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| **Date** | Saturday, February 13, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Jonah’s Supplication |
| **Part** | 3 |

**The Third Flash *(continuation):*** **“Even if the entirety of creation had become his servants and helpers, it would have been of no avail. For causes have no effect. Since Jonah saw with the eye of certainty that there was no refuge other than the Causer of Causes, and unfolded to him was the meaning of divine oneness within the light of divine unity, his supplication was able suddenly to subdue the night, the sea and the whale”.**

***Recap:*** The story is told to me right now in a figurative form. The Creator is speaking to me for my sake, to guide me right now. I am trapped in the belly of a fish; it is really dark and stormy. This figurative description must represent something to my reality right now. I should not be concerned about the actual happening of the event. Analogy: I will be driving back home and Mrs. Smith tells me to take precautions while driving as the roads are slippery and narrates an event that happened on a particular road. She is basically telling me to be cautious and avoid that particular road. *Would I go to see the conditions of that particular road that I am told to avoid?* I am not here to confirm Mrs. Smith’s narrated event whether it happened, why it happened. **NONE OF MY BUSINESS!!!**

**The Quran mostly teaches figuratively.** For example when it talks about Adam being in paradise surrounded by angels where all the angels prostrate to him and one of the beings does not. ***Do I need to go and investigate where this paradise is?*** **Paradise is a concept I have within me.** **The Quran is guiding me that I am Adam and that I am in paradise in my primordial nature. I am with the angels where I see everything in this universe submitting to the existing order of the Order Giver.** However there is one side of me that rebels and tells me not to submit to the order in Creation. ***Why do I not want to join this submission?*** That is what I need to focus on. There is absolutely no need to think or talk about whether the event happened or not. **It is a guide that I need to take for myself!!!**

Some of us may take the events narrated as a miracle. **A miracle is something that happened at the will of the Creator in an unusual way. I am not here to confirm the unusual way.** If I do not see anything extraordinarily unusual happening in my present life, then what good will past miraculous events bring to my understanding. I have to see that the usual, ordinary, accustomed way of creation is in fact not “an ordinary” thing. They all are miraculous acts of creation. **It is not the purpose of the Speaker to make me go back in time and confirm historical events.** Additionally, we should not be concerned with legitimizing our claims through narrations of the scholars. That does not serve me any purpose.

**The Prophet teaches me in an allegorical way because he was speaking to all human beings at every level, in different conditions.**  As far as I am concerned, I have to listen to my Creator. We only grasp reality when it is told in allegory. Pure reality (al-haqq) is ghaiby (not a physical entity). If the Creator told me about the physical entity, which I am given the ability to observe and analyze, then it would contradict the purpose of the Speech. The physical aspect is always within my reach in the universe so why would He tell me that. **My Creator is always calling me to teach me about the reality, about *ghaib*, the meaning that the physical world carries.** Order in creation is observable by my human qualities without reading a source of guidance from the Creator. **Where I need Divine guidance is when I cannot make sense of the meaning and what this order refers to, which is called “ghaib”.**  The **meaning** that this physical creation carries lets me conclude that **there is a Conscious Will behind it**, there is a Creator.

* ***Why am I given life?*** I do not know. **That is where the Creator guides me.**
* **The scripture does not talk to me about the material/physical side. For example, telling me where Washington DC is located. How to get there? That is not the purpose of the Quran. If I am an archeologist, what will I achieve by finding the historical place or skeleton of a personality? What will I do with the historical facts?**
* The point of the Speech is to teach you what you do not know. Example: **When I eat the brownie, I enjoy it, what does it mean to me?** When I am using my legs to walk what does it mean? When I am in the kitchen preparing food, what does it mean? **That immaterial side of my existence is what the Speaker talks to me about.**

We are constantly immersed in *ghaib* when we get meaning from the physical world but we think we are only in this physical world. In reality, we get meaning through the physical world. Example: A book worm insect lives in a book without knowing that it is in a book. It does not get the meaning that is there in the book. What makes a book is the meaning it carries, not the ink and paper. Similarly, we are in the book of the universe. **If this physical world had no meaning, then my humanity would have lost its purpose.** **If I do not get meaning from this creation, I am not living in this universe as a human being but as a physical matter.** This is the reason why materialists/scientists reduce human feelings and emotions to particles and matter. Since I am more than my physical being, my Creator speaks to me in order to guide my humanity.

