

June 16, 2010

Wednesday Telephone Call Suhbat



Title: [Understanding the Rizq of Allah](#)

Understand a Broader Definition of Rizq (Provision) of Allah

The provision that we have to intellectually understand, to analyze, to gain insight and to deepen our faith, the capacity for intellecting, for insight, for faith is also a gift or a provision of Allah. Like all provisions, you can squander them or dole them out, or you can increase them. In the garden, if Mustafa decides to keep some seeds from the plants for next year, then the provisions Allah gave us for this year are going to be extended to next year. The intellectual capability we might have for discrimination or analysis is a provision that is given to us in one way, but it can be extended by us—so too, our insight. The capacity for insight is a provision; it is the *rizq* of Allah.

Of course, insights increase the more we practice certain things—so too with faith. When people have a crisis of faith, you have to realize that the idea or reality of faith itself is the *rizq* of Allah. It's not a narrow term. It doesn't mean what Allah gives you in the garden only. What gives us sustenance and what nourishes us both inwardly and outwardly is beingness. It nourishes our body on the physical level; but on the higher level, it is the idea of what gives us the inner state of balance and trust and faith in Allah (swt). It is necessary for someone who would be a Muslim, of course, but many people are born as Muslims. They are not necessarily choosing to be Muslims as opposed to something else they had before—like you did. Or like the young people in our community who are born to Islam, but in the first generation.

I think it's very important to realize that the most important provisions of Allah (swt) are not the ones he gives us in the outer. The ones in the outer are to be balanced by the ones

in the inner, number one. The second is in terms of the Shar'īah, in terms of *hudūd* and the technical aspects of Islam or the rules and guidelines of Islam, many of which are open to interpretation, as you well know. Interpretations are many. What's important is what is in the inner being of a person. If a person turns to religion just for security, that's wonderful. If they turn to religion because of personal need, of course we all do that. But if a person looks at Islam, not so much as a religion but as a way of *adab*, a way of finding balance and harmony, then you have to find balance and harmony in any environment you are in.

For example, a woman walking around, even in Washington, DC in *niqab* – not just *hijab*, but the whole face covered, like *burqa* – is not someone who is seeking harmony and balance with their environment. They may have been brought up in a cultural way to believe that is the right thing to do, and that's fine; but they are in a different culture. Allah also created this culture, and he created Muslims in this culture. What you choose to do and why you choose to do it is also a provision of Allah. Allah has given you this kind of rationality and intellecting capability, so if a person should make a statement about their religion, they do it in different ways. The Jews have black hats and things they wear, and they make a statement about their religion and beliefs. You can look at *hijab* or *niqab* as that. The Christians wear the big crosses. All these things have to be thought out.

Some things Allah provides for us we don't have to think about, food for example. We know that there is food, and it comes from Allah. If you don't have any food, then you can question where is the provision Allah gives to me? The subject of *rizq* has many faces to it. A person should understand whether they are doing it for personal reasons, psychological reasons, cultural reasons, or emotional reasons. Be clear about what Allah is providing: Allah is providing things for our sustenance: our mental, emotional, physical, spiritual sustenance. This is what is very important. I was in the elevator going down, understanding some of the Arabic two people were speaking. The man looked at

me and said, "I think he knows what we are talking about." I said, "Schwei, schwei." He said, "Ah, you are a Muslim!" And I said, "Yes." I wasn't wearing my topi, just a pair of pants and a shirt. How did he know I was a Muslim? He was watching me watching him, and he picked up something from that. In the same way, we used to tell the girls in the community. Some wanted to be *muhajib* and some did not. To the ones who *wanted* to be, I would say you have a big responsibility. You are going to have to tell people you are Muslim. You will have to stand up for something that's Islamic. You could be silent, and nobody would know the difference; or you could be verbal and defend. But if you are walking around in *hijab*, then you're expected to know.

Again, when Allah gives us provision, we have to understand how to use what He provides for us and how to give it out. Yet, at the same time, we should be pragmatic, open-minded and open-hearted. We should not be doing something defensively. You shouldn't not be dogmatic, and use the law as an excuse to be rigid, close-minded, and close-hearted. Even a person who is a Muslim has to be very careful about how they can become rigid for whatever reason they become rigid.

