

December 23, 2009

Wednesday



Title: The Rules of the Order: Traveling in One's Homeland

DVD title: The Rules of the Order: Traveling in One's Homeland
Observing and Examining One's Own Self

Dinner blessing: O Allah, so many of us are traveling, and we ask You for safety. Then there are the parents of those who are traveling, who are traveling from this world to the next. We ask safety for their journey also, Allah, that You greet them with love and kindness and spread Your wings of Mercy upon them. Give them everlasting peace, Allah (swt). We plead with You to give the rest of us, who are traveling this week safety in our going and in our coming, to open the hearts of people who believe this is a holy time, holidays, that they are filled with holiness. We ask You to straighten the minds of our supposed leaders, and end the torture and oppression of the Iranians and the Iraqis, the Chinese in Sinkiang, and the people of Palestine. We ask You to punish those who misuse the name of Islam, and to remove from power those who would abuse power in the name of Islam, and give the truth unerring a hearing. *Amin.*

Suhbat: Tonight I want to talk about *safar dar watān*: “traveling in the homeland,” and to differentiate between that and “watching your steps.” In this case, *watān* means homeland. You have heard the expression in English, “the heartland” of the United States, meaning the center. Keep in your mind that homeland can also mean heartland. Heartland, in the center, has an implication that whoever lives on either coast isn't quite the core of America, if we are talking about the U.S. But in this case, we are going to talk about heartland/homeland [as]

the core of one's home. In this case, *watān*/homeland means within one's own self. This is different than traveling outside one's self.

Traveling outside oneself for the purpose of learning may mean that you travel outside yourself to meet people or visit places, or learn about places, or to get the *bāraka* from some place. But traveling within one's own self, or in the homeland, means you observe yourself, but with a detachment, in a non-critical way, in a peaceful way. You are able to observe and critique yourself, and you learn from your errors. What do you remember from [the *dars* yesterday on] “watching your steps”? (Individuals respond.) Action and inaction. Think before you act.

Watching the steps you'd like to take. Watching your thoughts, watching what you say. In this case, you are also watching your traveling. But you are doing it based on certain principles.

For example, you need to know certain things that are very important in Islam, to travel in your homeland. You have to understand things like *hayya*, and *mushahadah*. What does it mean, witnessing? What is an attitude of *mahabbat*? What is spiritual love? What is *tajrīd* (in this case, detachment)? What is *marifah*? How do you recognize real knowledge? What is *himma*/yearning? You have a series of things you understand the meaning of, but you observe them in yourself. You are traveling within your own self, and you are observing in your own self these manifestations of the self.

You are not saying, “How should I act in this moment? What's the best way to make this decision? Where should I put my foot next?” You are observing yourself, how you are, against the backdrop of certain characteristics and qualities. So you are traveling within the realm of your own self, indeed, in your own heart. So you see [yourself]: Do I have *shawq*? Do I have contrition? Do I have *tawbah*? Am I repenting? Do I have *rahmat*/compassion? Do I have

shukr/gratitude? You are observing yourself. If you don't see that you have it – not in this circumstance, necessarily, but generally – you are not overly critical of yourself. You have a certain level of empathy or sympathy for your own self, your own state.

You also watch what parts of your being, even parts of your body, are determining your attitude. Am I operating from my head? From my heart? From somewhere else? What is determining my actions, and my thoughts? Traveling within one's own self and observing is different than *nazar ba qadam*, watching over your steps. *Nazar ba qadam* implies observing cautiously, carefully watching before you take an action or before you choose not to act, not being apprehensive, not being worried about doing something, not being afraid to do something, but literally watching and observing. You are watching your whole self. What is motivating you? That will also tell you about how you are going to make the decision in watching your step. That's going to give you an indication not only of your character, but it will tell you about *nazar be qadam*.

