Saturday, December 6, 2014
Topic: The 12th Word (page 143)



**“…And he who has been given wisdom has been given great good…”(2):269**

* What is wisdom?
* We think that being an expert in subjects related to ethics or humanities is wisdom.
* Knowledge or information is not wisdom.
* Quran speaks of wisdom in an ambiguous way.
* *Is wisdom rationality? Is having wisdom related to having insights?*
* When a word is used in the Quran, this word must be understood within the purpose of the Quran.
* Wisdom (as defined in the dictionary) = the quality of being wise i.e. having good judgment, knowledge and experience.
* *What is good judgment? What is good knowledge?*
* The meaning from the dictionary does not help us much as it does not give the criteria for good judgment.
* Our main problem in understanding the Quran is that we read it outside the scope of its purpose.
* *What is the main purpose of the Quran? What do we need from God?*
* Common answers we hear:
1. To seek guidance on how to live.
2. To seek guidance to get to know Him.
* Both answers differ from each other.
* *How do we feel that we need to get to know Him?*
* We have questions and these questions do not have answers in this universe.
* At the same time, we have the ability to ask questions, express our concerns…
* *How come the universe is wonderful? Why do we exist?*
* We do not know and it is unknown to us.
* We live in this universe according to the result of our understanding of existence.
* To get an explanation of my existence in this world, I need guidance from my Creator, which is the Quran in this age.
* I ought to read the Quran to get answers to my existential questions.

* Without establishing existential questions, we cannot read the Quran.
* We usually read the Quran as a historical text which cannot be updated.
* Existential questions do not accept any time-space restrictions.
* As long as human beings exist and human consciousness works, the Speech of God is fresh.
* Prophet Abraham, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and all other Prophets had the same existential questions as all of us.
* Without establishing belief, religious rituals are meaningless.
* Belief comes as a result of answers to my questions and so I confirm and perform my ritualistic prayers.
* Your prayer must be established on belief instead of a “must do” ritual derived from the Scripture.
* We have to combine belief and rituals together.
* Example: I understand my existence in this world in a way that I always have to be in contact with my Creator, so I fast as a way to keep my awareness with my Creator.
* My belief necessitates that I fast.
* Let’s say the scripture says that stealing is wrong.
* Typical reasoning: Stealing is wrong because the scripture says so.
* **Instead**, I should reason as follows: Stealing goes against the worldview that I learn from the Quran.
* According to the author of the text, the revolution that the Quran brought to society is as follows:
* People used to think that everything in the universe is meaningless. But their views changed after the revelation of the Quran.
* The universe and its objects became consciously speaking elements: Water, clouds, stars…everything conveys a message.
* All scriptures brought in the same revolution because fundamentally, we all have the same existential questions.
* My existence becomes pointless if I do not know why I exist and yet I claim that I am a good person.
* If someone does not take his existence (by being aware of his/her human qualities) into the equation, all his good work in the name of humanity or religion will contradict his reality.
* For example: Animals live according to their instincts. But human beings have more qualities than animals.
* If I live in this world with the expectation that death will be the end of my life, then it contradicts my human qualities.
* We ought to establish a purpose in our existence.
* Quran stimulates our human consciousness.
* *Why do human beings have to keep studying the universe?*
* As we study the universe, we discover that the universe is more and more meaningful.
* The existence of everything has a meaning. This meaning points to something else.
* When I am conscious, I am communicating with the Creator by studying the universe.
* In reality, you start communicating with the Creator of the universe through the objects.
* Objects are not here haphazardly.
* When I read about the prophet Abraham, if I do not refer it to get answers to my existential questions, then it would be irrelevant to read the text.
* Practical side of how to live in this universe is demonstrated by the Prophets.
* Belief in the Quran is one subject and belief in the Prophethood is another subject.
* For example: When we read the hadith, we focus on the outward aspect only.
* The Prophetic example also needs to be understood stemming from an existential base.
* Religion starts with questioning my own existence.
* The first guidance for any human being is the realization of his own existence and the existence of the universe.
* In the first paragraph of the text, ‘Science” refers to studying the universe for itself not for its meaning.
* *Why should we study the universe?*
* We understand that the author is going to emphasize on the difference between the meaning of the universe (which Quran deals with) and the objects themselves (which science deals with).
* We have to come to a conclusion through our understanding and make that conclusion our belief.
* First Principle: The author is talking about the Universe.
* *Why does the author mention the Quran while he means the universe?*
* To hint the reader that our understanding of the Quran must be alongside the Universe.
* To make your religion real, you cannot isolate belief from your own existence.
* Similarly, you cannot have two personalities i.e. religious and social.
* The universe speaks to me exactly how the Quran speaks to me because I am living in this universe and I have questions.
* Quran and the universe work together.
* Example: You cannot isolate your spirit from your body here in this creation.
* When you read the universe you have to seek the message it gives you and when you read the Quran, you seek the meaning of that message.
* *What is antique?*
* Anything which brings a lot of information that we do not know.
For example: A dinosaur fossil in a museum. It is valuable because it brings news from an epoch that we do not know and through which we learn.
* Similarly, **the universe is antique as well because it brings us news about something we do not know.**
* *Where is the universe coming from?* *What do the objects in here represent?*
* The visual beauty of an object means nothing until you get the meaning out of what it represents.
* Similarly, Quran is not a poem. What makes it impressive is the meaning it carries.
* The deeper knowledge we have about the creation, the deeper knowledge we develop about the Creator.
* *How do we increase our capacity?*
* Everyone has the same potentiality but the more we use it, it becomes a capacity.
* E**very human being is able to be a “Caliph”** (representative of the message of God). This implies that every individual is able to communicate with God in his full capacity. *How much of it are we using is the question?*
* Another problem in understanding the Quran is our tendency to get stuck in the metaphor.
* Metaphors are used for the purpose they are intended for and should not be taken literally.
* For example: Antique is used as a metaphor through which you get a message through that object which you do not know.
* Similarly, extracting meaning out of the relationship between a lion and a human being would be “courage”.
* In the second paragraph of the First Principle, the word “European” is used to address secular approach as oppose to a realistic approach.
* Realistic approach= A person who tries to see the meaning in the existence of everything.
* When the Quran describes: “this is an Arabic book *(kitabun-arabiyyun*)”. It means that it has a meaning which you can understand.
* **It emphasizes that the Quran is in a human language that you can understand.**
* Secular science only focuses on the physical aspect and properties of an object.
* Physicists mostly tend to look for the cause and effect relationship in a matter. They tend to miss to look for the Source of existence of the matter. Thus, they deviate themselves from seeing the meaning in creation.
* This is similar to separating eternal life with this life.
* Human beings ask questions and are interested in the matter itself and the message it carries.
* If they question the meaning of the book of the universe, they will find out that it is the wonderful work of its Creator: I am created by Him, I am not alone and I have to acknowledge it. I cannot ignore it.
* By secularizing, we get divided into different groups.
* Group A: I believe in God and I have nothing to do with the universe.
* Group B: I am studying the universe; I am not interested in whether it has any meaning or not.
* The author combines both: The universe speaks through action and the Quran speaks through words. You cannot understand the word if you do not see the action. Similarly, you cannot really understand the meaning of action, if you do not listen to the word.
* **Criticize yourself**: If I do not establish my belief based on observing the universe, the Quran and the universe will not speak to me.
* Universe is “sacred” not “secular”.

