Wednesday, January 07, 2015
**Topic:** **Satisfying Hearts with “How?”**

*We will study how the Quran teaches us to reason*:

Human beings are given emotions and intellect to reason. We cannot reason by just using our intellect and shutting our emotions. Similarly, we cannot reason by following our desires (listening to our emotions) only. Both intellect and emotions are needed to make a decision.

* We need to have a satisfied heart in our existence now, so we can get ready for the eternal life i.e. the hereafter.

Most of our decisions are based on our emotions. Quran emphasizes on using logical reasoning to make decisions. Certain Arabic words such as ***tadabbur, tafakkur, tazakkur, ta’aqqul*** carry the meaning of understanding/considering deeply/reflecting on a particular subject/reasoning. At the same time, Quran emphasizes on using the heart for the purpose of reasoning/understanding.

* Quran combines both heart and mind in order to reason. **HEART<->MIND**

We may think that belief has to do with a logical conclusion only (A) or a response to our emotions only (B). Belief is a combination of both A and B. Our belief should be experiential and thus practical.

***What is revelation?***
Revelation is The Creator’s “guiding speech” to human beings. From one end, God’s infinite knowledge is speaking (C) and from the other end, human beings are receiving (D).

C: Eternal Source is Absolute, not bound to space-time. It provides guidance.
D: Created being is finite, bound to space-time. It looks for guidance.

* We need to see the relationship between C and D.

***How to understand revelation?***

Historically, we may find two extreme attitudes:

1/ The Creator speaks in the scripture and I have to follow as it is stated literally.
2/ The Creator speaks in the scripture and I will follow as it suits me.

Attitude #1 is blind imitation and attitude#2 is free spiritedness. Both attitudes may not lead to our reality.

The following typical attitudes may lead to our reality:

Attitude A: Quran is God’s speech; we cannot really understand it in its entirety, so we have to take it literally as it says.
Attitude B: Quran is God’s speech; we can understand it according to our capacity.

Attitude A makes us not try our best to reach our full capacity to understand the message. Attitude B encourages us to try our best to understand it and ultimately binds us to our own subjective conclusions of the message.

* Although both attitudes acknowledge that the Source is Absolute but Attitude A discourages us to utilize our human qualities. Whereas, Attitude B encourages us to increase our comprehension of the message which is coming from the Absolute Source.
* **What am I aware of:** He speaks with His Absolute knowledge. I am a human being and I will listen to Him and understand His speech because He knows who He is speaking to.
* **What must I do:** (1) I will try to understand revelation within my own capacity, (2) but at the end I will be aware that my understanding is subjective and (3) this revelation is coming from an Infinite Eternal Source.

Let us try to understand the Quranic message in simple terms.

Analogy: The Source has its roots in heavens and the fruits are here in this universe. If I eat one fruit, it means that there are more fruits that I can eat from the tree because the tree is coming from an infinite Source.

* Similarly, when I get one meaning of a message, it means that there are more meanings available to that message and I have to look for it.
* You can discover as much as you can. Pay attention: the message is coming from an Absolute Source.
* My Creator has given me the ability to reason (emotions, intellect) according to the conditions of my existence in this universe.
* Only within the conditions of my existence in this world, can I be convinced rationally.

***How do we reason?***I experience something in the universe --> I get information from it --> I learn/develop how to interact with the universe --> I use my given human abilities.

* My Creator is speaking to me right now within my conditions.
* He does not expect me to imitate blindly because he gave me the ability to “not be satisfied” with blind imitation.
* We cannot deny the fact that what we experience may be used as our evidence to confirm our belief.

***Do we realize that the creation of this universe is extremely sophisticated?***
The order we observe is not a simple matter. The more you scratch the surface of your experience with this universe, the more you realize that the universe has a sophisticated order. Every single object is consciously put in its place. Similarly, events that happen to us without our interference and the fact that we are given freewill to deal with them as we choose freely; they are all parts of His order. Instead of falling into despair, we need to get the meaning out of all of them, which ultimately points to His Absoluteness.

* The words of the Creator (*Kalimaatu rabbi*) and the act of creation in the universe correlate with each other and have endless meanings*.* Although, the verses in the scripture are limited but their meaning is infinite, like in the universe, although the universe is limited but layers of its order are infinite. They all are coming from Absolute Knowledge/Will/Power.



***“If all the oceans were ink to write my Lord’s words, the ocean would indeed be exhausted than the Lord’s words; even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid.”* Al-Kahf (18):109**



**“And if whatever tree upon the earth were pen and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of God would not be exhausted. Indeed, God is exhausted in Might and Wise.” Loqman (31): 27**

* If you want to count the words of your Lord, you cannot.
* If ocean was ink and the trees were pen to write the name of your Lord, the oceans would dry out and the trees will not be enough.
* We should get encouraged that we may at least get one or two meanings.

In order to have a satisfied heart, we need to answer the “How” questions that are mostly left for the sciences to answer. We are part of this universe: the One who gave us existence should be able to communicate that to us.