It implies examining your own self, or feeling a situation, or sensing a situation. What is the right thing to do under the right circumstances when the intention is right? You see: when it's the right time, right place, right circumstances and with the right intention, this is how I act. Traveling within one's own self implies a kind of examination of the self, an observation of the self, but it is non-critical. Also, examining yourself is examining your motivations. We want very much for our children and we say, why did you do that? Why did you say that? The parent acts externally in the way you should learn to act internally. If you are acting internally correctly, you will not be criticizing yourself for watching yourself. "Oh, should I do this? I do have this tendency to act this way at this time. This brings criticism or some kind of discipline or comment from my parent (or my *shaykh* for the adult)." So you internalize that. It should be gentle and it should

be a suggestion. “Don’t you think it might be better if you did this? Wouldn’t you be happier if you did this?”

But then sometimes, it has to be very sharp. Like I said to you tonight, you will let me sit down there [in my office] for hours because nobody wants to take the responsibility to go down and tell me it’s time to come up. That’s sharp. Now, that is a call for self examination and an intention to change. When you have the intention to change, then you begin to watch your steps. As you watch your steps, you’ll learn how to make the right step, to act or not to act, to say or not to say, to be funny in the moment or not. Yesterday, in the *masjid* I put the Turkish hat on Yehya, and he got embarrassed because everyone laughed. I felt bad, and he knew I felt bad. He knew I felt bad, and felt bad because of that. It would have been better not to act. Even though he and I may have been able to pull it off, I should have thought that you would laugh and it would be embarrassing to him. Watching your steps never ends.

When you examine yourself, you are examining your intentions and motivations. You are also seeing the results of what you do. If the result of what I do is causing aggravation to someone else, or causing me aggravation because of being told [by someone else]. For instance, a child keeps doing something; you keep telling them to stop it, and then they get aggravated because they are being picked on by the parent. The child has to come to the conclusion that if they change their behavior, that will change. Then, of course, the parent has to change. If the parent doesn’t change, then the parent is sending a double message: “No matter what you do, I’m not going to change.” That’s why you have to have an inner path.

You, yourself, have to watch yourself and know you are being watched: *ihsan*. There is nowhere Allah isn’t. In this sense, you are being like Allah or the *shaykh* to the child, watching the child. And you are being like Allah inside your own self

to your self. Then you have to realize you are not Allah, but Allah is Allah and Allah is watching you. How is Allah watching you? Allah is watching you because Allah has created love and shame, openness and closed-ness, thankfulness and fear, and all the things I mentioned at the beginning. When you experience those things, those are the eyes of Allah (swt) on you. Then you have stories for each one of those things.

You have stories of how the Prophet (sal) responded when someone said such and such a thing. When a woman came to the Prophet(sal) and asked him for a divorce from her husband, how did he respond? She came very strongly to him, not cowering. She said, “You have to give me this and that, because this is what is happening!” How do you talk to the Prophet like that? She was not talking to the Prophet (sal), but to the leader of the society at the time. The society was open and they had access, and it was *majlis*. You have to understand how he responded under different circumstance. There are reasons for action and inaction: watching your steps. But you have to stand back and look at your own self and see the results of what you do. If the results of what you do or what you don’t do – like the Catholics say, sins of omission and sins of commission – if you consistently don’t pick up the stuff in your room and you always get the same result from it, the answer is simple. Clean up your room, and as my grandmother would say, nobody will hock you to pick up the clothes all the time.

In other words, you see that you have control of the situations around you by good actions. Remember we talked about good actions. Your actions have to be for the purpose of good action, for the purpose of understanding, for the purpose of creating good circumstances in good situations. Then you get the *madad*. If you are a child, you get the assistance of a parent. If you are a *murīd*, you get the assistance of the *shaykh*. In addition, you seek the assistance of the *awliyā*, and of

the *ambiyā*, of Rasulallah (sal). And you know the *madad* of Allah (swt) is flowing to you from everywhere. Then you learn.

