

April 25, 2009

Saturday

Title: **The Only Choice is to Pay Attention to the Divine Reality**

DVD title: Choosing to Make Effort is the Key to Understanding Destiny

Opening Prayer: O Allah (SwT) we are so grateful that You allow us to remember You in the *jamah*. We are grateful to You Allah (SwT) for Your blessings and to the beauty that You surround us with and the fragrances that You surround us with. We are grateful Allah (SwT) that You remind us of Your Presence and Your Beauty and Your Divine Presence through Your pollen as you blanket us with the beauty of Your sun colors and You fill our lungs with the sweetness of Your fragrances. Ya Allah. So many of us are forgetful and so this opportunity to remember You is a real blessing. We ask You for more blessings. We are greedy and ask You for more blessings: for the safety of the journey of those who are on journeys and who will be coming, and those who will be celebrating the great achievements in life. Make those count in the *akhirah* also. Heal those among us who are ill and suffering and in pain and in need. Give a good health report for those who are recovering. Fill our community with love and our children's hearts with gratitude. *Amin*.

Suhat: Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem. So when we look and we see, and we really begin to see, we see that within creation there is a natural predisposition. It is an intrinsic pre-disposition. It becomes evident that what is destined to happen is dependent on the wish of Allah (SwT), in the creation of a thing or a being, to cause situations in accordance with the pre-disposition of what He creates. The level of that which He has created, or situation that is created, also determines that "destiny".

Allah (Swt) creates human beings with a pre-disposition to have choice. In doing that, there has to be at least two things to choose from. If we are pre-disposed towards our *fitrah*, that essential goodness, then our choices are in harmony with Allah (Swt). The device that Allah (Swt) has created within us and implanted within us—the compass, if you will, the gyroscope—is the heart, because the heart is pre-disposed towards love and goodness and beauty. When one keeps the heart clear and pure, it operates well. It keeps us on the *siratal mustaqim*. It keeps us on the course.

If what happens and what one is to become are dependent upon what one is and one's potential, if that is how you define destiny, then there does not appear to be any way to change it, to adjust it. If that was strictly so, the whole reason for the existence of human beings (especially wise human beings, religious guides, spiritual guides), the need for Divine Texts, and the need for prophets would not need to exist. So there has to be something more than that kind of definition, even though it appears to be that the Divine Will is this and that the Divine Will operates in relationship to all the essential pre-existing causes. This is sort of the point of view of the people whose opinions are dependent on what is seen, what is visible.

The more one turns inward in *muraqabah*, the more one makes *tawajjuh* and faces/*wajh* that heart, that center, the more one can differentiate between what is a distraction or what is good and what is evil and what is right and what is wrong, because you begin to see beyond the physical. You begin to see the essential or the intrinsic patterns of the universe, and you begin to see the manifestation of love, not just the manifestation of love in *dunya* but in your own self. You see the evolutionary quality and characteristic of love. You realize that what good happens to you is from Allah and what bad happens to you is from yourself. Allah further explains that in Qur'an when He says: **“All is from Allah, but what is the matter with these people that they make no effort to understand**

anything?” (4:78) In there lies the issue.

There lies the key to understanding our own existence and the key to understanding destiny. Allah created us with the ability for understanding, but we have to make an effort. If there was no need to make an effort, if everything was just destined without any change in it, again, there would be no need for prophets, no need for Qur'an, no need for Torah, no need for Injil, no need for *shuyukh*, no need for anything because there would be no need for it because it would not do any good. There would be no need. Ultimately, the core choice that we have, because we make choices every day, is the choice to make an effort. If you trace the history of your *muraqabah*, your meditation, or your prayer or your own temperament, or your practices, you will see that your achievements or your failings lie in your effort.

What efforts did you make? Sustained efforts. If service comes easy to you, then you track that and you say, “It didn’t take much effort, because I love to do community service,” or “I love to help people,” or “I love to do *dhikr*.” Some people say, “I love to meditate. It really doesn’t require a lot of effort,” it seems, because it is easy to make that kind of effort. You wouldn’t even call it effort. But it is effort. It is a conscious choice. It is a choice. Indeed, the whole idea of addictions can be positive or negative. One can be addicted to doing good. With that effort, one understands, truly understands (and this may be a big jump) that all is from Allah, when you make the effort.

This idea that all is from Allah is applied to the creation of all. When good things happen to the best of creation, Hazrat Muhammed (sal) made himself disappear knowing that everything comes from Allah. Then the natural thing was just to praise Allah. When things were difficult, and bad things happened to him, he saw those things that were happening to him—including the attitudes of people and the resistance to his message, the

attempts to kill him and to poison him, the shunning from the society and all of that—as coming from his own self. Yet, Allah (SwT) was still in his heart, and because of that, he was patient. *Rasullallah* (sal) kept praising Allah. He chose to praise Allah. He chose to keep the reality of Allah in his heart. Everything is from Allah, but the understanding of that falls to human beings' choices.

