

October 23, 2009

Khutbah



Title: [What Are You Enslaved To?](#)

DVD title: Tafsir on Verses of Sūratu-l-Insān (or Ad-Dahr)
Strive to Be a Servant of Allah, Not a Slave to the Worldly

Opening *du'ās*. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) reveals to the Prophet Muhammad (sal),

Truly, this is your reward and your striving is gratefully rewarded.

He's speaking of paradise in this *'āyat* of Sūratu-l-Insān.

Truly, We have sent down to you the Qur'an as a revelation over time, so be patient with the judgment of your Lord, and do not follow the willful wrongdoer from among them, or the ungrateful denier of the Truth.

Remember the name of your Lord morning and night, and in part of the night prostrate yourself to Him and glorify Him throughout the length of the night.

Truly those who are unmindful of Allah love this fleeting life, and scatter behind themselves thoughts on a grievous day. We created them and strengthened their joints, and if We will, We shall replace them with others like them.

Truly, this is a reminder that whoever wills may take a way unto his Lord. (76:22-29)

These ‘*āyāt* are a great empowerment by Allah to humanity, and show a way human beings can understand things. People can take it to be actual or metaphorical, that there is not only life after death, but a beautiful life after death for people of faith who take their faith seriously, and who take their progress toward Allah seriously, who make the effort in the morning, in the evening and the late times of night to remember Allah, and also to prostrate to Allah is very important—to regulate ourselves. This is the formal aspect of what is being said here. There is a reward called Paradise if you live a good life, do good things, and you don’t become attached to this world; and most people work from the point of view of reward.

But the real servant, the real ‘*abdallah*, the person who understands what it means to be in submission to Allah is not just a religious slave who follows religious rituals, it’s the one who, through a lot of effort and struggle with the heavy burdens and strains and vicissitudes of day to day life, sometimes feels the struggle is never ending. They, probably at times, think they are [carrying] very heavy burdens, and sometimes think they are too heavy to carry (despite the fact that in *Sūratu-l-Baqarah* Allah (swt) tells us there is no burden too heavy). That person is one who wants nothing, and really cannot serve anything other than Allah. The person who really has a realistic view of life, and maintains their piety, faith and the basics of their practices, even in the service of one’s own family and loved ones, one has to think that in that service you are really serving Allah. What does that mean? We repeat it over and over again so many times.

Serving Allah means to serve the incredible manifestation of life itself. It is serving the expression of the Divine Reality, the expressions of love: *rahmat*, *rahīm*, ‘*adl*/justice,

wudud, hibb, hubb/love in day to day life. This is serving Allah, not serving someone over here, over there, or on a throne somewhere up there. It is serving that Divine Expression that permeates everything. We cannot have consciousness, and we really cannot have awareness, unless we are so committed that we are a servant of that consciousness and of that awareness. At least we should understand that awareness and consciousness is provided to us. Last night we spoke of the biological phenomena, and didn't touch directly on the consciousness that follows with that. But obviously we know it's there, because we're talking, listening, and thinking.

We cannot stand being unaware or unconscious. That is a slave of Allah; that is a truth seeker. One who seeks the truth is not seeking the truth of a situation only. They are seeking the Truth, seeking the undeniable Reality in everything, seeking the beauty in the fall, the magnanimity of the mountains, and the love in the hearts of people who you love or who love you. In fact, there is no freedom without that servitude, without that sense of trust and submission. Perhaps we should see very realistically that for most of us, in this very moment we are living in, it is not that we are really free. It is just that we are enslaved with something we don't think is enslaving us. That is true of the person who is a rank materialist, who only thinks of worldly things, but doesn't think they are enslaved to their materialism.

We are, though, enslaved to our expectations, to our minds, to our history, to our culture, to our educations; and to our doubts, fears, and the hagiography of the existence around us. We are enslaved to many things, and have allowed ourselves to be that. It is not all bad. "Slave" is a tough word to use, of course. It has a heavy historical and cultural reality to it. But think of it in those terms: people are sold or captured into slavery. To sell is *bai'at*; only this is about choice. We need to choose to be servants (I'll change the word now to servant), to be in servitude to the Creator.

When we're walking down the road, [it might happen that] a big acorn hits you on the head. What did you do to deserve that? Were you in the right place at the right time, or the wrong place at the right time, or at the right time in the wrong place, or at the wrong time in the wrong place? This acorn falls from the oak tree. It has a history. Way back months ago it started growing and growing. It was destined to hit you in the head. It hit me in the head . What could I have done about it? Nothing. That little thing, an acorn hitting you in the head (it hit me on the shoulder), what could I have done about it? Nothing, nothing. I'm a slave to that acorn. Does the acorn say, "Ah, there's Shaykh Rashid, I'm going to hit him on the head. Oh, I missed and got his shoulder. Better luck next time." There is not a consciousness in that. It is part of a Reality that we are part of to make us humble.