It is said that first Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) learned the language of the vegetable kingdom, and then he learned the language of the animal kingdom. Then he learned the language of the human kingdom, and then he taught. You realize you are getting assistance from everything. The messages are coming from everywhere to you, and I don't mean in a bipolar state where you are hearing voices. If you are hearing voices and you are religious, you should probably be living in India in the mountains somewhere. Now you are looking for that assistance. So your aim in traveling in one's homeland or heartland should be critical only in the sense that you are analyzing it and seeing the relationships.

You are looking at something and not trying to find fault in it. You are not trying to find fault in the parent for telling you something. You are not trying to find fault in the *shaykh* or in Rasulallah (sal). You are certainly not trying to find fault in Allah, because that's very narcissistic. That would be very I-centered, and you would only be trying to protect yourself. You would be at odds with the whole purpose of trying to be a *murīd*, or a Muslim for that matter. You are not trying to find fault, and you shouldn't assume that they are trying to find fault. The parent is not trying to find fault in the child. The *shaykh* is not trying to find fault in the *murīd*, but what's obvious is obvious, because the *shaykh* has *basīra*/insight.

You are all sitting up here, talking and chatting. Nobody is thinking to tell the Shaykh to come up. Nobody is trying to find fault, but you have *basīra*. You see something. People say to me, "O Shaykh, you should walk." I say, "Yes, I absolutely should walk, but every time I walk I see something wrong." You see things. It's not that the kids don't see the clothes are all over the floor of their

room, because they are tripping on them. You see it, but you don't see it. It doesn't have value to you. You don't understand it is linked to something else.

I know that if you don't call me up here, it means you are being very selfish and not thinking of the whole. You are wrapped up in your own thing. You are forgetting what the evening is about. Yes, you'll appreciate it when I do come up and speak to you, but you are [putting yourself] outside of the process. But no one is outside of the process. I keep pointing out that nobody shows up in the mosque for *muraqabah* for *fajr*; and on Fridays is Shabbat so hardly anyone comes; and on Sunday, absolutely nobody comes because that's another Sabbath. You don't put things together. If you don't put things together, guess what? They are not together. There is no continuity. You are arcing between things, like an electrical arc. But if you do things in continuity, things go with ease.

Maybe the hardship is that the parents tell you to clean up your room all the time, and the ease comes if you do it, and you do it on your own. It's true in everybody's life. If you come and sit in *muraqabah*, you bring happiness to the Shaykh. Are you doing it to bring happiness to the Shaykh? No. But at least if you start there, you might find out that it is beneficial to you. That's not the point. You have to be, when I say non-critical, you are looking at it not trying to find fault. But you are seeing that something is discontinuous. Something is out of order. And you are getting a message it is out of order. The parent is acting in place of the *shaykh*, the Prophet, or Allah. The Shaykh is acting in that way. Why? It's a lineage. Everyone has a lineage. When Mitra had to get her first Iranian passport, she had to produce her lineage, *shaz nama*. It's like a *shejre*. It's the family history that goes far back. You have to have it. This is part of the lineage. The children are a product of the parent, and we are all products of Allah. This is traveling in one's homeland.

It's not that things are only at fault, but you are observing if things go correctly. You are working in a group, and the group fails at something. What do you do? You bring the group together and find out why it failed. If it is successful, you bring the group together and analyze what you did right, so you can repeat the phenomena. Or make it not a phenomena, make it your default. Both ways are correct. You try to do it impartially. That self-examination is a gentle kind of self-evaluation, not a major psycho-analytical process where you have trained yourself, or the environment has trained you, or family has trained you, to be harshly critical of yourself and a perfectionist. But actually you are traveling through your own self, and you are looking at your own self. It's not a child's intention to drive the parent crazy. I don't want to believe that's the intention!

We say, "Order and regularity is a law of the universe and the foundation of honesty." What is honesty? Think about it. Order and regularity is not just so everything is orderly. Yes, order is very nice. You know where things are. Regular means you can predict when it's going to happen, and any deviation from that is deviation from the norm. It's very good. But it is a foundation for honesty. What does that mean? It goes with your word. Your word is your bond. The parent wants to know that the child knows that their values, as they grow up, [includes] that their word is their bond. They are not going to do anything they promised not to do. They know the boundaries of life and what they should be. They are not going to go outside those boundaries. If they do, they see the tremendous disappointment and heartbreak on the part of the parent. That's the last resort Allah gives you. If you break the heart of the parent, and if you have any feelings inside you, you will feel shame. You will feel ashamed.

