

January 1, 2010

Khutbah



Title: The Attributes Adam Received Begins Our History

DVD title: The Wealth of the Knowledge of the Names
Writing Our History: Dispelling the Darkness with the Light of Knowledge

Allah, the Most High, reveals to us in Sūratu-l-Baqarah (2:30-40), the Qur'an within the Qur'an:

And when your Lord said upon the angels, “I shall place upon the earth an emissary.” They said, “What! Will You place upon it one who will corrupt it, shed blood, while it is we who hymn Your praises and sanctify You?” He said, “Truly, I know what you know not.” And He taught Adam the names of them and made them visible before the angels and said, “Tell me the names of these if you are truthful.” And they said, “O glory be to You. We have no knowledge other than what You have taught us. Truly you are the All Knowing and the All Wise.” And

He said, “O Adam. Tell them the names.” And when he told them their names, He said, “Did I not tell you that I know the unseen reality of the heavens and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal.” And when We said that to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam,” they all prostrated save Iblis. He refused through pride and became one of those who cover up the Truth. And We said, “O Adam. Dwell you and your wife in the gardens and eat freely from it, both of you and do not come near to the tree lest you become one of the oppressors.” But Shaytan caused them to slide and so brought them out of the place that they had been in and

We said, “Get down, each of you human and Shaytan, each of you an enemy to the other, and the earth shall be your dwelling place and pleasure for a time.” Then Adam received from his Lord words of guidance. And He turned to him with mercy. Truly, He is the Oft-Turning and Singularly Compassionate. For although We said, “Get down from this state, yet shall there come guidance to you from Me and for those who follow My guidance. Neither shall they fear nor shall they grieve. For those who cover up the Truth and lie about Our signs, they are the companions of the fire.”

You would think that was enough—and it is. But we will quote some more. Today we ask Allah especially to send His blessings to all the people of this world as we begin a New Year in the Julian calendar which fell, also, this year in the month of Muharram. The month of Muharram also fell in the same month as the Julian calendar, so it is a double blessing, *inshā'a-Llāh*, for everybody. The Muslims and the non-Muslims are celebrating the New Year, at least most of the non-Muslims, in the way that is not necessarily great, because a lot of them get intoxicated. Other than that, maybe they were intoxicated with the beauty of the idea of the change, *inshā'a-Llāh*.

We have to remember this guidance from Allah many times in our life, this guidance of the names. It is an endless subject as you know and it is one that I endlessly talk about, but I want to dive deep into the names a little today to have some understanding of this supplication and glorification of Allah (swt). I hope this *khutbah* might be meaningful to you. The aspect I want to talk about today is knowledge. It is a very big topic. We know from the Qur'an that Allah (swt) is the Source of Light. He is the source of our seeing and the source of what we understand about what we see. Just as Allah is the source of the Sifat, of the Attributes, but these Attributes were not seen by the angels. They become seen when Adam (as) tells them the names. By the Word of Allah and by the Command of Allah, he tells them the names. Allah didn't just give the names to Adam. He tells Adam (as) to tell them to the angels.

Some people think that He told him to tell them to the angels as proof that he really got the understanding. But it was a sequential process. Allah has the *Sifāt*. He transmits the *Sifāt* to Hazrat Adam (as), not just the Names. He transmits to Hazrat Adam, the *Sifāt*/Attributes to some degree, in some reflection. Then Hazrat Adam translates them to the angels, because if you hear, then you gain something. They gained something they didn't have before, and they gain it from a human being. Now it does not change their role. [Each angel has its role]. Each angel is like a stem cell in which can be made into something. Allah makes [each angel] into something and that is what it does. This angel is a lung cell. This angel is a heart cell. This angel is a whatever. That is it. Without that, we would not be standing here right now or sitting here right now.