Sometimes, for example, people get married. They are very open-minded and pragmatic. Then all of a sudden you find out they are going to get divorced. Why? The girl says, "My husband was becoming more and more *salafi*, more and more rigid. He didn't want me to go out or have friends. If I went out, he'd call me every 10 minutes." I have heard this so many times. It happens a lot. A lot! This is a misunderstanding that gets carried over to someone else. What is the provision here? The provision is to have intellectual freedom, the ability to make a decision, the ability to understand who your real brothers and sisters are, who your community is.

Community is on my mind a lot these days. If you call people aunts and uncles, you treat them like that. If you call people brothers and sisters, you treat them like that. These things are very important. Do the aunts and uncles act like aunts and uncles,

brothers and sisters? What does this have to do with *rizq*? We are provided with these capabilities, but we can become very, very lazy by the environment we are in, by the challenges of society, or by our own comfort zone.

That's one thing. There are other important things to understand about *rizq* that leads us to understand Allah (swt) more. One is it makes no difference if a person is rich or poor. The provisions available to each person are the same. Indeed, one can make the case that the person who has less engagement with the material world has a better opportunity to attain a deeper level of understanding of the inner, spiritual world. We see that all over the world. People who have nothing are deeply pious and spiritual, and, by the way, they not necessarily ultra-orthodox or narrow-minded. The other point is that every circumstance that transpires in this universe, in creation, and the outcome of all the circumstances are according to certain guidelines and laws that I spoke about on Sunday in Charlottesville. Whatever the outcome of a situation is, it is following the laws of Allah (swt), whether you know it or not, like it or not, whether you understand it or not.

The unhappiness or dissatisfaction we have at any given moment really comes from the fact that we are ignorant of all the elements and factors that are involved in that situation. If we could stand back and see them all, the frustration, anger, fear, arrogance, whatever it may be, we would see where it fit in the greater scheme of things and what we could learn from it. A real *mumin* and Sufi has no other way of explaining it than to understand that there is a larger picture. It's not just saying, "Oh well, it's Allah's will" and pretending it has no effect. It's actually seeing that these pieces fit together. If I actually step back a little, divorce myself from my own ego a little; if I remove or pretend I don't have any doubt or fear, how would it be if I didn't have doubt or fear, or if I wasn't rigid in my demeanor or dress? How would it be if I was just a sincere believer without doubting my decisions, my destiny/*qadr*?

Everything is taking place according to prescribed laws, and the outcomes are following those laws. The person who is aware, who has faith with experience and knowledge, who is really sincere about their journey, will realize that this journey is incredible. Over and over in the Qur'an, unless we are guided to see it, and unless we have a more spiritual point of view (not a dogmatic religious point of view), then we won't have any hope of seeing that other side. It doesn't mean we don't have disappointments, and there aren't circumstances that cause us to lose our balance. It doesn't mean that we don't have expectations. But instead of having disappointment, we learn how to turn the negative to the positive, our anxiety into strength and courage. We see that we are overcoming misplaced expectations. We know our relationships.

This is me quoting (not just me saying), "There is nothing more powerful than *suhbat*" – the *adab* that goes with it, the faith that goes with it, and the practices that go with it. So if we take responsibility for our own, we can't be a victim. Ali Ibn Talib (ra) said, the Prophet said to him,

O Ali! Certainly you will not be agreeable to anyone who is incurring the wrath of Allah or who is against Allah, and you do not glorify anyone for what Allah has brought to you. Seek not to fault anyone for what Allah has not brought to you, for provisions will not be brought by covetousness. Nor will they be repelled by someone's spite or jealousy. Allah by His wisdom and grace has made ease and joy in certainty and contentment.

If we are content and certain in where Allah has placed us, then we are very careful about every decision we make, every opportunity we take or turn down, every change that we anticipate. If we are certain that everything comes from Allah, and we are content with what we have, that eliminates from us blame, hate, comparison, jealousy, victimization. It allows us to embrace what we have. It's like being a leaf on the creek; it just gently flows down the creek. "*Allah has made sorrow and distress and doubt and displeasure.*

There is no poverty worse than ignorance, and no wealth more useful than reason. There is no loneliness more desperate than vanity.” You can also reverse this: An unreasonable person, no matter how much wealth they have, has nothing. If you see a very lonely individual, see where their vanity lies. It goes on:

No evidence better than counsel, no reason better than acumen, no caution better than stopping at the bounds of what is forbidden, no account as good as goodness of character, no worship as good as reflection. The pitfall of haqq is lying, the pitfall of knowledge is forgetfulness. The pitfall of devotion is coolness. The pitfall of gracefulness is arrogance. The pitfall of courage is transgression. The pitfall of tolerance is someone under obligation to you. The pitfall of beauty is infatuation with yourself. The pitfall of being a man or woman of good standing is pride.

