

August 8, 2009

Saturday

Title: [Going Forward, Coming Back](#)

DVD title: Allah Calls: Our Soul Returns
The Means to Answer the Call and Return to Spiritual Awareness

Opening Prayers:

Thank You, Allah, for the blessings for the past few months and for the months to come. We ask You to continue to shower us with the blessings, so we may strive to do better in our work. We ask You to protect all the members of this community, to provide work for everyone in this community, to lift the burden of worries from our minds and our shoulders. Protect the families. Give the children a good year of school. We ask You, O Allah, to protect everyone who is going to the beach an SP45 blessing, especially the children. *Amin.*

Going back to Ibn At'ala Iskandari (ra) Shaykh Ibn At'ala says things in the Hikam that can be a little confusing, unless you think about them. Since most people do not want to think about anything, they stay confused. But then you do not have to read it if you are confused; you just have to put it down. I hope you don't put it down when you start to read it. He says, "*One of the signs of relying on deeds is loss of hope when there are missteps.*" Have you ever had that experience? You make a misstep and you lose your hope, because your hope depended on the action. We all come from the *ghaib*, from the unseen world. Allah extends His Ruh to us and it takes form in this world. Because it takes form, as I have explained to you many times, it has to have name to distinguish it. Then, within the cycles of human life and life in general, He summons the *ruh* back.

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Every year, the plants die back in the garden. Allah summons the *ruh* of those perennials back, and then sends them forward again with light, earth, air, fire and water—the ‘*amr al khalq*, the things of creation, the world of creation. We see that, time and time again. He sends it out; He summons it back. We are born. We have a form and the first thing that happens is—our parents do what—we are given a name. They can distinguish us without a name. Do you think a deer gives a name to its baby, or mosquitoes give name to all of its babies, one million mosquito eggs? Then what happens? We call a child by its name. We summon it back because it has wandered off. Ahmed is creeping. “Ahmed!” his father says to him, and summons him back. That is in creation, but it is symbolic of something else. Then you say that everything is okay because you are relying on the deed: going out, came back. If he doesn’t come back: “Where is Ahmed? Where is Yahya?”

I was in Macy’s one day (when it was Hechts) when Samah was very, very little. I couldn’t find her. I had been watching her, but she hid in one of those racks of clothes. I started: call security, do this, do this, my daughter is missing. Right? One misstep and I started to lose hope, immediately. One little misstep: I didn’t pay enough attention. Immediately I went crazy and drove everybody else crazy there. Then she peeked her little head out. *Alhamdulillah*. Hope comes immediately back. If she had been a little older, I would have been angry. But, for the calling back from *dunya*, calling back from confusion, calling back from the world of distraction, Allah Swt puts that call on the tongue of the prophets/*ambiyā*. It is symbolized by *adhan* five times a day, minimum, plus the *iqama*, to summon our souls back and our mind back and our *nafs* back from its distractions, back to our heart, *qibla*, to put our attention on Allah Swt, Who is all the names, beyond the names; all the attributes, beyond the attributes.

He is the Namer of names and the Attributer of the attributes, beyond comprehension,

greater than the sum total of the parts. We put our attention toward that doorway that we cannot see, but we put it towards the *ghaib* and our *ruh* settles. Our spirit settles. Then we are sent out again, only to be called back again. We are sent out again to be called back again, five times a day, and the *witr* prayer that nobody does, and the *tahajjud* prayer that a few do. Isn't that what is happening? If we rely on the works, or the *dhikr*, the remembrance of Allah (Swt), or on *jihad* or on fasting to bring us to the end of the path, they will not just bring us to the end of the path. They are forms of *adab*. They are means, not ends.

They are the proper manner that we should have when we come to the throne of the King. They are the way we should act when we are on the path. They are the way the pilot acts when he checks his instruments while he is flying, so that we don't have an accident like we did today in New York. A helicopter and small plane collided over the Hudson, and nine people died. It is the routine that the surgeon goes through before he cuts. It is what you should do before you pray. It is the consideration you should have when you come before any human being, ultimately. If you practice, when you are called back and you return back at the prayer, rarely can you throw the net in the river or the sea and pull it out immediately with fish in it. You have to leave it there for a little while so that Allah can say, "Ah! There is a net there to send fish into." The good works we do are like a net, but the spiritual compensation comes from Allah Swt.