The point is that knowledge is transferable. Allah sets into motion this knowledge. This knowledge gives us what? It gives us an opportunity to understand, to some degree, our Creator and the creation. So you say, "Hello. What is your name?" "My name is Khaled Hassouna." "Oh. That is a Muslim name. Where are you from Khaled?" "I am from Egypt." "Oh, where are you from in Egypt." "I am from Alexandria." You see, now I am getting some knowledge. I am getting knowledge and I am getting history. That history is meaningful because now I can make certain assumptions. "Oh. You must like camels because you are from Egypt." Well, that is cultural stupidity. But I can say, "Oh. You have a very rich culture that goes back." Then I can ask him questions about that. "How is it that you came here?" Everybody has a history.

I want you to pay very close attention to me today because this is a very big subject. I am giving you an assignment. The assignment I give you is to write down your history. I am not telling you to write an autobiography. You might be one of those people who goes crazy when you start to write and can't stop. But you write down, even just an outline of your history, how you got to be sitting in this room today, or tomorrow or next Wednesday, in this community—how you got here. Because when Allah gives the

Names, meaning the Attributes, to Hazrat Adam (as), He is starting history. He is telling you how you got here, because Hazrat Adam (as) is our progenitor. I am not asking you to start with Adam, because there will be a big space in between, unless you happen to know your history all the way from Adam. Or you may be a *sayyida* like my mother-in-law, who can at least start from the Prophet Mohammed (sal).

What is the importance of this history? If you can write this history, without making judgments about yourself: “I wish it was this way” or “I wish it was that way” or “I wish I had moved to St. Tropez instead of Bedford.” You write your history because history is not just because that is only the beginning. What is very important is that history is active. It tells you some things that you might do, you might think, you might act. Not only is it active, not only is it reflective, it frees you. Do you understand that? If you say, “This is my history. This is how I got from here to here.” Now that I am here, I am writing history every day. My friend Sulayman Nyang says, “You writing history every day.” I am giving this *khutbah* because I spent a long time with Sulayman the other day. May Allah give him long life and a good year.

History frees you. You are not hiding anything in your history. Children should write, “My history that I know: my father is this. My mother is this. They do this.” Everybody has to write a little history and it frees you from the secrets that sometimes are kept. We were talking the other day, some of us, in a meeting about how important it is to know the history of the organization. That doesn’t mean that it is always going to be exactly the same. But it frees you to move and to make changes, and to stay within certain contexts. The Prophet (as) has a history also. His history affects the history of Noah (as). And his history affects the history of everybody who knew how to swim or float. There is the history of Sidna Musa (as), and of course everybody in between—and Sidna ‘Isa (as). It all brought us to here.

Then you realize that you are creating history, by the way you talk and the way you act and the way you think, and how you encourage or discourage, which is very much parallel to what I have been talking about in the Rules of the Order. You [learn to] automatically use these Rules of the Order. I was giving you yesterday the metaphor of driving, a very important metaphor, [as a way to show how to do this]. We are not just speaking about intellectual knowledge here. We are talking about active knowledge. Most of us think of history as, “We are studying about the Romans, the Byzantines or the Greeks or the Arabs” or whatever of the past. History is active, active.

Allah creates this history through His Sifāt/Attributes. The angels gained more knowledge from human beings. Now they understand better. It was very scary to one: Iblis. Iblis is a *jinn*. He is chief of the *jinns*. He is studying at the University of Angels, but he is a *jinn*. He was a transfer student. He was not an angel. He is a *jinn*. He was a pious *jinn* on his own terms. He didn’t have an assignment, until this happened. Until this happened, he was studying interdisciplinary angelism. He didn’t say, “Oh what do you want to do?” “Oh, I want to be an angel of the ear.” “Okay.” “I want to be an angel of the heart.” “Okay.” Everybody knew what they wanted to be except Iblis. If you had asked Iblis (excuse me, *astaghfiru-Llāh*) “What do you want to be?” he would say, “I haven’t decided yet. I haven’t picked a career yet.” As soon as the Names come, ho, ho, he knows what his job is. He now knows that he is going to get a PhD in deception/*gafla*. He is a deceiver. This is his role now, and now the job of the angels is always to protect the Haqq of Allah. There was no problem when there was no reason to protect it. They just did their job, but now because there is duality, now they have to protect it.

