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Khutbah

Title: A Book Fully Consistent within Itself

DVD title: The Vastness of Dhikr:  
Make Everything Remind You of Allah Swt

*Asalām Aleikum.* In Holy Qur'an in Sūratu-z-Zumar, Allah (swt) tells us:

**Allah has set down the most beautiful message in the form of a Book which is fully consistent within itself in which promises of reward are paired with promises of punishment, which cause the skin of those who fear their Lord to shiver. Their skins and heart soften to the remembrance of Allah. Such is the guidance of Allah by which He guides and whom He wills. One who Allah leads astray, for him there is no guide. (39:23)**

In Qur'an it is clear and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (sal) and the example of Rasūla (sal) is clear that human beings were given a conscience, consciousness. It is not just that you can think and figure out math problems, and understand physics and biology or learn things, but in the greater scope of things, you begin to understand that all the things of creation, all the realities of creation come from Allah Swt. Inherent in that statement alone is *dhikr*, to remember, to be in remembrance of Allah Swt. So many people think that remembrance of Allah (Swt) means just saying *dhikr* over and over again. Of course there are great rewards in that, and we are told to do that. Our *shuyukh* tell us and [Qur'an says], **“Remember Me sitting and standing and lying on your side.”** As [much as] we understand, the greatest meaning of all this is to have everything remind you of Allah Swt. We say that Allah Swt is present.

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**“Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah”** (2:115) means: does it remind you of Allah? The first few minutes that you go to the ocean, it reminds you of vastness. After that it reminds you to jump over the waves, then it reminds you to watch the undertow— all sorts of things. Or you see a policeman and it reminds you to slow down. Then two minutes later, you have forgotten and you speed up again. Then you get a big reminder, like a ticket (part way to Hell). It has consequences, and then you have to go to court. Then you have to plead your case before a judge. All of that is to remind you that it is a pain in the neck to get a ticket; you get points and you can lose your license. There is total consistency within all of the systems. In remembrance we have to remember. We go to school, we learn a lesson, and we have a test. You are supposed to remember what you studied. Somebody is sick, and you are supposed to remember to tell them that you hope they feel better. Somebody has a birthday, and you remember to tell them happy birthday. All sorts of things that develop [need to be remembered]. You have Plaxo (email software) to remind you, or Linked-in, or whatever to remind you that it is so and so’s birthday. But the whole point is to remember— to remember something.

We are told in this *‘āyat* that I quoted (Surah 30, ayat 23, if you want to study it) that *dhikr* softens the heart. What does that mean? Because the heart/*qalb* has certain characteristics, ethical, moral, social, spiritual characteristics, a soft heart means that you are compassionate, and you are merciful and you are kind and you are considerate. And what are these? These are Names of Allah Swt. A soft heart means that you are in constant contact with Allah Swt. So Allah Swt is present. Where? In your heart. Allah Swt says in Qur’an that in the remembrance of Allah Swt, hearts find their rest. In the remembrance of Allah, hearts find rest. Also, another way of looking at it is in the remembrance of Allah in a softened heart, you find Allah Swt. You find compassion, you find mercy, you find patience, you find perseverance, you find love, you find sincerity,

etc. **“Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah.”**(2:115)

The point is to make everything remind you of Allah Swt, make everything *dhikr*. *Dhikr* doesn't just mean making *dhikr*: “*La illah ha illeh la. La illah ha illeh la*” beating your heart like a piece of meat to make it soft. We do that too. (Demonstrates). But remembering Allah Swt is best coming from what everything has been created for us, [from understanding] how everything has been created for us, and from looking into the eyes and hearts of other human beings.

Our success as Muslims, our success as believers comes in our understanding that there is nothing more important than to develop this consciousness that deepens and increases our belief, our remembrance, our meditation, our service. Everything for success as Muslims, for success as human beings, for success as Abdullah, as servants of Allah Swt depends on our ability and our consistency and our remembrance. Only in the hearts of true believers, do they fear and shake when Allah's name is mentioned in *dhikr*. [This is true] because we tremble when we realize what we forgot and think: “Oh my God. If I had not stopped for that red light, I would have been in that accident that you see up the road.” “It is a good thing that I did not eat that food because if I ate that food on the train, I would have gotten sick.” The timing is so important. So many times when you just missed, you just missed, and you tremble. You say, “My God. I just missed that. If I had been on that plane....” You don't know—by Allah.

When we reflect on those things, we have some *taqwa*—fear, but piety. It deepens our piety. All of this is to impress us with the majesty and the power, the intensity, the strength of Allah Swt, of this process we call life, and how important it is to commit ourselves to it, and to obey. The verse from *az-Zumar* was revealed at the time of the battle of Badr. The mention of the remembrance of something that is fearsome was to

help us to understand how the Mercy of Allah Swt and the Rewards of Allah Swt are paired with circumstances that are called in Qur'an, rewards and punishments. Rewards and punishments are paired. We see good and evil are paired. Right and wrong are paired so to give us the context of what the benefits are, what the up side is and what the down side is, what is the positive and what the negative is. We should remember Allah Swt and have some fear/*taqwa*, some sense of importance as to the consequences of our actions, of our own consciousness.

