

August 15, 2009

Saturday

Title: [The Importance of Authorized Permission](#)

DVD title: The No-Choice Choice of Giving up Our Free Will
to One Who is Authorized to Guide

Dinner blessing: Thank You, Allah Swt, for bringing us back to this room after a successful summer. We are grateful to be here again for our *suhbet* and our dinner. We ask You, Allah Swt, to protect all of us who are traveling this week, coming and going, and get us settled in our hearts and minds for this holy month. We pray for the health and well-being of Dr. Hassouna and the strength of the family. We ask for Your sweet rain of mercy/*rahmat* to fall upon them. In this time of Ramadān, we pray that we remember the true meaning of this fast is to reflect upon our relationship with You and to turn ourselves inward, and create our schedules in such a way that we will be able to do that. *Amin*.

Sohbet: *Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem*. I was speaking the other day about your favorite subject which is the relationship between the *murshīd* and the *murīd*, or the *bai'at*. The irony is that Allah Swt gives us choice and free will/*ikhtiyār*. The whole point of life is to give it up, to choose not to choose, to surrender and trust in Allah Swt. Here is this tool by which you can develop yourself to such a degree that you don't trust in anyone but yourself. But the whole point of it is to learn how to give up the temptations of free will. It would be wonderful if you could learn that at the age of 12, 14, or 18. You can only hear it at that age, though; and most people never learn it. In the process of learning how to give up your free will, Allah Swt gives us ample opportunities to not want to do it. He gives us inflated ideas of our own knowledge, of our own sense of what is best for

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ourselves. He gives us an inflated idea of choice meaning “something I like and want” as opposed to “what is best for me, for society, for my family, for humanity.” Any of us who have lived for any length of time know all that; but we keep making choices.

If we are on the *sayr ul suluk*, we want to make our choices consistent with—what one would say in the idiom—what Allah Swt wants for us. Allah Swt doesn’t “want for us” except in the sense of what is consistent with our role as humane human beings; moreover, what is consistent with the core value that has been placed inside of us, and that is trust. Trust in Allah Swt means we can trust in our compassion, in our mercy and in our sense of justice, and trust in our submission and obedience that it will bear the necessary fruits. Most people don’t ever learn that lesson. Most people, [when they] make decisions, then compromise their understandings, their beliefs, their capabilities and capacities in order to sustain those decisions, so as not to be wrong.

With those decisions, Allah Swt begins to tell us if they are made in the context of Qur’an, meaning in the context of the guidelines and guidance from Allah Swt, then there are many things we learn from our decisions and choices. Some people are very, very arrogant and say, “It doesn’t really matter. If my choice is bad, I’ll learn from that,” which is hardly ever true, by the way. Most people don’t learn from their bad choices. They justify them and find other ways around them. Even if they change their choices, they very rarely say, “I have learned from my bad choice because I have come to realize that the Divine Will is this, that the purpose of life is this.” They usually find some other reason to change the choice, equally as self-deceptive.

When we take the advice of anyone for anything major in our life, like major heart surgery, you want to find the best authorized cardiologist. You hope you are flying on an airplane with a pilot who is authorized to fly it. We have no problem with the concept of

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authorization except when it comes to something that is directly our desire and choice, which we then say is “necessary.” It becomes a necessity because it obsessively controls our minds or desires. Or it becomes a necessity because it is what is necessary to advance in one’s career, power, or money. Or it becomes necessary one doesn’t want to be wrong, or because one doesn’t want to be ill-thought of. People every day sacrifice their integrity, their intelligence, their essential beliefs, culture and traditions, just so they are not wrong. Then the most intelligent among us can articulate what we are doing in such a good way that it sounds like we are right. That’s why Allah Swt authorized people, people who applied their lives and efforts, and were able to look at their own errors, rectify them and understand them. That’s why Allah Swt authorized people to be in positions of authority, to be able to give advice and give *idhn*/permission.

Every time we get on an airplane, we are really taking permission from Homeland Security to fly. They have all the rules and regulations. So we have to have *idhn* from the Secretary of Homeland Security to fly. We seek permission. “May I sit here? Is this seat taken?” We’re used to getting permission. “Oh, yeah, sure.” But people rebel from the idea of permission from someone authorized to get permission, because they know how not only to observe a situation and evaluate it, but they know how to love you. They know how to love your heart. They know (and nobody wants to hear this, so you can hold your ears) what’s best for you. Did any one cheat and listen to that? Nobody wanted to hear that.