The problem is you can't undo things that you do. So you don't want to do the wrong things, ever. If you do something wrong, you want it to be only moderately wrong. You want to see you are going in the wrong direction and change direction.

You don't want to say, "Gee, if I crash my car into a tree I could be killed. Let me drive my car into a tree and see if I'll be killed." Unless you're suicidal, nobody does that. It's the same kind of situation. Traveling in one's homeland: you look and see. You watch your steps. Based on what? How do you know whether to act or not act? And how are you going to evaluate it? You have to make certain decisions, so you have to be able to evaluate those decisions. Based on what? It has to be based on Qur'an, on Hadith, on the values that have been given to you, hopefully. The values given to you by your parents have been translations of, exegesis of, tafsir of Qur'an and Hadith, or some holy teaching, some revelation of high value revealed by Allah and brought down into day to day life.

All of a sudden you realize, "Wow, cleaning up my room really means that's the honest thing to do." How do you define what honesty is? Does it just mean to tell the truth all the time, the "whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" Sometimes honesty means withholding information, because you could hurt someone with information. I know enough about all of you that if I just stood up here and started talking about it, you'd all run for the hills. How do you know? You practice. That's what childhood and youth is about. Some of us don't grow up until we 35, 40 years old. We make a lot of bad mistakes. But if you travel in your own self, if you take the time, when your intuition begins to operate and when your conscience begins to tell you that something isn't right, and you watch it and you don't fight against it – that's traveling in your homeland. Then you act on it properly.

At the same time, you trust "*those who are set above you without question or complaint.*" What does that mean? That's very undemocratic. When you see children brought up in the right way, who at least have the *adab* not to question or complain (they might be mumbling under their breath, but don't question or complain), though you may see confusion on their faces, they trust the parent. The

parent has always been there when they fall down, when they need to be loved, to give them comfort, to tell them what's right and what's wrong, to give them reward at the right time, or punishment at the right time, and they encourage them to do good. So they don't question or complain, at least not as much. If they are left free to run here or there, then they question and complain about everything. It's the story I like to tell about the person who goes crazy because their car broke down. "My car didn't start today! I could kill myself because I couldn't get to work!" What kind of a thing is that? What's the mental link between those two things?

Traveling in one's homeland is without that charge on it, and watching one's step is applying that. Conversely, it is learning when to act and when not to act, making errors; being shown the corrective and following the corrective, determining it. Now you can evaluate how you are doing. *Safar dar watan*. Traveling usually means to move from one place to another, doesn't it? During that process, when you travel, you usually observe things. Very few people travel with their eyes closed. You might sleep on the train or plane, but you are observing things: the person next to you, who should be taking up two seats but is only taking up one; the person who just had garlic before they got on the plane, and is having a conversation with you; the back side of every town you go through when you are on the train; the signs that are telling you how to get to where you are going. Traveling means you are observing things: the flowers, the animals, the houses, the weather conditions. Some you observe consciously, purposefully.

It's supposed to sleet on Friday, and we're supposed to travel on Friday. I need to know that, so I'm watching the weather report. I may have some negative feelings about it, and grumble about it. Or I can have the attitude that we'll just have to watch it and be careful. That kind of passive observation. Sometimes you are observing things subconsciously, but you don't know that you are. You are taking

note of things, but you are not assigning any relevancy to them. Only in retrospect is it relevant? Again, this is like with children. They don't know they are observing certain things and being taught certain thing and they are learning certain things. But later on, they realize it. I recently renewed a correspondence with my aunt by marriage. She wrote to me because she came across my website. I introduced her again to my bifurcated life; so she watched the outer work as J.E. Rash, and then she watched Shaykh Abdur Rashid. She said, "It's hard for me to adjust my head to see you as such a dedicated and sincere individual, because I knew you when." "To see you as a man of substance," I think she said. She must have seen a picture of me with the weight gain.

