood, which Allah as al-Haqq requires of us just by virtue of His being our Lord, our Rabb—the parallel being, of course, being the Lord and the servant, the master and the servant.

He tells us that if it is the time for obedience, then our path is to witness the grace and the blessings of Allah, the *nai'ma* of Allah, if we are in a state of obedience, because Allah guided us into this obedience and made it possible for us to be obedient. If it is a time of disobedience, then our path is to seek the forgiveness, to make *tawbah*, to seek the forgiveness of Allah (SwT) and repent. This is the role of the servant. If it is a time of blessings, then our path is *shukr*, to give thanks for that blessing and to have peace and to rejoice in that Divine presence. Conversely, if it is a time of affliction, then we have to practice *sabr*. We have to be patient and be content with the degree and endure that infliction. Contentment/*rida* in this case is to break oneself of one's extreme desires and passions. Of course we know the word *sabr* refers also to the word *asbar*, which is a target for the archer. The person who exhibits and finds patience in enduring their

infliction is one who sets himself as a target for the hour of the Divine decree, he says. Then if one is unmoved by them, he or she is said to have patient endurance.

The Prophet (saws) said, *“Those who when they receive, give thanks; and who, when they are inflicted, endure patiently; who, when they are wronged, they forgive; and who, when they are guilty of wrong doing, seek forgiveness.” Then he was silent. And one of the Companions said to him: “What about them, O Messenger? What about these people?” He said, “It is they who shall be secure, since it is they who have found the right path.”* This person who achieves this kind of harmony and this balance, whether they are obeying or disobeying, afflicted or rewarded by Allah (Swt). Then he goes on and tells that there are also those who will find security in the after life and in the earthly life because they are rightly guided. The Prophet (sal) goes on and says, *“People belong to one of two groups. Those who by virtue of Allah’s favor have arrived to a state of obedience to God, and those who by virtue of their obedience to God, have experienced God’s favor. As Allah has declared, ‘Glory be to Him, God draws unto Himself everyone who is willing and guides onto Himself everyone who turns towards Him.’”*

That is why we not only find in ourselves at different times different attitudes, but we find different types of people. The ones in whom Allah places a kind of strength and determination in their heart and soul to reach or to strive to reach awareness of that Divine presence. Those are the people who set out and go anywhere and do anything and attack their *nafs ammāra*; and even go against what their natural tendencies are, until they arrive at a state of contentment and balance. Allah says of those people: **“And as for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them on the path that leads to Us.” (29:69)**

Then there are the people who just live their life and are taken by surprise by Allah's provisions and wisdom, who never sought it out, and made no preparation for any kind of journey. Allah also talks about them in Qur'an: "**Allah singles out for His grace whom He wills.**" (2:105) A person, a *salik* on this path, a sojourner on this path, is either one who is like the *majdhub*, who is all of a sudden overtaken by Allah; or one who chooses to walk on the path and to strive through actions and through day to day efforts to come into some kind of communion, I guess you would call it with Allah (Swt). Or they are the ones who have a sense of direction and communion and an understanding of what Allah (Swt) has created this for, and go out and do it without any question.

Now, all of this is fine, and makes sense, and is about these states. But when we read the Qur'an, we often don't see it as a moment to moment guide for achieving these states, for acting grateful when we are bestowed with benefit, and being patient when we are afflicted, and repentant when we are disobedient, and grateful and remindful of when we are obedient. It is as if we find the text, the revelation on one side; and then the realities of life on the other side. Somehow we have to hold onto certain principles and then bring them to light in the moment, or just reflect upon them after the fact. Sometimes we pick up the Qur'an and we read the stories of what took place thousands of years ago, in the case of the prophets of the Banai Israel; what took place almost 1430 years ago in the case of the Prophet (sal) and the Sahabah; or [what took place] two thousand years ago, in the life of 'Isa (as). We don't realize that the Qur'an is speaking to us in present terms—not just speaking to us in present terms, but is empowering us, is transmitting to us a kind of eternal presence. It speaks to us as if these events that we read about are taking place in the period of our own life. In this sort of method that is used by Allah (Swt), it asks us to remember events, historical events, just in the same way as we remember something that happened in our own life.