That’s why a *murīd* asks for advice and permission from the *murshīd*, for all the decisions and resolutions they are led to make in their life. Sometimes the permission is a blanket permission. It’s called *ijāzah*, in the sense of permission to teach. Sometimes it’s a very specific *idhn*, because we see the states and potential of the individual in all of their acts.

When a person gets this permission, and really understand this choosing-not-to-choose

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and planning-not-to-plan mentality that we learned from Ibn At'ala Iskandari (ra), all of the states of such an individual, all of their movements, all of their words and actions become *du'ā*.

You may remember that *du'ā* is the original language. The language that Hazrat Adam (as) spoke was *du'ā*. There was nothing else to say; only to praise Allah. “Hey, Hawa, what time is it?” It doesn't matter what time it was. “Hawa, what's for dinner?” It doesn't matter what is for dinner. “Ya, Hawa, I'm going to the store, do you want me to pick anything up for you?” It never happened. “Ya Adam, would you mind taking out the garbage?” There wasn't any garbage. Everything was *du'ā*. This is the truth. What else could it be, a philosophical discussion between Adam and Hawa? Your life becomes an active invocation, an act of *ibāda*/worship, a way of worshiping Allah through your work, through your family, through your discourse, through your planting the seeds in the garden.

We say a person like that is one who is faithful to the promise, the pact that is made. You have no honor if you are not faithful to the pact that brought you to this earth. I say, “Your word is your bond.” Be faithful to your word. Allah Swt tells us that a person who is faithful to that pact, whose heart is filled with that trust, is a person who will be among the spiritual people nourished by the Light of Allah Swt, and will be spoken of in better terms by Allah Swt. There will be no veil that separates that individual from what is in the *ghaib*, the invisible world. By the mere power of that trust or *du'ā*, of your words being words that come from a heart that is sincere, pure, trustworthy, noble, and honorable, fulfilling one's pact, that person is saved from most of the futile aspects of this world, from most of the things people are negligent in doing. Their life is meaningful, not just happy, not just exciting, but fulfilling.

A lot of people have exciting lives; they have to keep themselves excited. They climb one mountain and come down safe and sound, they start planning to climb the next mountain. They run one mile, then ten. They run twenty miles, then a 200 mile marathon. If one doesn't entertain this idea of guidance and have authorization, then veil upon veil goes over your heart and mind. The beauty of it is most people don't see it, so they don't think there are any veils. In fact, they are sure they are not any, and they stay away from anyone who does see them, because they see with the Light of the Prophet (sal) and of Allah Swt. They see through the *nūr, basīra*. They stay away from the people who see, because they see. You avert your eyes from that person because you don't want to look at them.

It's the will that is at the root of our desire to affirm or assert ourselves. It's that kind of will that is thirsting for control. The human soul, being deceived and veiled from its own purity, the ego (*nafs ammāra*) takes over, [until] we turn to someone who can teach us how to distance ourselves gradually from our free will/*ikhtiyār*. It doesn't mean you don't make decisions. Of course you do. It's not will. It is free will. Nothing's free. "Ah, Shaykh, you are telling us to give up our will power and free will, after all these years of saying choice is what makes a person unique!" It's not that you don't make choices. It's that each choice is not free. It has a cost to it. It has to be paid for. A person who helps us to move away from this frivolous idea of free will is a teaching master who allows distancing to happen, [who allows the] renting or pulling aside that veil which creates the illusion that human beings are totally free to act and totally free to choose, and everybody and everything else will adjust to it. "After all, I have to be the center of my own universe. What kind of a person would I be if I wasn't? This is my right, and the American Psychological Association guarantees it to me."

But for those of us who have tried to turn ourselves over to our guide and to those who

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see, will see that the veil gradually lifts until another mercy comes: the mercy of understanding, the mercy of seeing, the mercy of having a heart at peace, not being pulled here and there, and realizing that Allah Swt is the true agent of everything. That doesn't come from a book. It won't come from this talk. It will come from an inner tasting/*dhawq*, an inner awareness. That cannot come unless we allow ourselves to be guided to it. I guess you could trip over it, or be *uwais*. There are not that many people who are. We still know the name of the first person who was *uwais*, so there can't be that many of them. How many Smiths are there? We can't know them all. But Uways Qarni, we know.