You have your own images of your own self. Sometimes you are observing things, and you don't know until someone says something or some situation comes about. Now you draw from your knowledge. Everything you have ever done in life you will draw from on this path. Every book you ever read and the impression it made on you; every course you ever took, every individual you ever met, every situation you were ever in, every decision you ever made will in some way come to you on this path. Some of it will be pleasant, and some of it will be unpleasant. But if you know the purpose of life, and if you have the trust in the process, you may question the methodology, or the person who delivers the methodology to you, you have inside of you this understanding that life is both traveling in the outer – what do we say? - travel both inward and outward.

"*Watan*" has a very special meaning. You might use it as, "This is my homeland," in Farsi. But it also means the feeling you have for it; the attachment you have. Traveling in your own self, the feeling you have for your own self, the attachment you have for your own self, if you don't have a high regard for your own self, then no one else will. Or you will be influenced by someone who says they have a high regard for you, because your ego is not right. But if you have a high regard for

your own self, you will understand there are moments of happiness and sadness, and things that are difficult and things that are not. But you are watching it. As you begin to understand and build discernment, and your insight develops through practices and through the company of good people, and through the study of Qur'an and the care and concern for other human beings, or animals, or whatever, you now have a better concern for your own self. Not ego, in the sense of *rida*, but pride in being chosen by Allah to see. Now, traveling in the homeland, *watan*, is the place where you feel at home inside your own self.

It's very, very difficult. We go through different periods in our own life. Little children don't have any concept of this at all. As the ego develops around the age of 9 – 12, the person starts to internalize what they have been taught up until that time. Then from 12 – 14 or 15, when you are going through adolescence, people don't feel comfortable with themselves. But you don't want to extend that. You start to feel comfortable with yourself, because the values you have, you start to address them. I'm 67 years old and I'm still childlike in many ways. I make jokes and goof around, things like that. Shaykh Nooruddeen does the same thing. But you don't have any doubt, I hope, of my seriousness and my values. The sooner in life we begin to understand ourselves, you will see that you do good works. It starts quite young.

Yehya served me cake tonight. I looked at it and said, "I have no fork!" And he took off for the kitchen to get me a fork. Just like that. Didn't think, didn't break his stride. Why? The credit goes to the parents that he absorbed something. He wanted to complete his mission. I don't know the words he uses or how he explains that to him. But if I could bottle it and sell it, we could be millionaires. Sabreen is making birthday presents for Avie's birthday. She wanted to do something good for someone and make them happy. We all have this experience. But this is a bigger experience than whatever that moment is, whatever that step is.

But if you watch it and see it, you see, “That’s who I am.” When these young girls pick up one of the babies, take care of them and watch them, that’s the person you are. If you get to know that, then your decisions are based on that. This is watching your steps in each moment, and traveling in the homeland in yourself. You are getting to know yourself. It’s not an intellectual process only; you watch with the mind as well as with the heart.

Watan in this context means your own self. It means moving from one state of observing yourself to another state of observing yourself. That’s your travel. I was here; now I am there. I could have done this, but I did that. Had I done this, then this perhaps would have happened. It’s sort of like *muhasabat*. But *muhasabat* is very specific. It is used literally in Arabic to mean accounting, like with numbers, but as Sufis, we use it in another way. It’s critical in the sense that you are observing and there is a critique involved, but it’s not aggressive. It’s not hostile. It’s not cynical. If you do criticize yourself, or adjust yourself in some way, you do it because you have found a proper reason for it, because it brings harmony, because you find an adequate reason for making that adjustment, or to criticize yourself. Then it is correct to do that. In other words, you say, “I made a critical adjustment. When I did that, then the engine ran perfectly.” Or the experiment worked. “I adjusted my thinking, and then I understood.” That’s what we mean by critical.

