

May 5, 2010

Wednesday



Title: [Unveil the Sense of Necessity](#)

DVD title: Create the Necessity for Spiritual Effort and Growth

Dinner blessing: *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm*. Ya Allah, we thank You for the blessings of the week, safety in our journey, success in our work, beautiful weather, wonderful garden, the fulfilling of our hopes and the countering of our fears. We ask you Allah (swt) to sustain us and to give us more hope. We ask You, Allah, to wipe clean this world of these ignorant, crazy people, whose names we cannot mention because they are too many, and whose ideologies are so diverse they are almost exactly the same. We ask You, Allah, to give us peace and balance, harmony and understanding, to end partisanship in our government, to end extremism and radicalism in our religion; to end fear and doubt about Your Divine Will and Mercy. *Amin*.

Suhbat: *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm*. A lot of what I talk about, and what Shaykh Noorudeen talks about, and Shaykh Ninawe, and what you read in the texts, are admonitions and encouragements. I don't know how seriously we take those. A lot of it has to do with the time and place in history where we are, and what our assumptions are about our own capabilities, knowledge, and capacities. When I think about the work we try to do in our organization, we talk about building capacity. If I juxtapose that against building spiritual capacity, I see that most people don't want to make the effort. It's very difficult. They will settle for a lot less than the full capacity. The assumption is that there is more capacity that isn't being realized by the individual. This is the reason why we've talked for 40 years and why we have practices. If you talk about building capacity in individuals, organizations and society, there is a basic assumption that it can be done based on human nature or character, which often runs against it.

Spiritually, what counters it is a kind of torpor we've talked about, an unwillingness to change, an unwillingness to make an effort. I believe that when we look at the world we live in today, we tend to see human beings being very self-centered and selfish. Unless there is a compelling reason, a necessity or a threat to cooperate and live with a foundation of righteousness and justice, harmony and balance, people will continue to exploit every situation for their own benefit, just as people do with their own souls. We see it: the egregious, arrogant stupidity. Just watch the news. The governor of the state of Virginia made a big announcement of how 11,000 jobs are dependent on the fishing industry in the state of Virginia, and how important it is; then he signed a bill that says they can start drilling offshore oil right away. All this stuff is going on, and nobody wants to cooperate. A lot of people I talked to in Washington said that the actions of some of these people, some Congressional people and some of the militia people, are treasonous. And people don't want to cooperate.

What is necessity anymore? You see how human beings have shifted the balance of nature and are destroying the planet. I feel that when they criticize the Muslims and say, these people don't care about the future because they want the world to come to an end, you are dealing with a governor in this state who is a millennialist. They don't care how many people die, how many fish die, or what happens to the environment. The question is where is necessity? What is necessity? It seems to me it will get down to defending your own land and your own family. That seems to be what people want. Look around and see what is happening: egregiously unconstitutional things. A Senator is introducing a bill with the new Senator from Massachusetts, to strip people of their citizenship if "they are thought to be associated with terrorist organizations"—thought to be!

What's necessity? I see there are spiritual parallels always with what's happening in the *dhāhir*. We can look at our own history and our own self, and see what we are open to and not open to, what we are willing to change and what we are not willing to change;

where our laziness and torpor are, where our mindset is unchangeable. In some way, we can see where it reflects the world or the world reflects it. This idea that the tendency of human beings is to be very selfish and self-centered is pretty obvious today. I'm making all this political commentary, but I'm asking, where are we spiritually? Are we so far away from what's happening in the world around us, really? I said to everyone of those people in Washington that I could, "What has happened?" All I got was negative responses. "It's not the place to be now. There's no interest in what's good for America. It's all partisanship." Of course, they're earning \$500,000 a year as lobbyists, but...

Where are we spiritually? In the heart of everyone there is a *murād*; yet at the same time, it looks like human beings are only a bare step from being animals. Allah (swt) talks in the Qur'an about people being tyrants, and says we have to have clear guidelines that are understood that govern the different members and groups in society. If those guidelines don't exist or aren't clear, He says: "**Even the most basic trading will not be able to be undertaken.**" What is at the foundation of the acceptance of those basic guidelines is the Shar'īah and the Sunnah. It allows us to keep some form of structure in creation and human society, and not abuse the structure.