Allah says, for example:

**And remember that We gave Moses the scripture and the criteria between right and wrong. (2:53) And remember Ibrahim (as) and Ishmael raised the foundation of the house. (2:127) And remember We divided the sea for you. (2:50) And remember We took your covenant, your promise. (2:63) Remember your Lord inspired the angels. (8:12) And remember Jesus, son of Mary. (61:6)**

[It is] like [saying]: “Remember when we, last Saturday night, when we were, do you remember....who was that person in 1972 who.....remember who that was?” That is how the Qur’an speaks to us. Isn’t it? Who is He talking to? When Allah (Swt) says, “**And remember....**” who is He talking to? Sometimes it says, “**Remember Noah.**” In this very direct mode of teaching, it encourages us to erase the distance between ourselves and the past. It brings history to our moment to moment, our day to day life. It tells us to pay attention. It is as if this has just happened. There is a sense of immediacy. And it seems also to be guiding us through this kind of expression to tell us that in reality there is no distance, there is no essential distance between ourselves and those saints, no distance between our selves and the *anbiyā*, [between] ourselves and those events.

On one hand, as we live our day to day life and we find ourselves in a state of obedience and disobedience, gratitude and forgetfulness, affliction and blessing, we don’t see it as part of the continuum. We don’t see it as part of the reality that these *anbiyā* went through, and that the *shuyukh* went through. When we have to be patient, the time goes very slowly. When we get blessings, the time goes very fast. Really the message is to be present in the moment, to remember, to be present in the moment just like the servant is present in the company of the Lord and Master, standing there quietly waiting for the glass to be emptied to be filled with more tea. What the message seems to be of the

Hikam, of these different teachings is really that what is required of us is to be present, to be deeply and profoundly focused in the present. Allah (Swt) says:

**The Lord said unto the Angels, “Lo, I am about to create a mortal out of mire, out of mud and when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down before him and prostrate before him.” (15:28-29)**

**We taught Adam the names of the realities of all things. (2:31)**

And these names, the names of the realities of all things, this was to be able to recognize what was happening to us. These are the names of compassion and mercy and peace and love and understanding but as they manifest in the physical world, the names of things are not just the names of trees and rocks and stars and oceans. They were the transmuted attributes of Allah (Swt). In other words: “I am going to teach them that I will be present in their life. No matter where they look, I am going to be present.” Of course, I have given other kinds of explanation of this before, especially the one where human beings. so distinct from the angels, as we have said over and over and over again, have to make choices. The choice is to remain obedient and to remain a servant of Allah, the Creator. To do that, one has to be aware that they are in the presence of their Lord. Because if we are created to serve and we are created to be patient and we are created to trust and we are created to watch carefully and to see what the need is, then obviously you have to be present to do that.

All of these things that are described, though we see them in some sort of historical context, they really are not necessarily in the flow of history. Of course, from one point of view, from a linear point of view, they are. But they are now, right now. They answer the most profound of questions if we look at the Qur’an correctly. They answer why we

exist, who created us, from what were we created, what is our purpose, what is contained in the essence of this physical world and the nature, what is the potential of it, and what is the miracle of this life and this creation. All of those descriptions and all of those guidelines are for now. That is why we cannot look at Islam as just some sort of historical event. Islam is rooted in one historical event. But from the very beginning of time, from the conception of time to this very moment, revelation continues to come to us. It does have something to do with the covenant between Allah (SwT) and His human creation. Allah (SwT) asks all of our souls, before we were allowed to enter the physical existence, “**Am I not your Lord?**” And all those souls affirm, “Yes. You are our Lord.”

Allah tells us that this creation, as the Angels say, is a creation where there is a lot of distraction, where there is a lot of selfishness. This soul will be covered over with this *nafs ammāra*, this sense of self and entitlement, and the journey and the challenge will be one of remembering what your duty is, remembering what I am telling you over and over again, in every age, new to you. All the prophets throughout the history of humanity came to remind people of their promise to be loyal to their contract, their covenant with Allah (SwT).