You not only have to learn how to hear, but how to discern what you hear, how to turn your eyes in the right place, how to turn your mind in the right place, how to resist what is evil, how to accept what is good. Now, you see, their jobs have become increased by the Name of Allah (swt). Now history starts. History means you can look back. We go as far as Noah, we look back. We go as far as Sidna Musa, we look back. We go as far

as Sidna ‘Isa (as), we look back. We see, “Ah. There is where Shaytan is. There he is. There is Iblis.” You see a pattern of good and you see a pattern of the whispering, deception, distortion. How do you stay on the right track. How do you stay on the right track in anything? In your own personal life, your family life, your community life, in your work, in your political, national interest, how do you stay on track for the good? *Ma’ruf* and *munkar*.

There is knowledge where we glorify Allah (swt), where we can clearly comprehend things and we can solve the problems of life, which didn’t exist before the life of human beings, and we do it with some degree of effectiveness. What I say has some effect on you. What we do individually has some effect. What we do collectively has some effect. What we do institutionally has some effect. It is as though we could see something very clearly that was in the darkness, because we have eyes that can see. Inside of our own minds, each one of us knows there is some darkness. That darkness is there so we can make choices to bring light to it. But that darkness also represents Iblis, that part of our self. Against the world of the *dhulumat* is the world of *nūr/light*. We say that Allah (swt) is the Light of the Universe. This is the *sifāt*.

As I said last night in my talk of the rules, if you take the manual (Shaykh picks up the Qur’an) and you learn the rules and if you are active every day—you are driving every day; you took the driving manual and you studied it and you are driving all the time—you don’t have to sit there and remember [and think of every rule], as I said last night, “Oh, let’s see. I am in the left lane, who yields to the oncoming traffic?” because you are driving all the time. You naturally know it. It is not like remembering a list of rules. People memorize this Book, as if it is only a book of rules. They can memorize and they can quote it, but they are not necessarily living their lives in it because they are not driving with it.

The light is in the Attributes/Sifāt of Allah (swt). We know that each of these attributes is a name/*asma*. What did Allah teach to the angels? The names, so you can identify things. But what was really taught to Adam (as), and thereby to the angels through Adam (as), were the Attributes. It is like me going up to Mustafa and saying, “You know, Mustafa, you are really a wonderful, humble and kind person.” He does not go around all day thinking of himself as a humble, kind person. Do you? (Don’t ruin my talk here.) He is not walking around thinking that, but he is that. If he writes his history, he might find out why he is like that. “My history up until this point was this. Then I met my Shaykh. Then we started the community. Then I spent my life in the community. Then I struggled against this and learned that and I succeeded with this and I am still struggling with that. This is my history.” He may learn why he is a compassionate, kind and loving human being. Part of it comes from where he came from. Part of it is where he chose to be. Part of it is how he makes the effort. You see.

Then free yourself from this kind of abstruse mentality or the ego, the *nafs* that tells you “I am this! And I am this! And this is what I am! And I have always been this way.” That is baloney. You might have struggled more hard to stay the way you were, then if you had just allowed yourself to become what you could be. Then you could spend 20 years, 30 years, 40 years struggling to hold onto your image of yourself; whereas, if you spent five years letting go of it, you could become everything you ever wanted to be. This is what writing your history will tell you. Noting it, outlining it—it does not have to be a tome.