A lot of what I heard in Washington this past week was abuse of the structure and of the rules. Most of the delegates were judges on the constitutional court, parliamentary brief writers, interpreters of the law; one has 12 lawyers working for him in restructuring the government of Oman; and a women's rights lawyer in Kuwait. They came from Brazil, Indonesia, Chechnya, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and South Africa. Some were high up in government. What was mostly on their minds? Corruption, corruption, corruption. I turned on the news tonight and heard a question asked, "What was the problem with the way FEMA was run?" The interviewee, some expert, said, "Corruption." But what kind of corruption?

Do you think we are not participating in corruption when we don't try to follow the guidelines we are given? I'm not talking about the corrupted mentality of the Taliban that says anybody who lives in a Western regime and doesn't resist it is not a Muslim anymore; therefore, you can kill them. This is a classic case of projection. They are the corrupt people of *bida*. Then you see on the news that the Christian militia people are probably going to be released until their trial. Why don't they release the guy who tried to blow up Times Square? Can't do that; he's a Muslim. How can they release them? Somehow there is a patina of honesty around them because they are Christian, even though they are militia people?

I spoke to a young man who is a judge in the constitutional court of Indonesia. I talked to him about the issue of the Shi'a and the Ahmadiyya. I said, "I'm not in favor of their interpretation of things." He starts to defend by saying they have only six recognized religions. I said, "That's not what your constitution says." He said, "Yes, yes, yes. I know." I said, "So? What are you going to do about it? You have to do something about it." He said, "It's not so easy, you have political parties and this and that." He finally said, "We're new at this and it will take time." I said, "That's the right answer. As long as you're talking about taking time to do things that are right." But how much time do we have spiritually? We know exactly how much time: our life time, except we don't know exactly how much time that is. We know the parameters. It could take four generations or six generations to change the law and get society changed. But we don't have six generations... although I saw a 106 year old lady on the news.

If we say things reflect other things, we have to look at ourselves and our own spirituality. Who are the tyrants? There is perhaps a tyrant in each one of us. We need to have these guidelines. What's at the root of it? The root of Shar'iah is compassion and mercy. The root of the Sīrah of the Prophet Mohammed is compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. If we understand this, it allows us to be guided toward a better life, *hayati tayyibah* (the good life), toward success (*fallah*), well being, and contentment. Allah says

in Qur'an that He makes life easy for us by giving us measure and proportion in things. If we want too much, life won't be easy. If we want our due proportion with consideration for others, then life will be easier for us. It seems to me that it is pretty obvious what is missing in the world, but it is obvious what is missing in ourselves?

Perhaps the analogy is Allah (swt) creates and apportions human beings from the Hikma of Allah. The exact same wisdom that created the universe is the same Wisdom/Hikma, knowledge, Haqq/Truth that created us and our capabilities and our capacities. There is a certain measure and a certain goal. We are told this is the path of well-being. The goal of every human being has been assigned a *qadr*/destiny from the beginning of creation. If it is to be happy, successful, to have well-being and fulfill one's life and soul, then that is accomplished by good *adab*, *suhbat*, by recognizing necessity and by training, and how to deal with the *souk*.

If cannot distinguish when we are in the *souk* and when we are not; if we don't develop a higher level of perception or understanding of how to interact with life and other human beings, it's only because we have not paid enough attention to our heart and we have not trusted our heart. We have not trusted Allah. We have not trusted the process. We have not trusted the foundational principles of life, whether you call those the foundational democratic principles of the constitution of the United States. (Of course, if people are stripped of their citizenship it will rend asunder the 14th amendment.) If we don't respect the foundation we have built, then what? What is it we are constructed from?

We are constructed from the Haqq of Allah. The interaction of human beings has to, at some level, be one of compassion and understanding, mercy and love. At least there has to be an overriding force—I use the word “force” purposefully—a force that forces people to separate when in conflict, by the power of justice and righteousness, compassion and mercy. How else would we have separated the parties in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina? When you get an explanation of what is succeeding and what is

not succeeding, you hear people talk about not just institutional development. When you listen carefully to what's being said, you are hearing words like truth, compassion, caring, or words associated with that. It's the same thing with our self.