When the child thinks the parent is criticizing them, it would be good if they understood that it is not for the sake of criticizing them, but to make a critical adjustment. [The *shaykh* may] say, “If you put your attention on this, believe me (that’s like being a mureed), trust me, Allah has put my hand over your hand, that this will have other consequences that will be positive. If you don’t it will have other consequences that will be negative.” Negative means there will be pain and

confusion and you will go off track. If you go off track, it's hard to get back on track again. How far off track can you go?

I saw a news story today that was terrible. A young boy was doused with alcohol and set on fire, over a bike and something else. Now the young boys who did it will be tried as adults for attempted murder. How's that for messing up your life? They knew it was wrong, they did it purposefully because it was wrong. But consequences are there. I'm not trying to give a psychological lecture here; I'm trying to talk about a very special process in these rules of the Naqshbandi line to people who are very special people, who have already made certain choices in their life to travel a certain path, or found themselves born into it, like some of the young people here. At some point, you make a choice. Just like I believe that every Muslim, whether you are born into it or not, should make the Shahada. You still have to say it. Even though you are Muslim by birth, you have to affirm it.

You don't want to get to a point where traveling in the homeland has been superseded by something very gross. That is to say, when you look at something you did and you feel extremely guilty over it; you feel sad; you feel like you are a stupid idiot; and you feel you did something foolish, you are at such a point where there is no subtlety left. You don't want to get to that point. All that does is feed the guilt and the shame, and it makes you contract. What did we say? Honesty. Honesty means honest with yourself. What's happened is in your memory. The choices you are making are in your memory. If you are going to have selective memory, it's problematic. We need to reflect on our actions, but we also need to stand back in that reflection and look at the whole pattern.

The whole pattern is already there. It's imprinted. If you are going to change the pattern ... Naqshbandi. We make the pattern. When you are traveling, you examine (while you are traveling). At the same time you are making use of the

experience you are having, you are also looking at the experience you are having and the feelings you are having. That process develops your intuition. Intuition is developed by seeing what is against the backdrop of principles and values, so the pattern becomes clear to you and you can intuit what is going to happen next. You can say it is like a compass. You don't have to look at the compass all the time or you would be walking into trees if you are in the forest. But you check the compass periodically to see if you are going in the right direction. Now we have digital compasses programmed to warn us when we get off course by X number of degrees. You've heard me say for many years, that if you are off half a degree, over 8 hours you can be off by fifty or sixty miles, depending on how fast you are going, and a ship can miss its destination. Take that as a metaphor. You need to keep looking at the compass. The compass is what is inside of you. This is traveling within one's own self, or the homeland.

You should do this in a useful way. It should be constructive. If you are in a situation where there are a number of alternatives, and you don't know how to make the decision, you rely on the maps that have been set out before you up until that point. I used to say, when I was practicing yoga before I reverted back to Islam, "What would my guru have me do?" Then when I became Muslim, it was, "What would my Shaykh have me do?" You can get to the point where you ask, "What would Rasulallah have me do?" "What would Allah have me do?" Some people like to go directly to Allah and ask what would He have me do, but they don't know enough about Allah. They want to say, "What would the Prophet Mohammed have me do?" and then pick and choose things from the Prophet's life, because they don't have to deal with the Prophet in any "real" world way. When you say, "What would my *shaykh* have me do?" that's another story. You live with your Shaykh and you know.

A child can easily say, “What would my mother or father want me to do in this circumstance? This person said such and such to me. This person came toward me with this kind of attitude. This person tried to do something with me that was not proper. What would my mother have me do?” You get an answer, boom, just like that. No question. At least for most of us. You act on it, and then your intuition develops. You see things coming before they come. Your insight develops. You understand the kind of person that person is, and you stay away from him or her. Or you go toward this kind of person, and you understand these things, because you have asked the critical question.