Then there is the fact that I cannot avoid saying a couple of things about this subject. I was watching the news today, because I want to see the continuity in all of this. Yesterday’s news was about a chimpanzee who ripped the face off of a woman. Right? Took her eyes out and seven hours of surgery and she is still surviving. That is a metaphor as a world’s reality. Today’s news was about a monkey who got loose in a zoo and they locked down the zoo because they were afraid of what might happen. Now this was an 11 pound monkey and that was a 200 pound chimpanzee. Anyhow, a monkey did that. Then tonight’s news there was a story about a bull who gored a woman. Mitra turned to me and said, “What is going on?” I said, “I will tell you what is going on,

whether you believe it or not.” What is going on is that canaries die early in mines and certain birds, like parrots, were taken on ships because they could sense when the weather was going to change. The world is messed up and the animals are reacting to it. They are responding to the global crisis—more than the global crisis. Are they responding to the economic crisis greed and downturn? No, they are responding to the human fears and paranoia. They are responding to the lack of faith.

We have not been obedient as a collective group of individuals. We have not seen these teachings of Qur’an – whether you call it the Qur’an or what – we are not seeing the teachings of Allah to be something for the present. We talk about history and revised history. The New Deal did not work: the new Republican mantra. Or people are obstructionists. Virtually everything, not everything, but virtually everything that can evolve to be something good, even out of disobedience or out of affliction, is coming up against a wall. Anything one can learn from disobedience, they are not learning because they are reveling in their disobedience and their obstruction. Anything one can learn from affliction, they cannot learn because there is constant feeding of the affliction creating more and more affliction. In that sense, we are at a real crisis, a real turning point, a spiritual crisis, a spiritual turning point in the world.

The religions, as we know them, have failed. The teaching has not failed, but the transmitters of the *dīn* have failed. Because we have forgotten that it is in the present. The phenomenological aspects of it, of course, people are attracted to. The people who are driven by the worst motives, the most animal nature, are acting like animals. Just like animals like. The animals are acting like the animals they are. You can put a chimpanzee in your house and you can train it all you want and it can be in as many movies as you want. (It can be up for an Academy Award. I don’t know.) All of a sudden, the world changes and the chimpanzee is picking up all these vibes. But this vibration (I don’t

know what you want to call it), but things are so inharmonious that nature is rebelling. Everything is rebelling. Every opportunity to create a corrective is being thwarted and distorted by some perverted idea of what is politically correct.

We have to talk about and affirm and practice what we know is a stabilizing effect. This is really, really a time for Hizb ul-Bahr. Because the ship is stuck and there is no wind! You can't just drive yourself crazy over it, and be so upset about it that it paralyzes you. That's not the way to do it. You have to have the faith in the principles behind what is right and what is good. And we have all done things that we regretted, and said things that we regretted, and wished we had changed things that we didn't change. Now it is aggregated on such a level that all those little things that we could deal with in our own little way, with our own personal repentance, and our own personal efforts, knowing that Allah rewards even the slightest efforts, and that every time we try to create a resonance in our life, the system resonates back with us, now has been so overwhelmed by this hypocrisy, greed, ideology, hate and aggressiveness, that we are all affected by it.

Then you get these little stories that come out: the marine who says that he couldn't stay there anymore, and couldn't do that anymore. Now, because that one story was reported, there are like ten other stories coming out of guards in Guantanamo, just in the last 24 hours. So you see, there is this struggle between good and evil in the world right now. And you can't just sit back and say: "Oh. Let's watch that movie. This is a twelve part movie. We can get it for \$130 on HBO." [You can't say,] "Let's watch it," like [it was] a football season. We are *in it*. We are participating *in it*. We have to remember that Qur'an was revealed to us for today. And Allah is saying, "Look. Remember this and remember this and remember this and remember this."

Real Tasawwuf, real Islam as it is practiced by Sufis, real Sufis, [where do you find it?]

Where do you go to find *muraqabah*? Go find a place where anybody teaches to sit forty minutes in the morning and forty minutes in the night in *muraqabah*. You can't find it. Oh, you can find plenty of places where Buddhists sit for hours and Hindus sit and things like that. But, my friends, my own personal experience is that the Buddhist way is wonderful and it is deeply personal. Maybe if you had enough people sitting and they focused their power on it, they might be able to change the vibration of it. But Islam is about real people in the world doing real things every day and finding a way to create harmony five times a day, plus the sitting in *muraqabah*, plus their acts of goodness and plus their interface with "the apparently real" world. It is very hard to find.

We have a profound responsibility in the world right now. What I think needs to be done is slightly different from what we are doing—not totally different. I think that people need to engage in these kinds of seminars and discussions, but we need to have places where people gather, meditate, do real things in the world, come back and gather. *Asalām Aleikum!*