

July 10, 2010

Saturday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Are We Taking Advantage of Our Time?](#)

DVD title: On a Journey to the Inevitable
Are We taking Advantage of the Time?

Dinner blessing: Ya Allah! Thank You for all the blessings You shower upon us, and thank You for the showers You showered upon us for two days. We ask You, Allah, to bring rain to us and keep our crops strong. Thank You, Allah, for the blessings of all the good people, for the young people, for the good work we do, for our safe travel and our return home, and *inshā'a-LLāh* for their good experience and safe travel, and for the safe travel of those from among us who are now traveling, and for health and well-being for those among us who are in need of health and well-being. O Allah, open for us a doorway for more service and for trust in You, Allah. We put ourselves in Your Hands. We realize we are always in Your Hands, but to consciously do it is important. Allah, give us all strength of character and strength of effort as we seek to be lesser people and better servants. Amin.

Suhbat: *Bismi-LLāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* We ask Allah (swt) to give us the means to speak the truth to the truth.

Al Fudayl Ibn Iyad (ra) was once sitting with an elder in the tariqah, and he said to him, "How old are you?" He said, "I am 60 years old." "Did you know that for 60 years you have been traveling toward your Lord, and you have almost arrived?" The man became very silent, and he whispered, "Inallahe wa inallahe rajiun," which is what we say when someone dies. "Inallahe wa inallahe rajiun. To Allah we belong and to Allah we return." Al Fudayl asked, "Do you know the

meaning of that statement? You are saying that you are Allah's slave and that to him you are returning. Whoever knows he or she is the slave of Allah, and that to Him we are returning, should know that he will be stopped on the Day of Judgment. Whoever knows that he will be stopped, let him also know that he will be responsible for what he did in his life. And whoever knows that he will be responsible for what he did in his life, let him know that he will be questioned. Whoever knows that he will be questioned, let him prepare an answer now."

"What then shall I do?" asked the man. "It's simple," said Al Fudayl. "Do good in what's left of your life. Forgiven shall be your past. If not, you shall be taken to account for the past and for what is to come."

Stories like this remind me of my mother's response. *Alhamdulillah*, she always did good in her life. In the not so long ago past days of yore, when a person was to go on a journey as you have heard me say metaphorically, you have to prepare the right provisions for a journey. There wasn't a McDonald's on every block. Better yet, there wasn't a Starbucks on every block. People had to provide for long journeys. The deserts were hot, harsh, and unmerciful. There were no places to stop for chips, Doritos, and even rest stops. In fact, there weren't any human beings in sight for miles upon miles. You had to have enough food, enough water, to carry you to your destination.

In the verses we find in Qur'an about Hajj, when everyone had to make some sort of journey to reach the Ka'ba, Allah turned the attention of His servants /slaves to another journey, a journey that every soul is taking whether we know it or not, whether we care about it or not, whether we are heeding it or heedless of it. **"And take a provision with you. Take a provision for the journey. Verily the best provision is *taqwa*."** (2:197) That's the provision for the journey from here to the Hereafter. Ibn Umar (ra) narrated:

One day I saw the Messenger of Allah (sal). He turned to me and held my shoulders in both of his blessed hands. He said to me, “Be in this life like a stranger or a traveler.” Whenever Ibn Umar narrated this to his muridīn, he would add, “If you reach the evening, do not await to be alive by dawn. And if you reach the dawn, do not await to be alive by evening. Take advantage of your health before you fall sick, and take advantage of your life before you die.”

Our stories as they are written in this worldly life should be in some way a story of a stranger in town or a traveler. There was a Muslim writer who wrote a small piece about how it had been six years that he had lived in Medina, and now it came time for him to move on. In the last days, he would buy a bar of soap and think, “Will I be around long enough to use this whole bar of soap, or should I buy a smaller one?” Here he is worrying about a bar of soap in the supermarket of Medina, where all kinds of stuff attract us on the shelves, calling out from the shelves. He thought he’d better leave it on the shelf, because his journey was about to begin. He made a few extra trips from the Haram of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), and prepared himself for his trip, just get ready in the right way. We want to remember what this journey was in life.