* ***How are things happening?-->why do they exist the way they exist?***
* Satisfaction of the heart cannot be based on imagination, imitation, and blind faith.
* Heart is given to us in order to reason with.
* In order to have a satisfied heart, I need to have a convincing conclusion.
* Belief is my conclusion.
* Without evidence, we cannot come to a conclusion.
* Just as we cannot confirm the speech of God (scripture) separate from its act of creation (universe), we cannot separate our heart from our emotions.
* If one is not at peace within himself, then something is wrong in their methodology.
* In order to have a satisfied heart, one has to experience the universe personally.
* We can only come to a conclusion concerning belief matters based on our personal experiences only.
* Our experiences may come as a result of observing the universe and using our human faculties.
* Satisfaction must be based on my reality because by definition my Creator is not going to tell me something which contradicts my human qualities.
* Deriving rulings out of the scripture should be left to experts only. If we are not experts we are responsible for our own personal judgment when reading the verses from the scripture. We may just follow an expert on subjects related to practice of the rituals presented by the Messengers until we became an expert.
* **Upcoming class topic**: Islam is a religion of *fitrah* (natural state).
* I need to have my belief based on my reality.
* There is no Absolute truth that one can hold and claim.
* I should be careful not to distort the meaning from creation and the scripture in order to satisfy my instinctual expectations (ego, caprices,) which do not take the purpose of my existence into account.
* My nature is based on His work.

**Verse #1: *“Indeed there is a reminder in this [the Quran] for whoever has a heart or listens with full intelligence.”* Qaf (50):37**

* Quran speaks to human beings.
* “Shaheed” (full intelligence) means the one who witnesses and experiences.
* Listen to the speech of God and experience it within yourself and your environment.
* Listen --> Internalize --> Witness
* *Ask yourself:* ***Can I really support this idea? Can this be justified with what I experience in the universe*?**
* My feelings/heart must be in rest as a result of my confirmation.
* Intelligence: observing what is going on in the universe.
* Heart: feelings, emotions as a result of the observation.
* It does not matter what comes first intellect or feelings. Ultimately, we have to analyze them together to come to a conclusion.
* By combining both (intellect and feeling) and studying the universe and the scripture altogether, I come to a realization of my reality.
* Quran describes itself as a “reminder” i.e. you know it or you have the capacity to know it.
* “Reminder” is a factor which speaks to us so that we may understand our reality. It is by no means forcing something on us.
* “Reminder” verses are guiding us to discover what is already in us.
* Human capacity must be ready to receive the message.
* The Creator would not speak to me if I were not given the ability to understand.
* Read the Quran as your Creator is speaking to you.
* We are constantly reminded of renewing our belief.

**Verse #2:** ***“So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blind but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.”* Hajj (22):46**

* We have to redefine what is “reasoning”.
* We have to satisfy the heart by reasoning without any prejudice.
* To understand the speech of God, I have to clean myself from the influences of the outside culture. Although, I cannot be 100% clean but I can always overcome the obstacles (prone to being influenced) by questioning the reality of my existence.
* Quran is conscious about inherited culture which may become an obstacle to seeking the truth.
* Although, it is easy to deal with wrong assumptions about our existence, **it is difficult to deal with inherited assumptions.**
* My life span from the beginning to the end is a witness for me to reason about the existence of an Absolute Being.
* Additionally, accepting the existence of God does not make me interpret the religion in the right way either: everything needs to be analyzed critically.
* Our heart needs to be used as a tool to reason.
* We are encouraged to use our hearts in order to dig the deep meaning of objects/events in the creation.
* Scripture repeatedly says: “***You have to look at the universe in the order to see the signs in the creation”***.
* We ought to educate our heart by reflecting on our reality of existence in this world and taking guidance from the scripture in a way that we are not being manipulated by our own caprices. We need to use our reasoning to control our desires.
* If we aim to satisfy our egoistic desires only, then we are establishing a barrier/obstacle to our true reasoning.
* Example: Banana is a gift. *How?* Our eyes (intelligence) may see the existence of the banana but the heart may not see the grace in the existence of the banana. We have to be ever watchful for our preferences made unconsciously.
* Sincerely look for the truth in your reality.
* We need to vigilant about our religious believes instead of being shaped by borrowed religion from the culture or tradition because at the end of the day, religion is our own personal conclusion.

**Verse #3:** ***“…They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like cattle; rather they are more astray. It is they who are heedless.”* A’raf (7):179**

* Every created being is given the basic senses to observe: sight, hearing, taste, smell, speak.
* Example: A donkey likes grass, sees it and eats it. It does not question where this grass came from, who created it. It does not reason, it acts only according to its instinct, which does not comprise reasoning.
* If a human being does not use his given senses to “reason”, then he may reduce his existence to that of a “non-human” created being.
* We should use our heart in order to understand our existence in this universe.
* The Quran is not an instructional manual to be read step by step.
* Just as our life is dynamic, the Quran is dynamic as well.
* Quran speaks to you “right now”.
* Belief matters, social matters and personal responsibilities are all interwoven: that is what makes the Quran guidance for our awareness of existence.
* Our development process is unique to us only.
* **Correct attitude: As of now, I am starting a new stage of life and I will be consistent with my belief.**
* Belief is my personal responsibility.
* Scripture is not giving us instructions; it is renewing our understanding of the fundamental belief system at every circumstance of our life.
* We have to establish ourselves by refreshing our belief.
* As your understanding of the meaning of events/objects change, the practical side changes its significance and meaning for us accordingly.
* We need to develop our own conclusion about the belief system.

Example: You cannot inherit the understanding of prayer you have to obtain it by studying the universe. On the other hand, you can inherit how the prayer is performed.