There are just some inescapable circumstances. There are inevitabilities. We are slaves to many things. We don't think we are slaves to our minds, to our history, to our cultural orientations, to our opinions and desires, so many things. But when something we obviously can't control comes along we say, "Okay, I can understand your point, Shaykh." We have to understand a deeper point. Allah says in Qur'an, **"For those who have covered up, We have made ready chains for them and an iron collar and a furious fire."** (76:4) Take the drama out for a minute. It just means there is a whole other realm of enslavement. That is, when you don't look at the truth, when you don't look at what is obvious, when you don't accept the system we are part of, when you don't accept the inevitabilities of things, you, therefore, don't submit to them, and you, therefore, don't have gratitude for what comes to you. Submission and gratitude come together.

Submission (*taslīm, salām, islam*) and gratitude/*shukr* come together. For the person who brings those two things together, they have raised themselves high above the average

human being. What comes to you has an emotional effect. It has a mental effect, psychological effect. It has a financial effect. Maybe it has many kinds of effects in *dunya*; but to get to the point where you have gratitude for the learning and growing experience is part of your *qadr*/destiny. It is not a blind destiny, because many aspects of your destiny you have created by choice. To have gratitude [and be able to say,] “Ah, that’s something new. I haven’t thought of it in that way” is the real, living Islam. It is not the Islam of doing this or that, praying this way or that way, this *madab* and that *madab*, the Shi’a hate the Sunni and the Sunni hate the Shi’a. There is no state Islam. There is no country Islam, not in Iran, not anywhere.

There is one state of Islam; that is the state of creation of Reality, of Allah, *Ahad*/One. Anybody else who tries to do anything else with it is twisting it for their own self-aggrandizement. Also, it doesn’t mean we cover up secrets or instances or circumstances, as when Allah talks about covering things. It means covering up your consciousness, your awareness, dumbing-down, not allowing yourself to use the capability and potential you have as a human being to see, to hear, to understand and to act responsibly. Where did those abilities come from? They come from Allah (swt). What does that mean? Does Allah have a big pot of abilities and walks around with a soup ladle? “Here is a little of this ability on you. Here, some for you. And here’s a little soup ladle for you.” No, that’s not what it means. It comes from Allah. The potential is there. That *fayyāz*, the overflowing of potential, of light, of love is there. It flows on all of us.

If you were outside an hour ago, you got rained on. Some drops would have missed you, and some hit you. Do you stand there and say, “Ah, I got hit by 463 drops, but 2, 432 of them missed me.” Is that the way we look at it? No, you got wet. Reverse the metaphor: outpouring of love and potential and capability and insight is coming upon us all the time. It is coming upon us in the light and beauty of nature, in the love of the beloved and the

ones who we love and who love us, in knowledge, intelligence, in good acts and service.

It's coming to us, coming to us, and we should be standing in that rainfall getting soaking wet, soaking wet with compassion, with mercy, with justice, with love.

How much is it appreciated by others? Allah tells us that the reward is somewhere else, under another dimension. What does it mean, somewhere else? Another place? Human beings always think of Heaven and Hell in terms of human analogies, but it's not that. The rewards of are of consciousness and action. These iron collars and chains are symbols of enslavement. When you enslave yourself to something – and we are slaves to many things, as I said – if you find you are a slave today to your expectations, or your hopes and fears; if you have projected onto those circumstances things that are unrealistic and enslaved yourself to that, then you will have misery. You will be led around by the collar of your desires, fears, or worries. It's that simple.

To be '*abdallah*' means to be servant of the moment in the present. Allah is present. Allah is as near to you as your jugular vein. To be a servant of Allah means to be a servant in this moment, to the opportunity of this moment. When you are in a bad mood, a little grumpy (most of you have never experienced that), you have an opportunity to make *mahasabat* and reflect on that. If you are at the point where you think, "I'm in a bad mood. How am I going to get out of this bad mood? It's infecting me and everybody around me," then you have achieved a level of *mahasabat* and are reflecting on this. You are taking account of yourself. There are stages to this being a servant of Allah. [But it means] being in the here and now, being in the totality and the unity of the truth that is around us, not the truth that is "out there" somewhere. If we care to, we can look and see it. Whether you see it or not, whether you understand it or not, it's here.

In a sense, every one of us is a slave to something. If you don't create the servitude in

relationship with that, from where you and I came and to where we return, then we will be a slave only to things of this world. But if we become a servant by choice to the Creator of all this, to that Divine Force, that Presence that is constantly here reminding us, then it is like the story they tell in India. The servant woman worked in the home of a rich man. She used to call the children, “My Krishna. My Sameer.” She treated them like her own children. But when she earned enough money, she returned to her own village, her own family. That’s how we should treat the world. We accept it, and do our task and our work as it has been given to us to do; but we know where our home village is. We know where our destiny is.