There are countless cycles in our life when we have this choice. Countless times, countless times in my life I have had a choice to make changes or adjustments or remembrance—countless times. So I am sure you too [have] met resistance and difficulty, slothfulness or desires of some kind. Countless times you have the opportunity, almost as if you can be born again, born again, born again. Many of you have experienced when you have been away for a week, or two or three, or four, or whatever, you realize when you come back that this is an opportunity: “If I can just make some changes, I can start again,” because people will say to you, “Oh, Gee, what happened to you while you were away?”

Also there are stories that tell us of all those countless opportunities. You may remember the story where it was reported that Hazrat ibn Abbas (ra) said that the Prophet (sal) said that Allah created 100,000 Adams before Adam. You remember the story that Ibn Araby, Shaykh al Akbar (ra) told:

One night I was circumambulating the Ka'ba, and I heard a spirit say to me, “Like you, we have turned around the Divine House in great numbers and in great joy so many years.” I said, “Who are you?” “I am your ancestor,” was the reply. “When did you leave this world?” I asked. He replied, “120,000 years ago.” I said, “Adam wasn't even created then.” The spirit said, “Which Adam? The one who was close to you in time or the one further in time? I am the progeny of the Adam who was further in time.”

So you see, again, it is the same thing: opportunity upon opportunity, creation within creation in our life. So in that sense it is never too late to make the right choice. It is never too late, because it is always the things of the *dunya* that are going to distract. That is why it can be said that the wrong choices or the bad actions come from you or me, and all good comes from Allah. One of the greatest of the *shuyukh* said, “*Allah (Swt) created the universe like a corpse without a spirit/ruh. He created Adam as the spirit of the universe. With that spirit, the body became aware of itself and became simultaneously aware of the One Who created it.*”

The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, “***As long as one upon the earth witnesses the existence of Allah in sincerity, the end of the world will not come.***” As long as one person on this earth sees the existence of Allah sincerely, with sincerity, the end of this world will not come. What does that mean? It means that as long as there is one person who sees the back row cosmic reality and themselves as the reflection, the microcosm of that reality, witnesses the Creator through witnessing that they themselves are the proof of the Creator, then they will understand “**Kull min‘indiya allāh. All is from Allah.**” (4:78)

This is quite a lesson, because we live in a world where [there is] the absence from the heart, the absence from understanding this capacity and capability that we have been given. [We are] either willing to just assume that everything is from Allah and there are no choices to make, or assume that everything is from Allah but there *are* choices to make. This is a big universe of a difference between these two things. All ethics and all morality, all actions for the good and all security in one’s own self lies in the latter, not in the former. When that energy is not obstructed by distractions, wrong actions, greed or any of those negative qualities, then what is set in motion in one’s whole being is this process where we actually remember. We actually remember Allah. Everything is reminiscent of

the Divine Reality.

As we go back to the beginning of these series of talks, Allah looks to the heart of the individual [to see] if in the heart of the individual is this sort of relentless search for the Truth, search for Allah. [Take for example] Prophet Ibrahīm (as). He announced the star, the moon, and the sun all unworthy of being the One sought, all unworthy of exemplifying the Divine Reality. He comes to the conclusion that it is the heart of the believer that can only understand or conceptualize the Creator, God, Allah. What is important to take away from this talk is this, I hope, meaningful idea, meaningful reality, meaningful guidance that the only real choice to make, the only real choice to make is to pay attention to that Divine Presence. [It is] to choose, to make the choice or the choices to keep turning one's attention towards the Divine.

If you are ill and you see that this illness is somehow caused by your own wrong choices, lack of care for your own self, your own body; if you are in need of something and you really turn your attention towards it, and you see that there were choices or decisions that were made that were not the best (maybe out of ignorance, maybe out of laziness, maybe out of desire and greed); if we are in need of something, which we feel is absolutely necessary and when we get it, we find that it is not at all what we expected it to be (it doesn't uplift or it doesn't sustain us) -- it could be a job, or something material, or a person -- then we have to begin to let that process show us that our choices are not within the context of what is good or what is right. They are not in the context of good effort.

We have put all of our effort out to our job, or our anything, anything in the world and we find out that there are real limitations to what we can accomplish. Then someone comes along—a wise person that you may listen to, or maybe an ignorant person whom you listen to who has a moment of wisdom—and says to you, “You know, really, why are you

putting all that energy into trying to control the situation? Why don't you just put it in the Hands of Allah and leave it to Allah?" Now, you come to realize that Allah is present and you are not walking in companionship with Allah. Allah is walking as your Companion, but you started window shopping. "Ah. Gucci! Ah Walmart!" And all of a sudden you have lost your companionship. But then you turn your attention, and now you understand what it means to put everything in the Hands of Allah.

It does not mean that you make no choices. You choose to make the effort. You choose to make the effort to pray on time. You choose to make the effort to come to the *muraqabah*. When your neighbor calls; or your alarm clock goes off because you did set it; or because you did put that program on your computer for the purpose of reminding you, you make the effort to get up off your backside and go pray. Click off... back to the Word document. "*Allahu akbar, Allahu.*"...click. I'll pray later. "*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar....*" Click. We all do it. The technology has no vested interest in whether you pray or don't pray. You make the effort. That is why effort is so clearly important. Do you get the message? At least try to go to bed a Muslim and wake up a Muslim. Don't forget what Prophet Mohamed (sal) said. *Asalām aleikum.*