

May 8, 2010

Saturday



Title: [Rizq: Gratitude for Everything that is Provided](#)

DVD title: Rizq Transactions: The Relationship of Spiritual and Material Provision
Gratitude to the Provider and Meaning of that Provision

Dinner blessing: Thank, You, Allah for the beautiful days, and beautiful flowers, the joy of spring and the hope that it brings us. Many people now are losing their income and potentially their homes and changing their lives because of the greed of humanity and its refusal to make progress, and to rape and pillage this earth. We ask, You, Allah to put the sword of Ali over their heads and end this miserable greed in this world today. Give us better ways to serve You, better means to serve You, more humility, gratitude for everything we have, and not to complain until we have taken account of the things we are grateful for. Amin.

Suhbat: Usually when we think of the Arabic word “*rizq*,” it usually refers to some kind of a transaction or provision. It has more to do with balance, harmony, and apportionment. It is collective and individual. Often, when people speak about *rizq*, they speak about what is permitted and what is not permitted in terms of the law. Permission and non-permission in the sense of *rizq* has a lot to do with what will enable you. If you do things that are permissible, Islamically and spiritually, then what is in our destiny will come to us. It doesn’t refer to just material things, but it embraces everything on every level. The *rizq* of spirituality is related to the *rizq* of materiality, whether we have material gain and loss based on our decisions or based on what Allah is providing for us—meaning, providing opportunity, challenges, tests and trials for us.

The spiritual provision in what Allah is providing for us, in terms of material gain or loss, resonates with or tracks with one another. Creation gives us many dimensions to this

idea of *rizq* transactions or provisions. Everything that occurs in life or is manifested is related to the principles of *rizq*. To better understand the depth and the dimension of the provisions Allah has given to us (and remember these provisions can be tests and trials as well as food on the table or opportunity or work) [we must realize] they are all related to the Names and Attributes of Allah. If you look at them, you will see that each Divine Name has a purpose. It is not just a name; it has a purpose. It is not just a quality; it has a purpose. It is not just the quality of compassion; compassion itself has a purpose. Allah (swt) has given purpose and meaning to everything in His Creation. When provisions come to us, when Allah provides for us some opportunity, and that opportunity is based on an attribute or quality, then it has meaning—most likely, on many different levels.

Everything has a purpose. When something comes as a challenge to us, we need to take the time not only to try to understand the purpose of it – what does it mean – but we also have to take the time to understand what Attribute of Allah is brought to our attention by the circumstance. Whether it is profit or loss, the blessings or Divine Gifts may come in different forms. It may come in the form of *qabd* or *bast*. It comes in the form of health and illness. It comes in the form of what it may take to have well-being and security for one's family—also, in terms of our talents and our spiritual progress. Everything we do in life: a sin, a repentance, an act of goodness or charity, wisdom or ignorance - all of it - forgetting, remembering, comfort, discomfort, wealth, poverty are all manifestations of the principle of a *rizq* transaction.

We human beings stand at the crossroads, at the heart, if you will, of these kinds of actions and transactions. We are the only creatures we know of in this creation who have the capability of understanding, not just that Allah provides for us—and thank you Allah for providing this wonderful dinner for us, we say—but that the provision itself is a reflection of an Attribute or Name of Allah that we have to uncover or discover, peel back the layers that are protecting it or hiding it, meaning come to the core. But that in itself is not enough to understand *rizq*. We also have to understand that through our

choices, and through the degree of real freedom that is afforded to us (socially, politically, spiritually), people often align themselves against that *rizq* transaction, against that process where somehow what you need and what is provided for us are resonant.

You might need someone to talk to about something; Allah provides that person. When I say “Allah provides,” you know what I mean, I hope; so I’m not going to go into it. If we align ourselves or we oppose ourselves to that understanding of *rizq* transaction, it may be the last thing that is discussed in a long line of practices and encounters between the *shuyukh* and others, but this subtlety is one of the most important things. Whether we align ourselves with or oppose the *rizq* circumstance, it will affect us. It will either provide for us the next test, challenge, opportunity or provision by Allah, in a positive way so we can say, “Ah, I made that right decision. That was tempting, but I made the right decision” because of whatever reasons. Then you have to be able to recognize what Allah (swt) is providing for us next.

The interesting thing is that the choices we make may not affect the *rizq* transaction; but the intention/*niyyat* we use to engage ourselves in life activities does affect the *rizq* transaction. When we are grateful for and accept the provisions given by Allah, we are also allowing for what is being provided for us to have some control over us. When you accept a provision of Allah, you are also accepting that it has some control over you. That control may manifest by some decision you make. Its control over you may manifest in terms of the way you explain or articulate something. Now that you have gotten something, this gift from Allah has come, positive or negative, you respond to it. As soon as you respond to it, it has some degree of control over you. You probably know where I’m going with that.