We are enjoined also to have *taqwa*/piety, a sense of meaningfulness that we realize cannot exist fully here in this world, in this aspect of our life. But Allah speaks in Sūratu-l-Insān (#76) about the springs and fountains of paradise. These are metaphors of what we sense will satisfy and fulfill us for eternity—not our family name, not our popularity, not our financial success, not our fame, but a greater satisfaction that has no end in itself. Once we have made that understanding in our self of our submission, we can be like a conduit. “There’s the spring, we found it! Let us lay a pipe to you and you and you, and let that water of the sweet spring flow there.”

How do you do that? You do that through your words, eyes, commitments, forgiveness, patience, steadfastness, love, practices, understanding, through your sense of nobility and justice, and through an attitude of *shukr*/appreciation. You are laying these estuaries or pipes into the hearts and homes of others. That means you can now drink from that sweet spring. This concept of expanding one’s own submission and knowledge brings us to the idea of something even greater than that, which is to die of this world while one is in the world. That doesn’t mean not care about the world, or that you don’t do work in the world, or that you will retire to a cave on the hill somewhere. It means that you find in

yourself a greater life beyond the physical world. Therefore, you realize the more you do in this world, the more good you do, the better it is and the easier it is for others to find the way. It's like laying a track in the desert. You cut a trail for three reasons: to get to where you are going, to find your way back, and so others might walk on that trail.

Aside from the political aspects of what the President was talking about today on energy. Aside from all the rhetoric that goes with it, and aside from the financial aspects of it, there was a small taste of vision and reality in it. There was a comprehensive statement that slipped through all the rest of the rhetoric, which was about the reality of the world we share, and the responsibility we have for that world. Christians call it stewardship, and we call it the *amanat*. We have been entrusted with this world. You don't need another *khutbah* on that subject; you've heard it a thousand times. It's part of the whole subject of submission and acceptance of where and what we are. In that sense, we are all enslaved because we all have certain abilities and certain disabilities. We have to come into the state of rehabilitation. Certain things in this world harm us, wound us, cause us difficulty: genetically, physically, disease, whatever it may be. Rehabilitation is very important.

We are now in a time when we are struggling to rehabilitate the world itself on the physical level. Is it not also a statement, a metaphor for the state of human beings? Look at how Muslims are so disabled in the world today that they totally misunderstand what Islam is, and they cast out an image of Islam that causes misery to Muslims and non-Muslims in the name of Islam. They have disabled the truth. It's as if I come to you and say, "Can I sit down at your computer?" and when you are not looking, I disable your hard drive. Then I run away. Now you sit down and you have to do something, and you can't do it. You call up tech support. And they can't help you, because they don't know that someone removed your hard drive (or something worse). We all have some

disability, and we have to rehabilitate ourselves. Where does this rehabilitation take place? Where does this sense of empowerment and servitude come about? It comes about in how we act outwardly to one another and how that works inwardly on us, at the center of our being, at the core of our hearts.

If we don't try to fulfill our capabilities, to fulfill our promises, to find the way to overcome our own disabilities, then we are not going to be part of a harmonious relationship or world or community of individuals. You can look around the world and see how people treat one another and how nations treat their own people. I was talking to Harold Robles today. He said, "I am now dealing with 20,000 orphans. They have no future, no hope. What you are telling me is hopeful for them!" I was talking about capacity building and social innovation programs. He's always very enthusiastic, *alhamdulillah*. What's the point? We have capabilities we have to access. We have promises we have to keep. There are conflicts we have to help end. It is this gap between who we really are and how we act, and what we think we are and who we really are that we have to close. The misunderstandings we have about ourselves, and the misunderstandings we have about others—there are chasms to be bridged.

[We need to bridge] the distance between what we promise ourselves and what we deny ourselves: what we promise ourselves that is good to promise ourselves, and what we deny ourselves that is good to deny ourselves. [We need to bridge the distance] between our conflicts and our inner peace. If we are alert and attentive and sensitive enough, and if we would really fear the results of hypocrisy, we would try very, very hard to live as a fully humane human being, with a strong identity, and a deep belief, and with abiding faith, submission, and trust. In fact, Allah (swt)—no matter what—is always the topic. It's just how you conceive of Allah. There is a verse in the Qur'an that warns us and inspires us and urges us to take a good look at the relationship between what we say and

what we do, certainly within the context of our intention.