It's not that there isn't necessity in other places in the world; there is. It's the interface with necessity. It is *adab* and keeping the right company. You might remember from Ibn At'ala Iskandari (ra) in chapter 3 of the Hikam, where he says, "*Your being on the lookout for vices hidden within you is better than being on the lookout for the invisible realities veiled from you.*" Trying to figure out all the things in the *ghaib* that you don't see and you are curious about is not as important as taking that energy and looking at the vices that are hidden. In Arabic, it rhymes (reads). Then he says that the real Haqq isn't veiled from you. It is you who are veiled from seeing it. "*For if anything were to veil it (Truth), that which veils it would cover it. If there was a covering to it (Truth), that would be a limitation of its being, and every limitation of anything has power over it. And Allah is Omnipotent, above His Servants,*" so nothing can veil the truth.

How do you see what you think is veiled from you, when you are really veiled from it? He says, "*Among the attributes of your human nature, draw away from every one that is incompatible with your servanthood, so that you may be responsive to the call of Allah and near His Presence. The source of every disobedience, indifference and passion is being satisfied with oneself.*" Take a jump for a minute to the Sarah Palins of the world. They are so self-satisfied, so arrogant. He says, "*The source of every obedience, vigilance and virtue is dissatisfaction with oneself. It is better to keep company with an ignorant man dissatisfied with himself, than to keep company with a learned man satisfied with himself. For what knowledge is there in a self-satisfied scholar, and what ignorance is there in an unlearned man dissatisfied with himself?*" How many of us really think about that every day?

He tells us that He will make life easy for us if we want only our due portion with consideration for others. What others? The analogy is Allah creates and apportions human beings from His *Hikma*. It's the same knowledge, as I said, that creates the whole universe. The goal of every human being is this assigned destiny, but we still have to make an attempt to do things. If we don't learn when we are in the *souk* and when we are not, then what are we going to know? The purpose is not only for our own benefit, but for mutual benefit. You see mutual benefit when you really hear the message of Allah (swt), and when you really submit to the message. We cooperate with one another and we help one another. No one can be a *murīd*; no one can be a *murād* unless one cooperates with and helps one another.

Just look in the mirror in Washington, where cooperation is exactly the thing people are not giving. When we achieve some level of material comfort and well being, there is a correlative spiritually that we can never have unless we have that cooperation. There are certainly many times when we don't know what the aim or purpose of this creation is, in clear terms. When we are in crisis, in difficulty, in illness; when we are self-deceived and arrogant; when we are lazy and ignorant; when there is no good guidance; when we allow ourselves to be manipulated by others, our normal perspective is lost and changes, and we can't see the purpose.

Not seeing the purpose of Allah (swt) is our responsibility. We can only see Allah's purpose if we have some kind of refined perception, *basīra*. That takes a special *niyyat*, and has an element of something else in it; something more than just seeing. Ibn At'ala says in the Hikam, "*The ray of light of the inner sight makes you witness His nearness to you. The eye of inner sight, ain ul basira, makes you witness your own non-being, as due to His being. The Truth/Haqq of basīra (inner sight) allows you to witness His being; not your non-being nor your being.*" You see only Allah. "*Allah was, and there was nothing with Him. He is now as He was.*" The responsibility lies in our intention and in our will. You can have good intentions, but you don't have the will power to move you.

Your intention is good, but you don't have the *irāda*. The will power has to be there; it is the fuel. Your intention is your GPS or your car, but you have to fuel it with your will.

The will can be blocked if your intention is in the wrong place. Iskandari (ra) says, "*Let not the intention of your aspiration shift to what is other than He, for one's hopes cannot outstrip al-Kareem (The One Who is generous). Appeal to no one but to Him to relieve you of a pressing need that He, Himself, has brought upon you. For how can someone else remove what He has imposed? And how can he, who is unable to free himself from a pressing need, free anyone else from one?*" When we achieve some level of material comfort and well being, there should be a spiritual correlative to that. That refined perception will allow us to see what that spiritual correlative is. Our intention comes from that will, and it takes a special kind of will and intention to refine our perception. It's not because we don't have the intellectual capability for it; almost everyone in this room has it! It's not that we haven't had enough experiences in life to know what happens when you're on the track and when you are off track, so to speak. Even the youngest people in the room know that.