Inside you, your *nafs* is saying, “I can handle this!” But you can’t, can you? You can’t handle everything you think you can. There’s not a person in this room who doesn’t know the answer to that question. Every adult can answer that question. This is traveling in the homeland. Then you learn from that. What would my Shaykh have me do? What would Rasulallah have me do? Then you will know what Allah would have you do. You still love your parents and you still respect them. You still love your Shaykh and you still respect him. You still love Rasulallah and respect him, but now you are on the level of *insani kamil*. Somewhere along the line, you became *murad*. You were called by Allah.

What does that mean? You have reached the *maqam*. You are familiar with your own inner self. You are traveling in familiar circumstances. Now, recite the definition you have repeated all these years: “*Traveling in one’s homeland. The path is within, the journey within. You are traveling in a familiar setting, thus do not be distracted.*” Now it’s familiar. If we asked the girls, what does your inner state look like? They’d say, “Whoa! I don’t know!” But it becomes familiar, like the woods are familiar, the paths are familiar, and people’s homes are familiar here. You are traveling in familiar circumstances and settings.

“Do not be distracted.” Now the decisions you make, watching your steps, to act or not act, will become very clear. You are familiar with your own self. You are comfortable in your own self. You understand your own self. You can see the people who don’t understand their own selves. You can see the ones who do. You even have the means of testing that. And you know your intention. Why are you traveling at all? You are traveling because you have to, because life is a journey. God bless her soul, Mrs. Kaufman is now traveling in another realm. I’m sure you know lots of examples of what I’m talking about.

Remember the story of Mullah Nasrudin who took a position as a guard at the palace door. He had a tiny little room just next to the door, and it was very nice and warm. He would sit there and every once in a while open the door and see if anyone was coming. Then he’d go back to sleep, because it was nice and warm and he got regular food. It was a good job, and he was very happy. One day the Grand Vizier came to him and said, “The Sultan is going to go to the masjid for Juma prayer. What’s the weather like outside, because he’s going to go all dressed up in his regalia.” Nasrudin soporifically looks up and said, “It’s raining quite heavily out.” He doesn’t open the door and look.

The Vizier went back to the Sultan, and everyone put on their protective clothing and their boots and rain gear they got from Dick’s Sporting Goods. They form in the courtyard and open the gates. Outside the sun is blazing, and it’s hot and dry. (Don’t ask the obvious question, why didn’t he look out the window. This is a Nasrudin story.) So they rode in all this gear, sweating and sweating, for a mile and a half. When they returned, they took Nasrudin out and beat him. He was lying there moaning and groaning, and the Vizier asked him, “What made you say it was raining, idiot?!” And Nasrudin said, “Observation!” “Observation? What

observation, you nitwit! If you look out the door, you can see the sun is out! What kind of observation were you doing?” He said, “I observed it from my room.” “How could you possibly observe it from you room? You have no window to the outside in your stupid room!” He said, “I’ll tell you how. I saw the cat who came running into my room, and he was soaking wet. I concluded it was raining outside.”

The Vizier said, “You stupid idiot! You know the butcher down the street? You know the cat likes meat?” “Yes, yes.” “Do you know the cat always goes to the butcher shop to steal meat? And the butcher has a bucket of water. Whenever the cat goes there, he throws water on him!” Nasrudin heard this and got his beaten body up, and goes off to beat the butcher, because the butcher was the cause of him being beaten.

You have to know how to observe yourself—not to blame other things. Don’t blame your parents for saying to clean up your room. Don’t blame the Shaykh for telling you that you are an idiot to let me sit down there for an hour and a half before you bring me up, or always put a new tape in the camera. It’s hard. Everybody wants to make the right decision. I told Jehan, “Why didn’t you have the guy clean off the snow better?” She said, “I followed him around and forgot certain things, and I’ll know better the next time.” She’s right. I shouldn’t beat her up over that. You have to do the same thing with yourself. Why did I give myself this instruction and not that instruction? It’s not a psychological thing. It’s far beyond the psychological.

