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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Relationship of Firāsa and Character](#)

DVD title: Basīra: Insight and Firāsa: Clear Sight
Secrets of Sırr: Discernment of the Inner Eye

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. We talked a little about *rūh* last night. Mixed in with that was a little bit about *firāsa* and *basīra*. There is a slight difference between *basīra* and *firāsa*, which we have talked about before. *Basīra* is insight in a sort of loose way of translating it, seeing within. *Firāsa* is discernment—perspicacity, if you like a fancy word—clear sight. So, [there is] insight and clear sight.

There are different levels, depending on how you or I use the different *latā'if* as a means to perceive or to see. If you use *basīra*, you are talking about seeing with the inner eye, insight. But how do you discern what you are seeing? It seems to be splitting hairs, but it isn't. This *firāsa* is how clearly you are seeing with that insight. The more refined that sight is, the better it is. There is a *firāsa imaniyya*; clear-sightedness or perspicacity through faith. There is a Divine Light that Allah (swt) gives to a person of faith through their inner eye, through their *basīra*. Think of it this way: think of *basīra* as being the inner eye which has a capacity to see, by definition. Perspicacity is the discernment with which one sees through the inner eye.

There is a Divine Light that Allah (swt) gives to a person, who has *iman* in their inner eye, to see. It's gained through refining one's *aqīda*, or *akhlaq*, their character. The more noble your character, the more understanding and clarity you

have in what you are seeing with your *basīra*, with your inner eye. If that character, or as that character is in harmony, resonance, balance/*mīzān* (equilibrium), then the sight is clear and more dependable. I'll give an example from today.

I went up the hill and I saw the amplifier, and I acted on it. I turned it on and got this great urge to say, "GOOD MORNING VIETNAM!!" from the movie with Robin Williams. There is nothing spiritual about that. There is nothing important about that. You can say it's just sort of serendipitous or accidental, except it happens all the time. It happens a lot. At a certain point you learn to act on it without thinking about it. I didn't restrain myself from doing it. I didn't say, "Oh don't bother," I just let her do it. And I watched myself let her do it, by the way. I don't want to give myself any great credit for this, but I watched myself do it, and it went against my normal character.

Normally my character is to say, "Don't bother doing it." And she would normally say, "No, no, it's not a bother." And I would say, "No, really you don't have to do it, it was just a whim." And she would say, "No, no, it's okay," and she would have already done it; and I'd say thank you very much. But we didn't go through any of that. I didn't even thank her for plugging it in. At some point, you learn to act on these things. You look at it as practice. That wasn't very deep discernment—It wasn't. The second part of it is, I went down to the house and I'm watching the news. I decide to go to channels that have something more informative on, and I change the channel. What's on? "Good Morning, Vietnam."

Am I proud of myself? No, I wasn't. And I wasn't surprised. Because you are crossing these matrixes all the time. This information flow is happening all the time. The question is, are you picking it up or are you not picking it up? Are you

reading the news as it is coming across the wire, or are you not? As you know, most of the news is like static. Except for some of us, it has some special meaning. Some people just like Robin Williams. Is it really important? No. Yes. It depends on how you look at it, and what you take it to be. I wonder if we put this up on YouTube if I might get more responses just from this little thing than I would get from saying something deeper and more profound. People can relate to the phenomenological, and want to attribute a lot of phenomenological importance to it. There is some importance to it. It has to do with trust. It has to do with perspicacity, clear-sightedness.

I was in some kind of equilibrium or balance with that reality hours before it happened, and I swear to you I didn't look at the tv guide to see what was going to be on tonight. How is it possible I could have picked up on something that was going to happen in the future? It's happening all the time, like everything is happening all the time. It's put out there by somebody. You can even say, somebody planned the schedule, so it's out there. It doesn't matter. And I don't want to spend too much time on this, because I want to talk about *sirr* tonight.

The Prophet Mohammed (sal) -- how do you like that? Almost in the same sentence as "Good Morning, Vietnam" -- said, "***Be wary of the firāsa of a man of faith, because he sees with the light of Allah.***" What was necessary here? *Iman*. Maybe that's the difference. Does one need to have *iman* to be able to know "Good Morning, Vietnam" is going to be on tonight and do a silly thing like I did this morning? Certainly not... maybe.