When the intention is right, then your life becomes *ibāda*. When your intention is right, and you understand where everything is coming from, then your attention is *dhikr*. You are remembering Allah. Your life becomes *dhikr*. What happens is the more one practices

or experiences what is coming to them as provision from Allah, then the more responsibility you will get in terms of spiritual capability, and the more responsible you get in terms of contributions you make to humanity, to your family, to your own well-being. These *rizq* circumstances also have a right over us, because they are made up of, or constitute, the way Allah wants events to unfold—happiness, joy, some suffering, some loss, etc. It’s a pattern laid out by Allah. We can work with our desires, hopes and aspirations and try to make them in alignment with what is provided for us. “I am provided this place, this kind of support. I have this kind of talent. How can I align my talent with where I am and what I want to do?” That makes perfect sense, right?

Or, we can treat the things that are coming toward us as interruptions in our own choices, our own decision-making, our own preferences, and now we have created *shirk*. We are denying what Allah is presenting to us, and we are affirming what we are presenting to ourselves. It is very easy under those circumstances to cover up the truth, and not develop the natural mind-set or capability where, within just a few seconds, you look at something, experience something, receive some news, something positive, something negative, and within a few seconds, you refer back to the Presenter, to the Creator, to Allah, and affirm that “this is a provision by Allah.” To get to a point where it is only a few seconds may be a long journey.

Also, the tendency to explain things without referencing even in your mind, let alone on your tongue and in your heart, the Creator of what you are about to express, begins to move us away from our spiritual goals. When Allah says, “**Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah,**” the unwritten subtext to that is “thank your Provider for that realization.” Whatever the circumstance, we have to strive to come to the point where not a lot of time or space comes between the moment and the reflection on the Provider of that moment. You see, it’s a form of *dhikr*. The other aspect of *rizq* is that, as general as it may seem, [it is unique]. We say that illness is also a provision of Allah because it teaches us a lot about our selves, our mortality, the efforts we are willing to

make, how much we value life, and many other things. Even though there is a similarity, we have to remember that each human being, everything in existence, in fact, is unique.

We share certain similarities with other people, like trees share certain similarities: they have bark, roots, leaves and branches. Birds like to build nests in them. But each one is unique. The nature or character of this creation is such that nothing is repeated exactly. Because everything and everyone is unique, we have a unique purpose. Our purpose as human beings has to do with *rizq*. It has to do with what we understand that the Provider of all things is providing for us. How do we develop the emotional, mental and spiritual attitude of gratitude and receptivity to whatever comes? I don't know about you, but I find that very, very challenging. Because each one of us is slightly different, even under the same circumstances, under the same roof, eating the same food, since each human being is unique, every human being has a unique purpose and role to play within the realm of these transactions. Allah (swt) has us programmed.

So we can say, metaphorically, Allah uses each of us differently to serve a specific purpose in a specific place with specific people to create an atmosphere where an individual not only understands, but cannot get enough for what Allah (swt) provides. Once you get to that *maqam* where you see that Allah provides all this, you can't get enough. "Happy birthday!" "Oh, you shouldn't have!" No matter how much you project protestation, Allah (swt) is transparent and endless. There is no end to the *madad*, assistance. There is no end to the blessing. There is no end to the value of the spiritual life of an individual, but each one is unique and different. Allah uses each one of us differently to serve a very local set of circumstances, manifestations, agreements, disagreements, just where we are. Yet, if we get it straight, and get ourselves near transparency, there are those who would make the case that if you get to that state of total absorption, anything can happen in a way that continues your spiritual transformation.

It behooves every one of us to understand the nature of what it is we have, the nature of what it is we seek. The knowledge of the foundations of Tasawwuf is very important to know, just as it is important to understand the Qur'an, not just memorize it. But it is important to understand that this was revealed under this circumstance and why, and what did the Prophet (sal) learn from that circumstance, etc. It opens up many doors, because then you can see that Allah provided it from this aspect of His Knowledge and Truth; now someone is providing from that aspect. When we accept that we are immersed in this Divine state of potentiality, then the knowledge we seek; the knowledge about what we seek—the knowledge *about* Islam and of a Muslim, the knowledge *about* Sufism and of a Sufi—now the universe has come into more alignment.