When Hazrat Adam (as) and Hawa (ra) peace be upon them, were expelled from Paradise, in their hearts they continued to weep in remembrance of their first home. It’s like when these young kids come to camp. Sometimes they are a little homesick. They were sent off to camp and were homesick. In a way, we should have this kind of homesickness every day. Be happy and grateful for where we are, but have a little homesickness every day, until we come home, *inshā’a-llāh*. This is how a stranger feels. We should go through life like a stranger. That is what it means. The children come here, and they are meeting each other. They are doing the game up the hill and everybody is a stranger to them. Not everybody—some of the kids know each other, but virtually everyone is a stranger. We talk about becoming friends and they become friends. They get to know each other and they become like family. It is true, but the

advice in Qur'an is saying to keep some of the stranger traveling in this world. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, ***“What have I got to do with the material world. The example of the material world, dunya, and I is that of a traveler traveling in the afternoon heat. He stopped to rest under a tree for some moments and then he rose and he left.”*** This world is the shade of the tree, and the destination is whatever it is, depending on your actions.

Sidna Ali (ra) used to say, *“The material world has gotten up to leave you, and the Hereafter has gotten up on its way towards you. Both of them have children. So be from among the children of the Hereafter, and not from the children of the material world. For verily, today is deeds and no accountancy; and tomorrow is accountancy and no deeds.”* One of our predecessors said, *“Strange is he who has a material world walking away from him, and the Hereafter walking towards him. How can he busy himself with what is leaving him, and turn his back on what is coming towards him?”* So that is the journey we are all on. That is the ultimate *suluk*. The question is “Are we taking advantage of the time?”

Mohammed ibn Wasi (ra) was asked how he was feeling, and he replied, “What is your opinion of someone who travels a mile towards the Hereafter every single day?” Every one of us, every soul is on this journey. Some people understand it, and most people don't understand it; some people pay attention to it, and most people avoid attending to it. Some people prepare a little bit every day for the questions to come, for the repayment to be made; and others are living life, as they say, to the fullest – heedless, negligent, fearful to think about what is to come.

Allah (swt) describes the day when they finally wake up, **“It will be said to the sinners, ‘Indeed, you were heedless of this. Now We have removed your covering and sharp is your sight on this day.’”** So, even though certain intoxicants have been forbidden to the Muslims, people manage to keep themselves intoxicated anyway and delusional. We

do it with our cars and our houses or our work or somebody or something. But we have to wake up in time to pay attention. In Suratu-l-Qiyamah, Allah (swt) describes something very important. He describes how the soul is extracted from the body in the last minutes. He probably went to sleep that night, not intending to pray Fajr. He promised his kids that “we are going to Disneyland” or whatever “next summer.” Or he talked to his wife (or she talked to her husband) about what they were going to do next week. They thought about buying a new car or taking a trip for business, and then that night, the person had an unexpected visitor. The visitor had an appointment with him, but he did not know about the appointment. He was or she was too busy with other things.

So Allah says in Qu’ran: **“Nay, when the soul reaches to the collar bone, up to the throat, is its exit.”** He says that the soul does not leave the body in one fell swoop. It leaves the body part by part until it reaches the collar bone, the throat. The legs are gone, the arms are gone, the soul – we used to call it the death rattle – gargles in the throat. He screams and the wife and children run to his side, calling out, “What’s wrong? What’s wrong?” He is about to start another journey. And Allah says, **“And it will be said, ‘Who can cure him and who can save him from his death?’”** Even the last breath, as they run to call the ambulance, everybody looks right and left. No one knows what to do.

Allah says, **“The person will conclude that it is the time of departure.”** Reality hits and then he knows it is the end. The time for departure has arrived and the journey is about to begin. He is departing from and through the Qur’an he used to recite after Asr. He is departing from the four rak’as he used to pray during the winter nights. He is departing from the Ramadan and the fasting. He is departing from the chance of Hajj, departing from the five prayers a day. The leg will be joined by another leg. This means wrapped in the coffin.