Sometimes, our intention can be good and sometimes it appears we are saying one thing and doing another. The ‘*āyat* refers directly to the Day of Awakening. In English, it is **“And who feeds with food out of love for Him the destitute, the orphan, and the prisoner.”** This is a wonderful ‘*āyat*. (Reads the Arabic). **“Truly, we feed you for the sake of the presence of Allah, and we do not need from you any reward or thanks.”** (76:8-9) It doesn’t say we feed you for the sake of Allah, but for the sake of the Presence of Allah. You can look it in the standard way of: you better watch out, because Allah is watching, or because Allah is present. Without that Presence you couldn’t do anything. This is the attitude you have to have as Muslims. This is the only attitude to have as Muslims, nothing else—not a political attitude, not just a religious, formalistic attitude. We have to examine this very much.

I’ll end with a story. These verses came to the Prophet (sal) in a very specific situation, which I’m sure you are familiar with. But they didn’t lose their applicability for us to explore, even though they come to us some 1420 years later. This verse refers to a vow Imam Ali (ra) took.

Imam Ali was having some problem, and he asked the advice of Rasulallah (sal). Rasulallah asked him to fast for three days because from constriction/qabd, comes expansion/bast. So Imam Ali and his whole family undertook the fast. As you know, they possessed very little, as most of the Sahabah possessed very little. His wife, Hazrati Fatima, baked five small loaves of coarse barley bread to break their fast. They would break the fast at sunset, like a normal iftār. At the time of the breaking of the fast, a very poor man knocked on the door. Imam Ali gave the man his bread.

Hassan and Hussein (may Allah be pleased with them), his two sons, gave their loaves as well. And Hazrati Fatima (ra), daughter of Prophet Mohammed (sal), and their servant also gave theirs. So the next day they fasted, and the same bread was baked. (That's all they had, nothing else). Then an orphan knocked on the door, and they all gave their bread to the orphan. On the third day, just as they were about to break their fast, a prisoner of war came to them. (War was no stranger to that region.) He was on his way home, and needed provision. In Islam no prisoner was to be kept longer than 3 days before judgment was passed as to whether he was to be kept or freed to return home.

That same evening, Imam Ali visited the Prophet. The Prophet asked him why he looked so weak, "You are so thin, and you have hardly enough energy to walk in the door!" This is when this 'āyat was revealed to Prophet Mohammed (sal).

We have to look at the purity and freedom of that household. They were all considered of the household of the Prophet Mohammed, *Ahl al Bayt*. They not only gave of what they had, but gave of the best of what they had. The giving was not just for the receiver, but for the giver, also. *Sādiq*. Anything that you do that is good is for yourself; anything that you do that is wrong is yourself. The giving of what we like trains us to live a healthy kind of life of detachment, not a self-beating kind of detachment: I'll give you this, but I regret it; or I'm forced to give this, because people are watching me; or if I don't give you this, I'll be criticized by society. Allah is always watching in that sense, because Allah is always present. There is only Allah, *Ahad*.

When we die, obviously we become detached from something to something. What is it we are going to be attracted to? We are going to be attracted by our good deeds. We hope that our good deeds will filter out the dross. I was making coffee this morning in my big Chemix. I put the filter and the coffee in, and poured hot water in it. The coffee stayed, but the coffee went down. How can it be in two places at once? What's on the top? Coffee. What's on the bottom? Coffee. We distinguish between the two: one is coffee grounds, and one is coffee to drink. What are we filtering? What is coming through? What is saf/pure? When we die, what are the filters? Actually, this morning I used a new filter and poured the water. It got on the outside of the filter and the whole thing dropped down. I had to throw out that coffee, because the filter, the coffee, and the coffee grounds were all mixed together. That's hell. I even said, "What the hell happened?" I had to do it all over again.

But you don't have a chance to do it all over again in life, so you build your filters. What comes through is the pure, pure coffee, fair trade, organically grown. When we die, obviously we become detached from something, and attracted to something else. How we live our life is the filter. If you have really good Sumatran Indonesian coffee, or Ethiopian coffee, you have very good, tasty coffee. And if you know it's fair trade, and the people who produced it are getting a fair price for their coffee, then you've done good, because you are being consistent within your belief system.

When you look around the Christian world, the Jewish world, the Muslims world, the Hindu world today, you find people are not consistent. We are not consistent, so we are not going to blame them. We are going to just say, "Look at what is happening there. If it's happening like that, it's happening more subtly with me, so I have to make better filters." When we give, we should give *fī sabīli-llāh*, for the love of Allah, and not just because the person is poor, but because that poor person is a manifestation of Allah. We

Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid

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know the Hadith of Jibreel. Allah says, **“We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks.”** I’ll leave you with that, not seeking any reward or thanks, only asking Allah to forgive me for any errors I’ve made.

SECOND KHUTBAH. Duas.