Most of us find ourselves in many conversations every day. The more one becomes aware of the Provider and the intentions of the Provider, the more we are as individuals deepening our *iman* and our trust. If we pay attention to what is transpiring around us, and find ourselves attributing that to Allah, then we can understand that this Sufi path is based, not just on the Qur'an, but on the acts of people who came before. It is based on the life and acts of Prophet Muhammed (sal). There is a kind of accruing of knowledge and availability of knowledge. Once we make this decision and allow ourselves to be humble, guided, and to really make *muhasabat*, then the next doorways open up for us. It may be the doorway of being able to articulate the truth, so that someone who hears it may become inspired. It may be the blessing of patience, so that people who are impatient can learn from your example.

It can be so many things—virtually anything. But it is in the subtlety in our own self, in our *muhasabat* that we make. We may find our weakness is anger. I can almost literally take it in my hand and put it down on the template, on the Revelation of Allah, on this state of *rizq* and watch it transform us. It is not about studying about something, doing the practices, reading Qur'an, reading Hadith, memorizing things, but it is the meaningfulness of it that comes from accepting that everything that is provided for us

comes from Allah. If we are doing right for the world, we are doing right for our self. If we do right for our self, we are doing right for the world. And the quality of our intention is very important. Metaphorically we say that Allah wants to hear beautiful things. The beauty of what is being provided for us needs to be reflected in the way we speak and think about it. There is a lot of work we could all do on this subject, don't you think? If everything coming to us is provided by Allah, just take the nice, pleasant things. How do we articulate this? How do we give thanks for it? How do we show our gratitude? Should we show it in a sloppy way when something comes to us in a very nice, high-level way? Should we think only of ourselves selfishly? You are invited to a black tie dinner at the White House. "Well, I don't wear a tux. So I'm going in my Nikes and sweatpants." That would be the epitome of stupidity and selfishness. "For that guy, Obama? I'm not going to put on a suit and tie. He was a basketball player. He'll understand if I come in my Nikes and sweatpants."

These assumptions won't ever be made. Once you accept that what comes is a provision of Allah, the transformation starts to happen immediately. One sees not only how they, themselves, don't relate everything to Allah (or that System) yet, but they see how other people are totally oblivious to what is happening in their lives. There is no gratitude, only thank-you's for when things go right. Never a thank-you for whatever it is one is experiencing. That's why you find that very good habit among Muslims. Which habit am I talking about? Yes, "*Alhamdulillah. Ma'sha-Allah. Subhāna-Allah.*" It is a wonderful habit. I dropped something off at your house. You weren't home, so I left it inside the screen door. *Alhamdulillah, shukran!* You realized that I was just carrying it, but the message and contents came from Allah. How do we get to that state of mind and really stay with it? We can talk about that the next time in a little more detail.

Let me end by saying, our heart and mind should be drawn to things that are good and pure. The things that are good and pure, that you gain from experience, should be put into your transactions with Allah. When you start a project like building a house, you say

“O Shaykh, can you come over and make *du'ā* over the footers?” Why do we ask that, because we are supposed to? It is for the blessing. We know that we want to get started off “on the right foot,” as we say. These challenges and blessings come to us, but we have to know the right ways and best ways to deal with them. It’s good for humanity that we trade and barter, strive to eat home grown things, and become more aware of the possibilities of disease and difficulties. We become painfully aware of the limitations of how things are treated. “I want to take my skills, practice my Homeopathy. I want to do something good for humanity.” You could say, “Shaykh, you speak a lot, and you are doing all these wonderful things for humanity.” But you, yourself, have to feel inside of you that what you are doing is not only *fī sabīli-Llāh*, for the sake of Allah, but it was created by Allah and presented to you as an opportunity. Does that make sense? The lives of the prophets and the walis all attest to this.

There is a great spiritual quality that comes from these kinds of interactions. We have to make sure we don’t have an agenda when we are having an argument with ourselves. Our agenda has to be only to gain knowledge and serve Allah, not to trip up the other guy’s logic or make a point no one else is making. There is a kind of harmony in that individuality. When two individuals (or more than two) are committed to the same purpose, there is a beauty to that. Maybe they are attracted to dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. You have the skill and compassion to do it, but will you go into it allowing for a life-changing experience? Will you go into it knowing that you are just another one of the provisions being provided to the people in need? Just a provision. When that happens, then we have recalibrated our *latā’if*. Whatever we have memorized, studied, or meditated on now is a resource for bringing someone else the awareness of beauty, of knowledge, of service. Bring who you are now to those day-to-day issues and circumstances. We all do it. The question is how do we do it consciously? How do we remember to remember? It’s a good question. *Asalaamu aleikum*.