Abu Hurayra (ra) reports that the Prophet (sal) said, "*None of you shall be saved by your works.*" Someone replied, "*Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?*" He said, "*Not even myself unless Allah covers me with a mercy from Him.*" But... but... strive to be right. Strive to be right. You can say, "But Allah (Swt) says, '**Enter paradise for that which you have done.**'" (16:32) The meaning of that is not contradictory, because the means to be successful in the work that you do, to be sincere in the work that you do comes from

Allah Swt. You have been guided to have sincerity, and the true success comes from having gratitude. Abul Suleyman Adarani (ra) used to say, “*How can a sane person be proud of his works when his works are but gifts from Allah and a blessing from Him for which we must thank Him.*” So what Ibn At’ala Iskandari (ra) is saying is don’t be veiled from the real truth. *Irāda* or your will is pre-supposed by the way (path). Indeed the word *murīd* is arrived from this word “will,” *irāda*. Ultimately, the path discloses to us that our soul’s return is because we are called back. It is out of the blessing of Allah Swt or the largesse of Allah Swt that we are brought back. This is a gift. That is why one of the meanings of *murīd* is desire, one who desires, or a *faqir*, one who is needy. In Qur’an, Musa (as) says, “**I am greatly needy of the good You have sent down to me.**” (28:24)

It is said that when you look at your own actions and your own good deeds, it can be a very dangerous thing. But if you just see them, and then turn to gratitude [it will be okay]. You remember what Allah says, “**Whatever blessings you have come from Allah.**” (16:53) In the Naqshbandi Tariqah from the ancient Khwaja Khwajagan is a statement about works, which could be misunderstood if we didn’t have this ten minute preamble. It is a statement in Farsi (recites in Farsi), “*Work produces a sweet essence.*” This is usually associated with the honey bee. [It means] not only work for Allah (Swt) but work for others, work for yourself. Just as the bee accumulates or makes honey, so the ancient Khwaja Khwajagan (especially the Sarmoun, the ancient brotherhood) accumulated, stored and preserved true knowledge like a commodity is stored. He associated it with a spiritual gift, or *bāraka*. When it was needed, it was released, released into the world, released into a community of people.

This is a transmission, *irāda*, to the *murīd* who ultimately realizes this and allows himself to be called back, returned, *murad*: (chants the call to prayer) the call to return. The plant

dies away and comes back. The teachings of our predecessors trained teachers to do this, emissaries of Allah (Swt). Just like Bilal was the first Emissary of Allah (Swt) to call the people back to the place of prayer. Just like the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Mohammed (sal) called the people back to the way, just as Sidna Musa (as), Sidna Daoud (as), and Sidna Ibrahim (as) called people back. Just like you call someone back from the precipice, like you call your child back from danger, your friend back from a problem. Just as you hear the advice of someone saying to you, “You know you really ought to think about that.” You need to return to back to your state of awareness. You need to return back to your state of spiritual attentiveness.

Children on the last few days of camp always say, “I want to come back next year.” Why do they want to come back? Just to get away from home? Just to make new friends? Why do they want to come back here? Because it has certain *dhawq*, a certain taste to it. It tastes familiar to the heart and soul. Not to be a Muslim, or a Christian, or a Jew. It has a certain taste to the soul. The soul has no religion, except it has the religion of *islam*, of surrender—not the form, necessarily. (Shaykh plays a tape of calls of prayer broadcasting over a city). There are so many calls to prayer from each part of the city of Marakkech. We have certain criteria that we can follow, great souls. Ahmad Farooqi Sirhindi (ra), Shah Waliyullah (ra), Charkhi (ra), Ghujduwānī (ra). He was a great example. He tried to hold the course of the navigation of his ship of spirituality to truth and purity, and the Sunnah of Rasul (sal). He resisted the heretical movements of the time. It is said he was taught *dhikr* by Khdir himself. He was persistent in putting those lessons into practice daily. He said that Khdir adopted him as his own son.