That's why a *murīd* or *murīda* must think that everything in the *shaykh* appears to him to be like individual will power and free will. But really it is a transmission from Allah Swt that leads to Allah Swt. It is a condition of benefiting from this Divine *Ijāzah*, this *idhn*. This is the means that Allah Swt has provided century after century, eon after eon, era after era, and millennium after millennium, for anyone who wants to follow the path of real sight, of real service, of real understanding and freedom. It's that free will, not the will that is the question. Will power, as we all know, can be misguided and misused. "I'm sure I know what is right. I'm going to do what is right for me. I'm going to do what is best for me. I have a right to do that." Right, best, me, power, right, me, me, me, I, I, I. Key words on del.ic.ious. Google I, me, my, will, power, right, for. If you have a del.ic.ious program in your brain, it would file all that selfishness, and you wouldn't have enough gigabytes in your brain to hold it.

We have will power, and the willingness to give it up puts us in a place where we see what is true. Our actions are not coming out of our willpower, but out of our consciousness, out of our submission. I've been blessed many times in my life, and Khaled and others, to meet one or more of the *awliyā* of Allah Swt, to receive from them

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their blessing. To receive from them their *idhn* is beyond words. Ibn At'ala (ra) taught in one of his Aphorisms, “*Exalted be He (Allah), Who does not manifest His saints, but manifests Himself. And Who only leads to them those He wants to lead to Him.*” To be able to see that Divine Presence and know that Allah Swt is leading you there—this *idhn* has to be given by a living master. The person who receives that *idhn* should have a means of confirming it inwardly.

There are many different kinds of servants of that type. For example, most of those of us who are teaching *shaykhs* have been given the *idhn* to guide all those who ask for us to guide them, or a limited number of people who meet certain conditions. Then there is the absolute *idhn*: a *shaykh* can lead a person to the end of the path. Or there is a conditional *idhn*, where the *shaykh* can lead a person to a certain spiritual degree. Then there's the total or limited [*idhn*]. That means the *shaykh* knows the actions of the Names of Allah, which can be transmitted totally to an individual, or a limited number of those names can be transmitted. Remember my previous talks on transmission. In all these cases, it is not the willpower of the *shaykh* that is playing any part, it's the *idhn* that he received to communicate to the disciples what has been given to him. It is not willpower.

Shaykh Nooraddeen was here last night, and I said, “Do you want to eat early or late?” And he said, “It's up to you. I'm your guest.” That's an example. He may prefer to eat early or late, but he wasn't going to exert his will power over it. Sometimes, you do exert your influence and your will, but it's in order to teach something, in order to clarify something. A person who really wants harmony, peace and contentment in their lives, who really wants to make good and right decisions will not make them from the *nafs ammāra*, just from exerting their will power or their free will. They will be willing to take the guidance and to go back all the way to the Prophet (sal), through the *silsila*, the chain of the *shuyukh*, to see every step along the way how the decision you are making is part

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of a continuum of permissions. It is not a continuum of ego-driven desires. There are two tracks: one takes you to peace, understanding, and fulfillment; and the other is a constant exerting of your free will throughout your whole life, in order to maintain the status that you, yourself, have created in your own mind because you never have submitted or trusted. Which one makes you free? The first one, not the second one.

The second one makes you a prisoner. The first one makes you free. If you don't get that, I'm sorry. I didn't invent it. I don't even like to talk about it, as you know. And the people who articulated it first, guess what? We know who they are. Anybody going to know who you or me are a thousand years from now? Will they remember your name? Maybe. But we remember their names. Imam al Ghazāli (ra), Ibn Araby (ra), Abul Hasan as Shadili (ra), Ibn At'ala Iskandari (ra), Ibn Abbas al Mursi (ra), Ahmed Farooqi Sirhindi (ra), Bahaudin Naqshband (ra), Khwaja Ghujduwani (ra), Jesus Christ (as), Muhammed Ibn Abdullah (sal). We know who they are. And I've only mentioned a few of them. Shah Waliyullah (ra), Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra), Moinuddin Chisti (ra), Shems Tabrizi (ra), Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi (ra), Shabastari (ra). Attar (ra), Hafez (ra), and all the *ambiyā*. We know who they are, and they all said the same thing. The people who said the other thing and acted a different way, we don't know who the heck they are, or where the hell they are, or where in hell they are. *Asalaamu aleikum*.