That light of Allah, that *fayyād* of Allah, the Divine Effusion, this overflow of emanation is one of the ways of gaining knowledge. It is given by Allah, bestowed on you. It is said, "***It is bestowed on the heart of the perfect slave ('abd).***" It is

said the heart of the *insani kamil*, the perfect person, like Prophet Mohammed (sal), can attain almost all of this Divine Effusion—except not all, because it’s overflowing. But you are bathed inwardly and outwardly in this Divine Effusion, Divine Light. It’s believed by some that the existence of this world itself is due to the overflowing of the lights of this manifestation of Allah (swt). Bang!—literally, the Big Bang—and the world is created. It is supported by that light that continually flows to us in frequencies perhaps we cannot measure or see. I’m going to set *fayyād* aside tonight for a few minutes. It becomes a little deep; and we don’t want to get too deep, right? I want to go back a moment to *firāsa*, and then, *inshā’a-llāh*, we will get to *sirr*.

This perception, discernment, witnessing, insight (*basīra*) is often defined as the eye of the heart, also—‘*ain al-qalbi*. The depth of that perception, as I just told you, is dependent on a certain level of character and faith, and the ability to see not just things but the consequences of things. If I can see the consequence of something at the beginning of an act, that would be called foresight. If you have foresight, it means some action is taking place, you are seeing it, and you are seeing the consequences of it. This insight and this *firāsa*/discernment are also considered, because of the *fayyād*, to be the singular source of spiritual knowledge through two aspects. One is through reflection (*tafakkur*). That is to say, something happens; you see it; you discern what is happening and you reflect upon it. You learn from it; you reflect upon it. And [the second one is] from the inspiration that comes from the seeing itself.

You see something, and you discern that there’s something very, very meaningful in it. You reflect on that, and it inspires you. It carries you upward. It fills you with the life force, inspiration. The first level of perception is just to see the reality of things and to know their names. Knowing the names means that you can

conceivably understand their meanings and the interrelationships. With that comes a power of conscience. Now comes *firāsa*. With that conscience, one discerns and defines parameters of values that originate with what you see. You discern meaning, and you assign value to it. Pure sight, balanced sight is clear sight. Clear sight means that it is correct. You are seeing things clearly. It is not being confused with reason, which is not dependent on clear-sightedness, but is philosophically values-laden, culturally affected, and may be affected by your preferences. *Firāsa*, clear-sightedness, is not affected by your preferences. You see; you discern its meaning, and you accept it. That's why it is connected with your faith and character.

I understand there are holes in what I am saying. You will forgive me for some of those holes. Maybe I'll fill them in later, and maybe I won't. Maybe you'll fill them in later.

The other aspect of it is the power of perception is refined by the light of your faith. One might call it the nearness you have to the Divine Presence. When we sit in meditation, we are always talking about being aware of the Divine Presence, the nearness you have to that Divine Presence. When your eyes become tired, when you are not sure of what you are seeing—and we say, “Well, if I'm seeing this correctly, then....” or “I'm not sure if I heard this correctly” or, “If what I'm seeing is real...”—when that form of sight becomes exhausted or questioned, the insight carries you forward by seeing with clarity. Without any other guidance, without any other evidence, without any machinations of the mind, the ‘truth’ is revealed, seen. This is the relationship between insight/*basīra*, and *firāsa* and *haqiqah*/truth. This is the sight by which Prophet Mohammed (sal) was seeing. This is the sight through the light of Nūr-i-Mohammed. Where reason might be confused, sight is not confused.

Let me read something to you. Each *latīfa* has stages. The seventh stage of the heart is called *al-mahabah*, as taught by one of our predecessors in the Naqshbandī line, Allaudin Attar (ra). He speaks of the love of the Prophet Mohammed in the following way. I hope all this convoluted talking of mine will become clear to you by his words.