These two meanings of apprehension and anxiety and mercy are re-united in Sūratu-z-Zumar, where we are told, Allah Swt has now revealed the fairness of the statement that the scriptures are consistent wherein promises of rewards are paired with threats of punishment, wherein doth creep the flesh of those who shudder, who fear their Lord so that their flesh and hearts soften at the remembrance of Allah Swt or at the celebration of the praises of Allah. When we think of the Mercy of Allah Swt, our hearts soften. They soften because we have lack of absolute knowledge. We are not sure about how this whole process works. We have to trust in Allah Swt and pursue what is good and we abstain from what is not good. We enjoin what is good and we advise what not to do: what is bad. And we have to try and live in this state of recollection, of remembrance. On the authority of Muazzi ibn Jabal (ra), the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said:

***Allah (swt) said: “No servant of Mine mentions Me in himself except that I mention him in an assembly of My angels. And he does not mention Me in an assembly except that I mention him in the highest way.”*** (Hadith Qudsi)

Again, we see the same process. If you do one thing, it is magnified. You see it in so many cases. If you walked towards Allah Swt, Allah comes running towards you. If you seek the *madad*, the *madad* comes to you. If you seek to remember Allah Swt, Allah

remembers you in an assembly greater than that. This is the way the system works. This is the way the Truth becomes magnified and clear. Abu Huray (ra) said, ***“While on the road to Mecca, the Prophet Mohammed (sal) passed on top of a mountain called Jumad’an, at which time he said, “Move over, for here is Jumad’an which has overtaken the single minded.” They asked, “Who are the single minded?” He said, “The men and women who remember Allah (Swt).”***

Does that mean that all they do is remember Allah (Swt), or does it mean that everything you see and everything you do reminds you of Allah (Swt)? Does that mean you spend your day just saying, “Allah, Allah, Allah?” Or does it mean that by doing certain practices and by awakening the *latā’if*, by doing good acts and by reading Qur’an, by doing your prayer and by fasting at Ramadān, you become more aware of that Divine Presence. Those are the single minded. Those are those who are firm in their life, firm in their Islam, firm in their beliefs. Tirmidhi in another way related the same *hadith*: ***“Who are the single minded?” and he replied, “Those who dote on the remembrance of Allah and are ridiculed because of it, whose burden the dhikr removes from them so that they come to Allah with anxiety, with apprehension.”***

[Note the phrase:] ***“who dote on... Allah Swt.”*** The assumption is that the people who don’t do that are somehow threatened by that activity, so they ridicule the person who does it. We know how people do that, and not just in religious things. Other kids ridicule other kids, because the kids do something better in school. People do that; they ridicule someone else because they, themselves, don’t do it. Again, everything is represented, from the lowest level to the highest levels, from the lowest *nafs* to the highest levels of piety. As we really truly are moved to remember Allah (Swt), we are overwhelmed by the Mercy of Allah Swt and the kindness and the patience; and all of a sudden you look back and think, “Oh my God, how did I live through that?” “How did I get away with

that?” “How come I wasn’t punished for that?” “I didn’t realize the gravity of what I was saying, the gravity of what I was doing, or the intensity of how my words were taken.” With that comes humility and a kind of anxiety, and it makes our skin shake or shiver.

Any of us who have had fear in our life, which sometimes comes out of nowhere—a threat or an attack, or a potential attack, or a risk—you find yourself shaking. You find yourself breathing rapidly. You find that you can’t control your mind. You can’t control your body. Well, if that comes from just worldly things, we should take seriously what it says in Qur’an when it says that when you come to this realization through the remembrance of Allah Swt, and your body begins to shake, you have something to relate to that. At some time you were in danger, or a car cut in front of you; you stopped and you are shaking. Everything is consistent. For every experience in the physical world, there is a spiritual analogue to it; therefore it has a meaning to it. It has a purpose to it.

The same response [comes] when we have love in our hearts and love for Allah (Swt). We lose ourselves in the love of Allah—we know what it is to lose ourselves in love—and we become overwhelmed by His Love. Our children, they may not have fallen in love yet, but they love us, their parents. They miss us: “Where is my mommy? Where are they?” This is love, worry, concern. They see us upset. They see us not on time. So we know what love is. Everyone knows what love is. Sometimes you cannot control yourself physically from love either. Amu Theeri said in his treatise, The Encouragement to Good and Discouragement of Evil: “*The single minded are those who dote on the dhikr and who are ridiculed for it. These are the ones burning with the remembrance of Allah (swt).*” This idea of doting on it [is repeated here]. Do you know what doting is? Your mother doted on you. You dote on your children. This describes the state of remembrance. This describes what happens during *dhikr*.