He said, “Go and dive deep into the reservoir of water and say with your heart, “*La illah illah la, Mohammedan Rasulallah.*” He did it. He dove into the water, into the tank and learned the lesson and he discovered an opening in his own heart. It is said that the

Mahadishaykh Abu Yaqub Yusuf Hamadānī, who was the Maha Shaykh, the *shaykh* of all the *shaykhs*, came to Bukhara one time. Khwaja Abdul Khaliq Ghujduwānī (ra) came to his *suhbet* and he discovered that he was also endowed with *dhikr*. He kept him company the whole time he stayed in Bukhara. It was said that Khdir (as) joined them. He was a spiritual teacher. After Khwaja Yusuf (ra) had left, Khwaja Ghujduwānī (ra) became very preoccupied with his spiritual exercises, yet at the same time he was trying to keep his spiritual state concealed from other people. But his abilities rose to such a level, it is said, that he traveled from Bukhara to the Ka’ba and returned between the ritual prayers. The proof of that was that he had along the way disciples who saw him and whom he taught. There was a *zawiya* in Damascus built for him where he would come on a daily basis to teach on his way to the Ka’ba in Saudi from Bukhara in Central Asia. People saw him, received lessons from him in Damascus and started a *zawiya*.

It is said that one day, on Ashura, he was giving a speech about some deep subject and a young man dressed in a tattered robe as a *faqīr*, as a *darvish*, appeared there. He had a prayer rug on his shoulder and sat down in a corner, and the Khwaja sort of glanced over at him. After a while the young man stood up and said to the Khwaja, “The veritable messenger of peace, the Prophet Mohammed (sal), said, **“Beware of the gaze of the true believer because he sees by the light of Allah.”** And he says to the Khwaja, “What is the secret of this *hadith*?” The Khwaja replies to him, “The secret meaning of this prophetic saying is that you have to cut off the *zunar*, the waist band (worn by the Magian, the Zoroastrians).” Upon uttering these words, the Khwaja beckoned to his servant, who promptly stood up and removed the tattered robe from the young man’s back and that man’s *zunar* came into view.

The young man immediately cut off the waist band and accepted the hand of Khwaja and affirmed the *shahadah*. Then the Khwaja said to the people there, “Let us fulfill our own

duties according to this prophetic saying. Just as he has cut off the waist band from his outer being, we have to cut off the waist band from our inner being, which is our conceit and our selfishness and our prejudices, etc. Just as he has been forgiven, we will be forgiven.” When he spoke like this, they all went into this spiritual state and each one of them immediately repented. There are many stories about these great saints.

Let us go back to the beginning before I end. Those actions, sitting in *dars*, like we are doing now, our prayers, fasting of Ramadān which is coming up, the *hajj* that comes afterwards, *dhikr* that we did tonight, all the acts of service that we do purposefully and consciously, which have come from our willpower to do them and our sense of timing and our sense of sincerity, they are not ends. They are practicing the *adab* that it takes to be aware of the Divine Presence and to answer the call. So when Allah calls, consciously, you and I, whoever we are in our consciousness, consciously, purposefully, intentionally are aware of our return journey back to the source. It would be like you hearing in the Fall, all the leaves saying, “It is time to go now,” as they fell to the ground. Could you imagine if each leaf had a voice, how loud it would be? But we can say, “Ah! The leaves are falling. They are being called back.” After all, even the people who spoke Latin got it. What does the word *relegare* mean? To turn back, to return to the source. That is what religion is about, to become aware of conscious returning. That is what this is all about.

So, *insh'allah*, we can begin to see the brilliance of these aphorisms. We can do the deeds that are necessary to remember. But at the same time, we have to remember that whatever blessings we have already coming from Allah, all these acts are to create in us the right form, the right name. If you are going for a job interview, you don't wear your dirty work clothes. You wear clean clothes. If you are a man, you may wear a tie and suit. If you are a woman, you might put on some kind of suit or dress, a nice outfit,

because you know there is appropriate dress for certain occasions, like our *dhikr*, *sema*. When we go to the *masjid*, we can wear our dress for our *sema*. Each has a meaning to it—the white cloth is like the shroud. We understand the meaning of it—okay, that is fine. Then we run home and put on our dirty clothes for dinner, because dinner is not a religious thing. Right? Of course, that is not right. It is not about being a religious thing. It is about being appropriate. It is the same thing about our attitude.

So those actions, those forms, those names are purposeful. They are necessary. They should not be mistaken for the end and they should not be discarded as meaningless. But they refine our *adab*. With a refined *adab*, you get the sight of a believer, as the Prophet (sal) said, “**Beware of the basīra of the mu’minūn,**” because they see with the eye of the... *Salām Aleikum*.