Then you realize, against this world of darkness and light, as you study and as you understand, all the knowledge that you obtain, you obtain from this transmission: from Allah (swt) to Adam (as), from Adam (as) to humanity and to the angels. Because we have bifurcation, we have Adam transmitting this knowledge to the angels, in part as proof that he has it. All the angels are going, “WOW!” then [he transmits it] to humanity, meaning his children, then from his children to the children of the children of the

children, some of who got it and some who didn't get it. If everyone got it, we would not have needed Noah (as) or Yunus (as) or Yahya (as) or any of them. Then it comes to us.

If you do this practice and you are sincere, you will realize that you can obtain only from Allah that knowledge, only from Allah, that righteousness, only from Allah that good guidance. "From Allah" means those who continue to make exegesis, *tafsir*, those who continue to transmit that understanding of that history and that meaningfulness of that effective meaningfulness to you and to me over time. You will then realize that the only recourse you have, therefore, is to Allah (swt) Who is present. There is nothing but darkness; there will be nothing but ignorance; there will be nothing but the worst of evils and problems in a world without light. You only would have people going around whispering: "I am telling you this, but don't tell anybody...." ad infinitum in the background—whispering, whispering, whispering. Some of us who are a little hard of hearing, that is all we hear. Then there are some of us who are in denial that we are hard of hearing, and some who are willing to wear their hearing aids.

From the 'āyāt that I quoted earlier from Sūratu-l-Baqarah, we see that those who come from the depth of darkness by the light of Allah (swt) are the people who are free. Free. Sidna Ibrāhīm (as), says, "**Oh, Muhammad. This is a book that we have sent down to you that you may bring mankind, by the help of their Lord, out of the darkness into the light and out of ignorance into knowledge.**" We stress this over and over and over again in our teachings, and we should stress it over and over and over again to ourselves. We see in Qur'an, as we see in the Hadith, that the Prophet (sal) with the help of Allah brought people from darkness into the light. That is a historical fact: from ignorance and disbelief to knowledge and faith. So *nūr* and *dhulma* are used invariably for the light of knowledge and the darkness of ignorance. When we look at the Qur'an, we see how often these words are used: light and dark.

Ask yourself while you are writing your history: what is light in my life and what is dark in my life? We can see the significance, the meaningfulness of knowledge. In this case, we can say *ma'rifa*. Because without knowledge, human beings cannot know that Allah has created them. They cannot know what the qualities are within themselves; therefore, you don't know what tools you have. You are just sort of shooting in the dark. If you like somebody, you are kind to them. If you don't like somebody, you are not kind to them. If you love somebody, you give to them. If you don't like somebody, you take from them. We don't see, let alone do we know the objective of our existence.

We can only know ourselves, and we can only know at least the Aspects of Allah (swt) because we know the names of things. Without these there is no possibility to appreciate, to glorify, to be humbled by, to supplicate, to utilize these Names and Attributes of Allah (swt). Human beings were created and were assigned a very special task and a very special mission on top of all of this to be the *Khalifas/Viceregents* of Allah (swt). We have to strive to be *as if* we are the *Khalifa* of Allah. To be the *Khalifa* of Allah (swt) is to understand the relationship to one another, to understand our relationship to this creation, to understand our relationship to good and evil, to right and to wrong.

If we all understand that we are all the children of Adam (as), at some point, we understand that we are all related to one another, which means at some point, we are all Ahl al-Bayt at some level, indirectly or directly. We are all cousins, brothers, sisters... we are all relatives to one another. We can all have in our hearts the love and extend the love of our family directly through Mohammed (sal)—directly. Of course, those who are Ahl al-Bayt in the direct line of Prophet Mohamed (sal), that is sort of different. That is like saying, “You are my brother.” And we understand that we are brother in Islam and we are brother in love, and we are not going to think too much about being brother under Hazrat Adam (as). That is true. But the relationship between your brother and sister is more intense and more, I don't want to say more meaningful, but more full of responsibility or meaning, in most cases.