Strangers may wash the body, and strange hands will shroud the body. And strangers will pray over that body and down and down into the hole that has been waiting for him. The day he entered this world, the hole was waiting, even though it wasn't dug. Then the journey began. **“The drive will be on,”** Allah says in Qur'an, **“on that day to your Lord.”**

So Ramadan is coming. The month of Sha'ban is before us. This is a month that is often forgotten because it is the middle month. You will hear me speak about it tomorrow. It is a time to remember and to be grateful for every moment that we have and don't wait until tomorrow to prepare for this journey. Come back to Allah (swt) before it is too late even though Allah is present. Look for Allah even though Allah is right before your very eyes. Walk beside Allah even though Allah is always walking with you. Hazrat Ali (ra) once stood at the head of a grave and he said to his companions, *“If he,” meaning the person in the grave, “had a chance to return to this life, what do you think he would do?”* And his companions replied, *“He would do nothing but good deeds.”* And Ali (ra) said, *“If it is not going to be him, then let it be you.”*

So many of you are young and beautiful [notice who I am not looking at]. Some of you are handsome, not many. Few of us fear Allah. If you are healthy now, or nearly healthy, or 90 % healthy, or 85% healthy (except for like my knee or whatever), worship Allah (swt) as much as you can before you are old or older. If you are wealthy, use your wealth, not just for your own selves but for the sake of Allah (swt) before the day comes when you are going to lose it and it won't do you any good anyway. If you have some free time, spend some of it memorizing Qur'an, reading Hadith. Certainly, [spend time] in *muraqabah* before the time comes when you won't find time anymore. If you are alive, take advantage of the life for the preparation of the next life. Don't walk around this world like a walking dead person.

Ibn Abbas (ra) who heard Prophet Muhammed (sal) advising someone: “Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age; your health before your sickness; your wealth before your poverty; your free time before you become occupied; and your life before your death.”

It is good that we can sit here tonight and say, “That is what I am going to do.” But I advise you, as I try to advise myself every day, because I forget that you should make *muraqabah*. It is not sufficient that you just do one thing or two things. It is not sufficient that you just memorize Qur’an; you have to understand it. It is not just sufficient that you read Hadith; you have to understand it. It is not just sufficient that you say good things just in the circle of where you are, but to make that circle strong and reach out beyond it. Of course, *muraqabah* is *ihsan*. Know that Allah is watching. Allah says in Surah Baqarah, you know, **“Know that Allah knows what is in your minds. So fear Allah, and Allah is Ever-Watcher over all things.”**

In another ‘*āyat* in Qur’an He says, **“He is with you wherever you may be.”** There are many verses like this. Of course. Hadith Jibreel tells us how to worship Allah as though we see Him. The meaning of that *hadith*, and you should go over that again and again, is really the description of and the definition of *muraqabah* – the endurance that a servant, a seeker should have in the seeking of knowledge, the conviction of their belief, and the certainty that Allah is watching over them internally, externally. Unless you have a better explanation for it, you may as well go with the one that has been given over five millennia by various people, unless you have a better, smarter explanation. To have this knowledge, this *yaqin*/certainty at all times, that is *muraqabah*. *Muraqabah* is not just a practice. It is the result of the practice. You would be surprised how certain you are and how much knowledge you already have. Because the fruit of the servant’s knowledge is that Allah is watching. *Hadari, nadhari*. He is present and He is seeing. *Sair-fi-Allah* (journey in God), *sair-bi-Allah* (journey by God) and *sair-ma-Allah* (journey with God). Overseeing – not just seeing – overseeing, hearing, observing.

Remember what Junayd said: “*The one firm in muraqabah, fears even the waste of one moment for other than his Lord.*” And Dhul Nun, the great Egyptian mystic, said, “*The sign of muraqabah is to favor what Allah has sent down of His revelation, to glorify what Allah has glorified and to despise what Allah despised.*” And Ibrahim al-Khawwas said, “*Muraqabah is the sincerity of both the internal and the external to Allah.*” It has been said that the best man can cling to on this road to Allah is *muhasabat*, reflecting on one’s own self. *Muraqabah*, the form and the meaning I have given, and governing one’s own conduct with knowledge is *akhlaq*.

So it is not just to be a person of real knowledge that is important. But a person of real knowledge is one who has this attitude, this *khawf*, has this *taqwa*; has this understanding of things to come; and has agreed that to have *muraqabah*, turning one’s attention to Allah (swt) inwardly as well as outwardly. It means to manifest one’s actions and one’s deeds and one’s behavior externally the best of what one has found internally. So whoever has this *muraqabah* for Allah (swt) in secret and internally, Allah will preserve that person, their actions and their behavior, both internally and externally. So I will go on with this later, at another time. Because I think there is enough to think about.