The last thing I’ll say is you have to measure clearly what you are doing. There are terms of reference. If I went and said to the tailor, “I have some new thobes Arif and Raheel brought for me from the Gulf. They are too long. Take 22 centimeters off!” And he said, “Do you mean 22 inches?” And I say, “No, it

doesn't matter, centimeters or inches! Same thing!" Well, it's not the same thing, 22 inches is a lot different than 22 centimeters. You have to have a frame of reference for everything, and know what your frame of reference is. Our frame of reference is the Qur'an, the Hadith, the historically proven love of Allah for His Creation, of the Prophet (sal) for the Muslims, of the *shaykh* to the *murīds* and the parents to the children. It's absolutely infallible, that love. There are some people who deviate, and some who don't have it. I'm sorry for them. But that's the frame of reference. Whether you are Ethiopian or Egyptian or Iranian or American or half-Lebanese, whether you were raised a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim, that's an infallible frame of reference. It works for everyone.

We know it works because even our children, when they pick up Ahmed, Abdi, Hoda, or Ayla, they automatically have it inside of them: care, concern, watchfulness. "Oh, he's walking over there! Hold her this way, she's a little baby." Ahmed goes strolling into the kitchen. She turns around and immediately goes. He gets up and immediately goes. No question. Why? The kitchen could be dangerous for Ahmed. He could pull something down on his head... of course that wouldn't hurt him. He has a Hassouna head! The children know what's right and what is good. The tendency is to test the boundaries. If you know the boundaries, don't test the boundaries. They will expand when they need to expand. They breathe. They will contract when they need to contract. You stay within the boundaries.

"I trust this kind of person but not that kind." How do you know that? Your parents tell you. How do you know who is good company? Your Shaykh creates an environment for it. How do you know who of the imams or the ulema are the right people? Because you have been taught correct Islam. The guy whose imma is [worn back on his head] is speaking normally to people and then the next minute is weeping into his sleeve. Then abruptly stops the weeping to speak again

normally to some people, but then abruptly begins weeping into his sleeve. He's trying to be sincere, and he wants to show his emotion, so he makes himself cry. Plenty of people make themselves cry for reasons that are not so genuine. I'm not making fun of him. You know what's real or what's not real. But if he takes the handkerchief away from his face and he's talking normally, then starts crying again, the guy's got a problem.

Astaghfiru-Llāh, I'm not trying to make fun of him. But you know what is genuine; you can sense it. Now you have to stay within the realm of what is genuine. Just try to understand as we go through these rules that these are much more concerned with knowing about yourself than they are with knowing about Allah. It's how to know yourself better and more deeply; how to be more sensitive; how to develop your *basīra*, your inner sight; how to develop your *furqan*, your *firāsa*. If you know yourself, who do you know? Your Lord. You have to live within yourself. You have to exist within yourself. The person you are nearest to is yourself. The one who is watching you and you are watching is yourself. It's much easier, more useful, and more beneficial to know what you are living and whether it's good or bad, right or wrong, than to know some distant god.

Allah is present. Every one of the qualities of compassion, love, mercy, trust, surrender, faith, patience, justice, they are all inside of you. Allah is present: *hādirī, nādirī*. Allah is watching, with your eyes, watching you. Allah is seeing you through your own eyes. The more you know yourself, you can see your strengths and your weaknesses. You can keep some, get rid of others. By knowing yourself, you can get answers to any question. You can understand why you exist, and your destiny. You can understand the right choices to make. It is not just to be "I'm the person who makes right choices!" prim and proper somebody. It's the ease that Allah has promised you.

Many mystical schools, many spiritual schools tell you that you meditate to know God, to understand God. There is no understanding Allah. You meditate to develop the qualities of knowing that Allah is present, to see those expressions of the Divine and to manifest them in your own self. It's not that you intellectually understand the meaning of life, but you live life meaningfully. It's not that you understand every little detail about *fiqh*, or every *tafsir* of Qur'an. This is all wonderful, if it's being done for the right reason: to understand yourself and your place. Then it helps you see and remember. We have to get to things like recollection and all the other ones. There is always more. *Asalaamu aleikum*. You will not learn this from just listening to me say it tonight. You have to do the things; you have to do the reflection; take it seriously.