One of the most important realities to realize in this story is that Iblis is given the same freedom as everyone else. He is given the freedom to choose. He refused to bow down. He made a choice. That sealed what his career was going to be. That was it. “What are you going to do your degree in?” “I am going to do my degree in resistance and deception.” “Oh. Okay.” Of course, we can make the case that he was created for exactly that. We can stand here and make the case that human beings came from monkeys also. Did you get that jump? Consequently we become responsible, we become answerable for all the actions committed on this earth. You remember, the taking of one life is like taking the life of all humanity, the saving of one life is the saving of all humanity. This is not just some wonderful poetic or philosophical statement. This is reality. This is the reality and that is what you will be judged on; consequently, we are answerable to those actions.

As Allah becomes active through the attributes, He is certainly not going to leave the humans unguided in this very, very difficult position: “You said you were going to be responsible, be responsible.” No, there is constant guidance, constant guidance. How do you know? You have to reduce this ego, which is the doorway to the whisperer. Iblis lives over here and that is the door. You want to go into his chamber, leave the door unlocked and you have a sign on your side of the door that says, “Welcome, anytime.” So we have to be guided. He tells us clearly in Qur'an that guidance comes to us as a task that Allah's other creations (the heavens, the mountains and the earth) were afraid of; but we take on the task, because now there is light that we can shine on situations. We can learn from what came before in history.

We can understand how we got to where we are, and we can appreciate where we are, because two of the cornerstones of this foundation are gratitude and humility. Then you can say submission and patience. Then you have four corners to a building. If you need some more support beams, there are plenty of other support beams. If you are going to

build a single story building, you will build it one way. If you are going to build a two story building, you will need some beams on each floor to hold, support and distribute the weight of each floor above it. So we have many other things. Where do you find those other beams? In the *Asmā' al- Husna*, in the *Sifāt* of Allah. We have the light of knowledge, and we have love in the form of both our intellect and our heart. The intellect is of the mind and the intuition is of the heart. In Qur'an, Allah reminds us:

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Has there been a time when humanity was a thing not thought of? Truly, We created mankind from a drop of sperm intermingled that We might test him. And We made him hearing and seeing. Truly, We have guided him to the way, whether he be grateful or cover up the truth.” (76:1-3)

Most people do not make use of this knowledge. They just go forward with blinders on. We have to take off the blinders—all of us. We are all guilty of twisted tongues or twisted minds or sight that is biased. We are among the best of people. We are not among the worst. We have chosen the right path. We have submitted. We have years of experience. We have years of community life. We have love and respect for everyone. We work with people all over. We care for the elderly. We care for the sick. We care for our parents. Wahali. We are of the best of them, and still look how flawed we are.

We are given freedom of choice and action, and consequently we are responsible and answerable. Obviously, Allah would not leave us unguided. He tells us very clearly what He tells us. There are many people who do not make the right use of this knowledge and there are many people who don't live by some guidance of goodness and righteousness and truthfulness. They choose what is right and truthful. They don't want anyone telling them or guiding them, because it may not agree with what you yourself like or don't like. It may not be to your taste. Qur'an reminds us, every one of us, that we must be attentive and vigilant. We have to learn that there is still always time to learn something.

Nadia will tell you that her mother at the age of 102 is still learning things, is still curious about things—18 years shy of what Qur'an tells us (and all Holy books tell) is or should be the life span of a person. May Allah give her those 18 years. There is never an end to learning. There is no reason to end this sojourn on this planet. There is no reason to wish it or leave it or anything. Wait until you hear Khalil's story about his father, the love of the father for his mother, and the fact that he has to remember every few minutes that she has passed because of his dementia, and how he is dealing with it. We have to be vigilant. He says:

Many are the jinns and humans that we have made for hell. They did not have hearts with which they understood, eyes with which they could see, and ears with which they could hear. They are like cattle, nay, even worse. They are the people who have become utterly heedless. (7:179)