These are subtleties that you only get if you are on the path. I’m not selling a product; it is just a fact. These statements might be from Abdul Qadir Jilani. I see in my notes that I say this *hadith*, so it must have been a *hadith*. I will look it up and give you the notations. But there is nothing you argue in it. It is said by a great Sufi who was a great Muslim. Everything that is provided for us is provided by Allah. It takes a great deal of awakening and maturity to be conscious not only of that, but of yearning and security, to be able to say, “*alhamdulillah-Llāh*” and understand what you are really saying it about. If you have maturity, capacity and responsibility, then you have to spend more time thinking about where it comes from, not less time. It’s very easy to forget, as I have said, that it’s Wednesday night. I looked at the clock and remembered, “Oh, I was supposed to call at 9:30.” It was 9:45 when I called. It’s very easy to forget that it’s Wednesday or Thursday or Saturday. Are they holy days? No. But they are the days in which we turn our attention to learning.

They are days that we have a tradition. Don't think tradition is not important. Tradition is extremely important. Tradition is extremely necessary for us to carry on the work of Allah, to carry on the teachings. It is not to carry on Shaykh Rashid's teachings. It is to carry on the teachings that Shaykh Rashid was fit to carry on. Please don't underestimate this.

We have to remember that Allah has created us in a positive sense for good works. We have to see that the good works we do have to expand far beyond, not only ourselves, but also beyond our community. Then the broadest meaning of *rizq* is that the circumstances we find ourselves in that enable us to continue our journey and our lives in a positive vein are the sustenance and provision Allah (swt) has given us. It has a physical level and has to do with our bodies at a highest level. It has to do with really critical, pure awareness of the Divine Presence. *Rizq* varies from provision for our bodies to the most highly refined impulses of the Divine that allow us to say, "*alhamdulillah-Llāh*," that allow us to say "*ash-hadu an lā 'ilaha wa-ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasūlullāh*," that allow us to say, "Here, let me help you," not because the person is a Muslim, but because you are helping Allah.

It is really necessary to understand the laws of creation and to be liberated from the arrogance of ego. It is really necessary to think through what we are doing, and how what we are doing or say, or not doing or saying, how we are responding to one another as brothers, sisters, children, parents, friends, husbands, aunties, nieces, nephews. Think it through. Understand how contemplating that and correcting that removes the arrogance of the ego, removes false modesty, false opinions and fears from us. Trust what Allah (swt) has put before us, especially if He put it before us in the Qur'an and in the Prophet Muhammed's (sal) statements and life. Why? Because every one of these demands that we submit. Trust what comes from us through our *shuyukh*. If you don't like me, trust what comes through me. Really, I'm not making it up as I go along.

It's important to realize on a material level and a spiritual level that the good life, *hayati tayibah*, is more than just a good physical life. It is more than just a good emotional life. We don't have to fight for that. We have to submit to that. What we fight for increases our ego, our worldly responsibilities, and our attitudes that narrow our minds. What we submit to expands us and frees us. Isn't that interesting? Think about it. Even the Prophet (sal) minimized the amount of battle. There were not so many battles; and not so many people who died. Compared to the number of people who died in the Iraq war in the first week, more people died there than in all the battles the Prophet (sal) fought. What does that mean?

If we are in a spiritual crisis and we don't feel close to Allah, it is because we are blocking it and somehow misapplying the laws of the universe. We have strange and false expectations. "I have this expectation because you said this or I read it in a book." No, your expectations are because you allowed them to come about without seeking the real understanding or the real knowledge. It's not because spiritual insight and awareness is not available to us. It's not because we are sinners, as the Christians say. It's not because we are poor, and good things only come to the rich. It's not because we are uneducated, and good things only come to the educated. Everything is available to us. The first step is to believe that, and when we do believe that, everything starts to become *ibāda*. Who made *ibāda* but people who are *abdallah*? They are the best ones with *ibāda*. So we are seeking this opportunity. I'm sorry, that's all I'm going to say good night. *Asalaamu aleikum*. I love you all.