* 17th word p238 (5th line): **“For the inhabitants of the heavens, we are each of us a traveling mosque…”**
* The stars are speaking in this description. Stars are the inhabitants of the heavens.
* Each star is a traveling mosque.
* Religion is not practiced in the mosque only but the star itself is the mosque.
* Star must be the mosque for me where I glorify its Creator.
* The more you study the stars, the more you prostrate. That is your religious field.
* To get excitement out of the universe: the more you get admired, the more meaning you get out of it and the more it connects you to the Absolute Creator.
* Analogy: Book means a physical being with its own meaning. It has to have a reader otherwise it is meaningless.
* Similarly, the universe is full of meaning. Everything refers to the wise Creator.
* We are worthy of the universe.
* Given: Human Beings are equipped with the qualities to understand.
* The universe must be meaningful and must convey the message to those who are open to receiving it.
* Analogy: A tree falls. If there is no to hear it, that falling never becomes “voice”.
* Similarly, if I have not been given the ability to wonder about my existence, the universe and my existence would be meaningless.
* We are here in this universe and we are given qualities to find meaning in our existence.
* *Why did He make me?* Asking “why questions directed to the Creator” has nothing to do with religion.
* We cannot read the mind of the Creator, it’s not the reality.
* When you realize that whoever made you, made you with the quality to find Him, then you are not contradicting your reality.
* You will feel secure in your existence when you realize that you belong to the Absolute Source along with the existence of each single particle in the universe.
* If you find consistency in your purpose of existence, you will find your life to be meaningful.
* Conclusion: This universe and I have been given existence so that I get to know Him. I confirm it, it’s consistent.