What did we talk about last night? *Negar dashtan*: watching, being heedful. We can see all these people around us in the world. You go and get a job and do some work. You watch how your standard goes down. The standard goes down, standard goes down. “That person is a nice person. He opened the door for me.” “That person is a really great person. They didn’t yell at me at work.” “I have a great boss. He picks on everyone else but not me.” You see how the standard goes down and down. For what? It is all ego. That is why Allah says in Qur'an:

Do not follow what you have no knowledge of. Surely, the hearing, the sight and the heart all of these will be questioned. Do not walk arrogantly on this earth. Surely, you cannot tear the earth apart, and you will never be taller than the mountains. All of that which has been mentioned is distasteful in the sight of your Lord. (17:36-38)

So this is a clear indication that in social and personal matters, people should not indulge in certain things. You can read this earlier in Sura al-Isrā. You don't want to gossip or lie, or do things that are wrong. There is clear knowledge, clear guidance. If we abandon the truth and work our lives around what is wrong, then one thing happens. If we abandon what is wrong and work our lives around what is true, then we are free. We try to live these Attributes; living the Names of Allah. The angels are living the Names of Allah: this angel is living that name, that angel is living this name. They didn't have to know the names, because they had no choice. It's not like going to a restaurant and getting a menu. Their menu has one thing on it. You can have soup. You can have salad.

When Adam was told to teach those names to the angels, it meant that out of all the capabilities and potentials of the Names of Allah (swt), we must become conscious of them all, because human beings were taught all of them. We are not angels; we cannot help but live the way we were created. The angels said, "**Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. It is You Who are perfected in knowledge and wisdom.**" (2:32) It is because of this knowledge we gain recognition or status above the angels, and above all other aspects of creation. Without the wealth of the knowledge of the names, we would be nothing. We would not have been created. We would have been powerless to do anything on this earth. Can you imagine what it means to be powerless to do anything on this earth? Now, here we are again at evolution. We can imagine what it is like to be nearly powerless on this earth. We can imagine what it was like to be a Neanderthal man or woman who had only a stick or sharpened rock against mammoths. We can imagine the fear. We even see in today's world, if you go into jungles in South America where the people are living naked, walking with spears, how animistic they are, how fearful they are. This is a bad omen; that is taboo. It's like that, but there's a beauty to that truth, too. There is a submission to that, also. I leave it to you to think about it.

What does it mean to know the names? It does not mean your name is this and someone else's name is that. It means to know the essence and meaning of those names, and that everything was named with an essence of Allah (swt), and every function has something to do with a name. We have the name of the Opener for anything that opens. We have the name of the Closer for anything that closes. We have the name the Avenger for anything [that avenges]. We have the name the Giver, or the Forgiver. That's why Allah (swt) can say, "**We created man in the best mold.**" (95:4) The mold is the *sifāt*. You have heard me speak many times on this image. "The best mold" is what the Jews and Christians say is the "image of God." We know that to mean "in the mind and imagination." This is why Allah (swt) can say that He created us with the best and purest nature.

It's also because of these Names of Allah (swt) that all of us are one; we are all united. That is also a metaphor and a reflection: all those names are united in Allah (swt), but Allah (swt) is greater than those. *Allahu Akbar*. That's the only thing *Allahu Akbar* means. It doesn't mean, "Cut off the head of the infidel!" or "Attack this person!" It doesn't mean any of that. It only means, that whatever it is, God is greater than that. I exist: Allah is greater than me.

Any glorification of any Name or Attribute of Allah is a glorification of all the Names and Attributes of Allah. Every aspect of your history is somehow linked to every piece of history. Your father and mother knew such and such. Their parents knew such and such. You only have to go back a few generations and you are spread all over the world, at least in knowing people. That's why I say 3 degrees of separation, instead of 6 degrees of separation. Last night, we gave these examples in a different way, and today I have burdened you with this long *khutbah*. *Asalaamu aleikum.*

SECOND KHUTBA DUAS