*My brother, listen to me. Listen with your ear, but with the hearing of Allah to understand what I mean. See through my eyes, and live with me in every quality. Be silent. Be quiet. Open your heart to listen to what I say about the love. You love Him, and you need this love. You could not leave the love. How could you live without love. What would your life be like? If you do not love Him, He will discharge you and bring another into the net. The people who love Allah, Allah loves them. Listen to what I say from the lips of the Prophet Mohammed (sal): **“Be the ear to your God, be the eye to your God, be the face also if you want to sit with God face to face. If you sit near Him, you will find no sadness because He has loved you from the beginning.”***

The meaning of the love and the religion are the secret, sirri. What He wants is for you to be the servant for your Master, and to be polite to Him when you sit near Him. You want Him to give you mercy and love from the mercy. After that, you will know what He wants from the meaning of the mercy. The heart must be more clean for His Love. You cannot reach the secret love if you do not change every quality to be like the qualities of your Beloved. You must die with your Beloved if you want to reach the secret love. Clean your heart of everything, and put your heart between the hands

of your God. Let Him do what he wants with it. How can you live in this life if you refuse an order that He sends you?

And he goes on and on about the Names. Listen with the ear, and see with my eyes. He gives a very nice description of why and what you see. The seeing is one of the luminous attributes of Allah (swt). Our insight is proportionate to the ability we have to receive the manifestations of this attribute. Each attribute has its manifestation, or is a manifestation. Each attribute is not just a singular, one-dimensional manifestation but has many dimensions to it. The greatest amount or portion belongs to the person who benefits from that Divine Emanation to the fullest. The light that is reflected from the clarity of the sight, the discernment of Rasulallah (sal) shines on the heart of the believer. To the degree that we have humility and gratitude, to the degree we have opened our heart (our *rūh*, our *sirr*, *khafī*, *akhfah* and *nafs*), we are filled with that light, which is the overflowing light of Allah (swt), raining down on us. In that Divine declaration by Allah, He says:

Say this is my path. I call to myself on clear evidence and by insight. I and whoever follows me point to the enormity of the share of that Divine gift belonging to the prince of prophets and his followers (meaning Prophet Mohammed (sal)).

This is a secret. How can it be a secret? I just told it to you. It is a secret of the person who has discernment, and it is secret from the person who doesn't have it. In other words, if you see, you see. If you can't see, you can't see. If you can be guided, you are guided. If you can't be guided, you can't be guided. This is told again and again in the Qur'an. Another part of it is this: to a person who has *firāsa*, this existence is (and all levels of this existence are) described as a book of countless pages. This non-living part of creation (a bowl - although we can say

the bowl has some kind of molecular life) is holding something that is living (some fresh fruit, which still has nutritional value in it).. Each aspect of creation is a word with countless meanings. It is an utterance of Allah with countless meanings to it. Therefore, discernment keeps unveiling more and more meaning.

What is the example of that? (Here's the quiz.) [The answer is] the Qur'an. "**If the oceans were ink...**" (31:27) Each word, with its thousands and thousands of meanings, reveals another face of this existence. Each person one turns one's sight toward reveals to the seer the hidden realities of that individual. When the individual turns and sees the countenance of Allah, they see the endless realities that are reflected in this creation of Allah. This is when we say, *sair illah, sair fi Allah, sair ma'Allah*/traveling with Allah, near Allah, and within Allah. You start to see realities as they are unfolded before you. Not all are of the same value, except they are all emanations. They are all attestations or testimonies to what has come before, what is coming next, and what is present, and what will be present in another moment as you are present in that moment.

GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM! It's just something floating by. The trick is, do you know that, and do you see it for what it is? And if you do, you can even play with it. You can frolic, if you like, in the ocean of Divine Love—however you want to say it. It's flowing. What blocks it are our worries, our anxieties, our fears, our jealousies, our lack of gratitude, our undeveloped self (our *nafs* that is yet undeveloped, in all of us), [and our] distractions/*gafla*. [We have] responsibilities in this world that we are taking out of the context of that Divine Flow and Presence. We are forgetting for a moment that our work and what we are doing is an interplay with these meanings, so we get distracted. Even if you are seeing, you may not know what you are seeing.

If you are seeing, you see things in the ‘*āyat* of that Holy Book, and in the luminous light-filled phrases and stories of that Holy Book, and in the life of the Prophet (sal) and the *ambiyā*, and in the words of the *awliyā*, and in the lives of the *awliyā*. You receive messages that even the greatest minds of those who have no faith do not even know exist. If you put it in the context of something they can reason and argue with, they dismiss its existence, like religion, or truth, or Islam or whatever. Yet, Allah tells us (you can take it literally or metaphorically) that there are all these unimaginable things to be seen and surprises to be encountered in the dimension of seeing. Where is the greatest dimension of clear seeing? Jannah. And there are levels to Jannah.