There are things that cause our perception to be made unclear, or unable to be perceived. My eyeglass lenses are ground to my prescription. I am able to see through my lenses. If you give me a hug and I get your body oil all over my lenses, I can't see through my lenses. I have to clean my lenses. Life itself, the oil from the face, has covered the lens and I can't see clearly. Where is that oil? It's right here, right on the same face the eyeglasses are on. It doesn't normally interfere, unless I come into contact with someone else, and give you a hug and a kiss. It's a silly metaphor, but you understand what I mean. The thing that blocks your vision is right next to the thing that makes your vision clear. It takes this will. If it wasn't this way, there would never be inconsistencies and disagreements, and we would only see harmony in creation. Certainly, the creation of the Creator, Allah, would never appear inconsistent or less than perfect to us. Admittedly, at times, we have felt there were inconsistencies and imperfections in Allah's creation.

Go back to Washington for a minute. Almost every speaker said to them what I said to them in my briefing, “Democracy can be inconsistent. There are imperfections. It is not a perfected form of government.” Someone asked, “What do you think about four year terms for the Congress people?” They only have 15 months to do any legislation, and then they are running for office again. Four years is a great idea, yes? Then the deputy historian for Congress was giving a talk. He says it’s the “1,2,3 Rule.” You have to think of it in terms of twos: the Congress has two years; the President has two two years; and the Senate has three two years. One set of two, two sets of two, and three sets of two, with the possibility of the President having four sets of two. 1,2,3,4. That’s how wise the founders of our country were, to make it so there would be this alternation and change always going on.

Then he said that the speed of government is different also. Go down to the Rotunda and look at the floor tiles. The tiles on the House side have been replaced three times since the building of the Capitol. The tiles on the Senate side have never been replaced, because the people in the House are always walking more, running faster. Then he said that at the end of this Congress there will be 500 bills that will have been passed by the House but not addressed by the Senate. They work at different speeds. Extrapolate that to your own life. You are not running for re-election every two years, but you should be running every day for something spiritually. We can’t sit back on our laurels and forget. They are interesting analogies, which I am using because that’s where I was this week.

The Shar’iah is there for removing differences, but people misinterpret Shar’iah just like they misinterpret the laws. You have to have a Supreme Court, but not one that is partisan like the one we have today; but one that really believes in the foundational principles. That is our *shuyukh*, and our Prophet (sal). The Sunnah is there to show flexibility among the diversity and differences in society. The reason why there are very clear guidelines in Islam about trading is because needs change, but the principles of trading

have to remain the same. The market changes, but the needs remain, and there have to be guidelines for honesty and equity. That's another word that came up a lot this week.

There has to be believing and trusting, intellectual and mental effort. There has to be accepting of justice and mutual respect. We cannot live by accepting justice when it is only to our own interest. The spiritual message is very consistent because it comes from Allah. We have personal responsibilities that we cannot just abrogate at our will. Either you trust in Allah, or you don't. How do you trust in Allah, if you don't allow yourself to develop compassion or mercy or forgiveness or patience and perseverance; unless you have nobility and a sense of justice; unless you understand that all success comes from being in harmony, *mīzān*, and balance? Of course we have conflicting forces within us, and unless we deal with them, they will be in constant conflict, and our character will not develop. Our *adab* will not be present. Our spiritual growth and development will not happen. The conflict is not with Allah; the conflict is within our own self.

Day after day, month after month, year after year—or go the other direction—hour after hour, minute after minute, we have certain conflicts when we are in violation of the principles. We try to live within the principles. If we are not, if we are scheming all the time, or giving excuses to ourselves, or manipulating all the time, then we are using our minds incorrectly, our intellect incorrectly, and our emotions incorrectly. We are thinking wrongly and perceiving incorrectly. Why should we be surprised if there are problems? In fact, problems are indicators that we should change our perspective. Things aren't coming out the way we want them to; things aren't manifesting in the way they should be; promises of Allah aren't seemingly to be kept, and we are blaming Allah. There is something wrong with our perception or our thinking.