There are many forms of *dhikr*. There are people who are constantly in a state of anxiety and fear also without *dhikr*, but it is a different kind of fear and anxiety. We know that the people locked in society are a bit crazy—the *majdhub* people. There are some who do *dhikr* in seclusion (*khilwa*), and that is permitted, by the way. No one should tell you that that is not permitted. In a Sahih Hadith, Hujuri says: **“Seven people will be shaded by Allah. And the seventh person is the person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes get flooded with tears.”** There is no one watching you. No one sees how pious you are. How do you make this happen? Do you practice crying? I can give you lessons from theater on how to cry.

You have to sincerely remember, standing and sitting and lying on your side. Abu Bakr (ra) said that the times have become so corrupt that there is nothing better than isolating oneself. We could take that to be true, but at least [take] some *itikāf* during Ramadān, or some *khilwa* during the year. We say that one isolates oneself from people with one’s actions while they keep mixing with them in the physical body. However, if we cannot succeed at mixing, then we should isolate ourselves physically but without entering into some kind of monastic mentality. We have to find a place and a time in our worldly life where we can remove ourselves for a period of time—overnight, a few hours, ten days during Ramadān, *itikāf*. Hazrat (ra) used to spend ten days every year. [When I was with him in India], usually we would go to the *mazar* in the *masjid* of Shāh Walīullāh (ra). He liked to spend it there. Or he would go to Chirāghi-deli (ra) and spend it there in the *masjid*. Everybody brings their bed rolls and they spend their days in *muraqabah*, and food and tea is brought to them after the *iftar*.

The Prophet Mohammed (sal), again in affirming that we should remember Allah, recite and make *dhikr*, said: **“The best *dhikr* is “La illa ha illallah.” Say it as much as you**

want until people say that you are crazy and foolish.” He said:

*The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt, among those who forget Him is like a green tree among dry ones. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt among those who forget Him, Allah shows him his seat in paradise during his lifetime. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt among those who forget Him is like the fighter behind those who run away. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt among those who forget Him, Allah looks at him with a look after which He will never punish him. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt among those who forget His is like a light in a dark house. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt among those who forget Him, Allah forgives him to the amount of every eloquent and non-eloquent speakers. That is the number of humans and animals. The one who mentions or remembers Allah Swt in the market place, will have a light in every hair of his or her body on the day of resurrection.*

As Sufis we say, “*Dhikr has a beginning which is tawajjuh sādiq, and it has a middle which has a light that strikes us with the nūr tarīq, and it has an end which pierces the difficulty.*”

So there are many different stages of *dhikrullah*: the truthful application of it, the sincere turning and facing/*tawajjuh*; the returning, the facing Allah Swt with a sense of sincerity, a sense of gratitude, a sense of truth; by seeing everything and being grateful. The light comes in that breaks open the nut, if you will. The difficulty within us makes us bare our hearts and bare our souls. Abu Sayed (ra) said,

*When Allah Swt decides to befriend a servant of His, He opens the door of dhikr for that servant, after the latter takes place. After that person takes pleasure in*

*dhikr, He opens the door of proximity for him. After that, he raises him to the meetings of intimacy. After that, He makes him sit on the throne of Oneness and then He removes the veils from him. He has him enter the abode of Dar al Fu'ād-daniya or singleness and unveils His Jalal (His Majesty), His Allah Zam (His Sublimity), and al-Latīf (His Subtlety). When the servant beholds His Majesty and His Sublimity, he remains without the he. He becomes immune, extinguished to the claims and potential of his ego, and protected for Allah's sake.*

Now that doesn't sound too bad. *Dhikr* is a very big thing, a very vast thing. It is not just saying Allah. It has an intention, an attitude, degrees, stages, experiences. It encompasses light. It encompasses apprehension. It encompasses wellness and illness, motion and stability, faith and submission, moral ethical fortitude, courage, sustainability. All of these aspects we have in us need to be developed. That is why Allah has created it. It is on one hand a medicine against all ills; and on the other hand, it is a food that makes us grow and reach our potential. It makes our souls full. I guess you could call it soul food. *Dhikr* is soul food.

People who have the worst disease of all are the ones who sin and live a life against Allah Swt, and who don't repent—because we all sin. There is even medicine for that. The familiarity of the estranged people, the treasure of those who practice reliance, the food of those who possess certainty, *dhikr* is an *abaya*, an adornment. It is the food we eat. It is the shoes that protect us on our journey. It is the hands that are gloved, that assists us to hold hot things or things that are dangerous. It is the tool by which we cut through the difficulties of the world. The sharpened sword, if you will. It is the covering under which we find protection from nature. It is the bed covering in which we keep warm at night. It is the blessed companionship of those who you love and who love you. It is the glasses that adjust our vision, which have to change with age. Hopefully we are near

sighted and so the nearer we get to Allah Swt, the less we need our glasses.

And for whatever reason we cannot think of *dhikr* as being anything less than these things. Rasūl Nebi (sal) said, “***Remembrance of Allah is certain knowledge of one’s belief, immunity of hypocrisy, a fortress against Shaytan, and guarded refuge from the fire.***” That is what it is. They are nice metaphors, but they are also the Truth. Insh’allah.

*Salām aleikum.*

Closing prayers.