It’s not that you just accept Jannah on face value: “Well, it’s religion and it says there is Paradise so I accept it.” For the Sufi, you develop the sight that allows you to realize that such a dimension of beauty, spontaneity and clarity exists by whatever name you want to call it. You experience moments of that Jannah in your life, just like you experience moments of Jahannam in your life. You see to the level of your rank, of your character, insight, effort, and openness of your *latā’if*. This perspicacity, this clarity, this seeing with discernment is what Allah says in Qur’an: **“Surely, in this are the signs of the mutawassamin (people of sight).”** Different teachers have said different things about it. Mujahid said it means “those who have visual acuity.” Ibn Abbas (ra) said that it means “those who watch things closely.” Maqadar said it means “those who learn the lessons.” There are different ways of seeing it. Muqtatil said it means “those who reflect.”

There is no contradiction in any of this, no real disagreement, and no incompatibility. It’s just the way the people of sight see, and how they describe what they see. Allah (swt) says the following with regards to the hypocrites: **“Had we willed, we could have shown them to you and you would have known**

them by their marks. But truly you will know them by the (lahn) of their speech.” (47:30) You’ll have discernment, and you will know. The first thing Allah tells us about is the *firāsa* of the eye, and watching. The second thing is the *firāsa* of the ear, which I read to you. This secret you could either keep and understand, or work on.

[What] if I said to you, “Think about and reflect on the things I’ve said in the past few days”? We’ve described the *rūh* and a lot of detail about *rūh*, not just the *latīfa*, but the meaningfulness. If I say to reflect upon this, where do you keep it to reflect upon? You think you are keeping it in your mind. If you are keeping it in your mind, you will argue with it and reason with it. And you will question it and you will test it. We all do that. Part of it is going to be there. But if you keep it in your *sirr*, you will be able to reflect on it; if you keep it in the place where secrets are kept. There was a movie recently with Richard Gere. He’s a doctor in the movie and one of his patients dies. He goes to some place on a beach in North Carolina and meets a woman and falls in love. Anyway, he dies, and all she has are his letters that are meaningful to her. She shares them with her daughter, with whom she had some problems. The secrets of the reality of the relationship were kept in a certain place, in a box that she had made. The box is *sirr*. It is made by us, for us. It is where the secrets are kept.

Sirr, in its mystery, is itself a subtle organ of perception, *latīfa*. If you are a Homeopath, you’d say it was a simple substance. All Homeopathic remedies have a simple substance that makes them unique from anything else. You can’t see it or measure it, and past the 6th potency you can’t find any reality in it, but there is a unique substance to it. If I give you Allium Ceba, beyond 6x you cannot find any presence there, but the energy is there. This is the energy of the secret place. It’s the inner most consciousness and is the point where Allah communicates with His

‘*Abd*. It’s the secret place where Allah manifests these secrets to Himself and His slave. That state is called *sirr al-hal*, the secret of that state. That’s when you realize what Allah intended to reveal to you, and you begin to see what Allah specifically, particularly, wanted to reveal to you in the moment.

This is where the Sufi would say that consciousness resides, [where] the secret or truth is revealed, that would be called *sirr al-haqiqah*/the secret of the reality or the truth. What is that? It is something beyond verbal expression. Something that is seen and discerned, but is not easily verbalized. But if it is verbalized, it is described in the context of something else. What would that be? That would be the names of things. It is described in something that represents that truth. It’s hinted to by some *ishara*/allusion. When you allude to something, that is *ishāra*. Allah alludes to the truth. All of this [creation] are illusions that allude to something else. Everything, even the words to the beautiful salawat we are hearing allude to something greater. They are real, but not quite. Reality is what it alludes to, but you can’t define that reality. But as it alludes to reality, you can sense it, identify with it, and become in harmony with it. You can be pleased by it and uplifted by it. You can use it to inspire others, and they, too, will come into harmony and resonance with the truth that cannot be described. But it can be alluded to by name. This is *sirr*. This is what happens in *sirr*.