We need something much more than just the intellect to change us. We need something that can't be provided just by time, or even by sincerity. It's something you don't find in the *souk*. Allah says, **“Indeed, the human being truly rebels when he thinks of**

himself as being independent.” (96:6-7) What is it we need? We need something that clarifies that we are not independent. We need to not fear those people who appear to be stronger than us. We no longer fear the law that just hangs over us. We are not victims of deceit or deception. We have to overcome our doubt. None of this can be fulfilled unless we address the human frailties within us. The only thing that can get us out of that state of loss, fear, dissatisfaction, or attachment to the world and worldly things in our search for happiness and well-being, and in our trying to fulfill our needs, and seeking to find our place in human society, and trying to tap into that Divine Presence, is—well, the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***“Humanity was one community and Allah sent to them prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and revealed to them the Book with the truth that they might be judges of humanity concerning that which they differed.”***—we have to find a sense of accountability and faith. We have to practice our realization of beneficence and compassion.

Bob Darr, out in San Francisco, is a boat maker. He studied under Idries Shah. After many years, he went to a *shaykh* who told him to sit down and asked him what he wanted. He really wanted to learn Arabic and Dari. The *shaykh* said, “Do you believe in Allah?” He said, “Yes.” The *shaykh* said, “Why?” He said, “Because of all the beauty and all the creation I see around me.” This was after many years of being on the path. The *shaykh* said something like, “I wanted to see if your belief was based on your experience or on your intellect.” It was based on his experience. There was the belief in Allah because of all the things in nature he saw. That was his immediate answer. The intellect tells you that you are holy when things go wrong, and then you pray to God, and you forget about it when everything is okay. Your mind plays games with belief, and questions whether texts are revealed or apply to this day and age, or whatever. You lose the sense of necessity.

We can only find real fulfillment and understanding if we accept our own condition, take time to dive deeply, sit in meditation, study, and practice good *adab* toward one another.

If our *adab* toward each other, toward our guide is good; then it doesn't matter if the person you are dealing with has the same belief as you. You will act in a different way. But still and all, just as Iskandari (ra) said, you have to keep the good company. In every conversation we will hear bartering in the *souk*. Most people are bartering all the time. "I think I'll do this. Why don't you do it this way? I'll sell you my idea, you sell me your idea. Let's compete." (I'm being a little sloppy in my language and I apologize.)

We have to stop lying to ourselves. One of the lies we tell ourselves is, "Tomorrow everything will change. I'll change tomorrow." The Prophet (sal) said, "***Lies are alien to faith.***" Remember the clay pot that sweats only from its own contents. It doesn't inherently sweat. It only has the capacity to sweat. Our actions are proof of our belief, and our attitudes are reflections of our thoughts. Someone said, what is manifest is a clue to what is hidden. What you hide is known to Allah Almighty and to the chosen ones among His students, because it manifests. If you put something wet in the clay pot, it sweats. He says,

*If you meet one of them, then behave in their presence. Repent of your sins before you go and see them. Be submissive and small with them, humbling yourself to them. When you humble yourself before the righteous ones, you humble yourself before Allah. Be humble for one who is humble will be raised high by his Lord. Behave yourself while in the presence of your seniors. The Prophet (sal) said, **There is grace and blessing in your shaykhs.***

Iskandari (ra) said,

How astonishing is he who flees from what is inescapable and searches for what is evanescent. For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts. Travel not from creature to creature, otherwise, you will be like a donkey in the mill. Roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his

departure. Rather go from creatures to the Creator, and the final end is unto your Lord. Consider the Prophet's words: "Therefore, he whose flight is for Allah and His messengers, then his flight is for Allah and His messengers. He whose flight is for worldly gain or marriage with a woman, then his flight is for that which he flees to." So understand his words, and ponder this matter if you can, and peace be unto you.

Asalaamu aleikum.