(Referencing the movie mentioned earlier): There are those words. They are in this letter. They are letters of love and affection and hope for the future and all the other things, put in this box, filled with meaning. She found out he died because he didn’t show up on the plane he was supposed to be on. Some time later, the son came with a box and all the letters to her were there, except one he had not sent yet. She takes them all and holds them to her breast. Because why? That’s the only reality that is left; that is now him. All those secrets, words, and meanings

are now there. With the separation from the physical reality, the only reality is embracing the truth of what was known and experienced in love. Very poignant!

But that's the way life is: the separation from the essence and the apparent reality. When the reality is something that is in the consciousness, it remains much deeper than the physical reality. That's in *sirr*. The knowledge that you receive from *sirr*, *sirr al-'ilm*, indicates the reality that exists for the one who possesses that knowledge. It's the reality you live in, if you possess that knowledge. Who possess that knowledge? There is something called *sirr al-khūṣiyya*, the secret of those who are elected. This is the innermost reality of the friends of Allah (swt). It is said that Allah is so "jealous" (I don't really like that term) that He keeps the identity of these people secret so no one else knows who they are. You don't want anyone to look upon your beloved, so you keep her veiled. That's not why people [wear *hijab*], but it's the essence. He keeps a veil over those people. They exist in a state that no one has access to, but they have access to one another. Allah says in a *hadith quds*: **"My saints are under My Dome. And no one knows them but Me."**

Each one of us is breathing right now. Our breath is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. If you learn to control your breath through breathing exercises, whether you are a yogi or Sufi, you can direct that energy in a different way. You can become aware of your life breath, and it takes you on a journey. Every yogi will tell you that, every Sufi will tell you that. [You become aware], not just doing *dhikr*, but when you are doing *dhikr* in a very specific way. When you are breathing "*lā ilāha illa-llāh*" and you are watching your breath, you find that there is a breath inside the breath. When you stop the breath, you realize there is a space in the breath you can go to, and not actually have to breathe. A lot of the yogis practice that for the power just to do it—holding your breath, *habs-i-dam*.

There is a doorway there called the *sirri-sirr*, the breath within the breath, the secret within the secret. Now you know some secrets tonight. There are secrets within those secrets. Only by contemplating what is secreted there do you get the essence of the meaning. Go back to the movie. You are thinking, “Oh, this poor woman. She lost the person she loved.” What is she going to extract from it? You get the sense there is something more, like she is extracting nectar from that relationship. Either you are going to get caught up in the loss, or you are going to get the secret of that love that I was reading to you about—*al-mahabat*, the seventh stage of that love. That’s the greatest subtlety in which Allah (swt) – if you want to talk about Allah in this way – sequesters Himself from everything but the love and insight of His ‘*Abd*. No one else can see it but the ones who have that sight. You have that sight by learning how to see through the *latā’if*, recognizing it and trusting in it; keeping it clearly separate from just the realm of reason, though reason is part of Islam and Tasawwuf; but clearly understanding that discernment, that level of *basīra* and *firāsa* is different than the level of intellectual reason.

You learn to act on that just like you act on anything. “I’m doing what’s logical and reasonable, what anyone else would do in a circumstance like that.” That’s what we do all day long in the outer. We do it so naturally, we don’t think about it, we don’t argue with about it. We might argue with someone else why you did something. “Why did you take that route?” “It’s the most logical route. I’m not going to follow my GPS.” We make decisions like that all day long. We do it naturally, because that’s the way we live our outer life.

Well, you start to live your inner life by *firāsa* and *basīra*, just as naturally. You discriminate between the outer and the inner. Through frequent trips to the ‘*ālam al mithal* we recognize what are distractions or not, and we are distracted. But the

more trains oneself and allows the natural insight to come about, the more one operates in these realms of the *latā'if*. I talked about *rūh* and *sirr*, and it's very deep, no? Yes. You are not going to remember everything I said. You can study this if you want, of course. But [being] inspired to look through these *latā'if*, it becomes proven to you by your own self, *inshā'a-LLāh*. Just remember, when you think about *firāsa*, think about your ears, eyes, and heart. *Asalām Aleikum*.