Some early Muslim Scholars that were Philosophers claimed that they get the truth through their own efforts/strives (intelligence) as opposed to the Prophets who got the truth directly from God. **Prophets were just conveying information to laymen who cannot think and find out the truth.** Some went as far as saying that the Philosophers had higher qualities than the Prophets because of their ability to reason and come to conclusions. They thought the Prophetic message is within the capacity of human reasoning, in other words, they compared the capacity of human reasoning with revelation. The truth of the matter is that revelation is ghaiby (non-physical matter) as the Speaker in the Quran elucidates that in order to understand what I am telling you have to use your reason but your reasoning power alone cannot penetrate into what I am telling you i.e. it cannot penetrate into ghaib. The explanation and guidance being reasonable does not mean that the meaning it conveys can be compared to human rationale.

* **One cannot penetrate into ghaib but can only conclude about It.**
* Trying to explain everything with reason is why the philosophers fell into the causal chain. They took the material causes to be the real source of effect because they never thought that the **causal chain is a means referring to a Conscious Will besides the things themselves.**
* The common mistake we do is to ascribe Power to causes in our daily lives.

**We may all claim to be believers but we fall into the causal trap. We think that without a job I am not going to survive, without good health I will not be happy. The reality is that without finding your Creator, you cannot be happy.** We are concerned with our physical needs whereas the Quran addresses my human needs. All arguments about the physical reality of events are contrary to the definition and purpose of the Quran. *Do I need to be concerned with who was Jonah’s father? Which sea did this event take place in?* All this information does not address my human needs.

**I being a human being is a miracle in itself.** **My human qualities cannot be explained in physical terms.** My physical body itself, my nose, ears, etc. their shapes and functionality cannot be explained in physical terms. *Who designed and formed them in such fashion? Who makes the body cells, tissues work?* **They are all miracles!**

Again, miracles that happened in the past are not related to the content of the Quran. There is no way that I can verify and validate them. I should stop keeping myself busy with the past and the future! The Scriptures should be read and the message/lesson needs to be applied directly to my case here and now. Do not imagine any futuristic fancies. That is, **Paradise needs to be related to my real life right now. *What shall I do with something that I will experience after I die?*** There is no reality to that in my life right now.

Analogy: A guidance counselor informs a student about the professional opportunities available after graduation in his area of study. The student should not be fantasizing about the future, i.e. getting the degree, job, money…by ignoring his/her current responsibilities. What the counselor is guiding with is to focus on the studies right now.

* Similarly, my Creator is telling me/guiding me what I am expected to do right now. We need to look for the right methodology to understand the Quran and Hadith. Do I need to concern myself with the nature of paradise and hell, what will happen there? Should I start imagining all this? **If the message was not applicable for here and now then it would be a contradiction to coming from the Eternal Knowledge which is not bound by time and space.**
* I need to read the Quran not to know about the past and the future but to be aware that this is a real conversation with my Creator right now. This is how I can feel secure in my existence. In a narration the prophet mentions that if you want a conversation with God, read the Quran**: It is the prophetic way of teaching me that when I read the Quran I have to read it bearing in mind that as if I am speaking to God right now**; and relate my readings to my present life right now. My human side is addressed and communicates with God.

A very famous hadith mentions that if you were to know that doomsday is tomorrow i.e. the earth would be destroyed, and if you have a seed then sow it. Someone may ask: Is it for an ecological reason i.e. to keep the earth green?

* As a conscious being, this must mean something to me right now.
* This is how the prophets speak and the message has to be deciphered.

**IMPORTANT**: Every moment is a new creation. I am continuously undergoing change.

* *“A la ya’lamu man khalaq?”*
* “Allah knows” means that Creation and Knowledge work together. My next moment of existence must be known by the One who creates it. That next moment must be within His Knowledge as it gets created. **From my being created in this moment, by studying the present creation I can say that He is All Aware.**

Belief in God is easy when you put aside your culture. What we mostly do is: whatever we read from the scripture, we use our previous knowledge to understand it and wrongfully get ahead of ourselves. We thus align the scripture with our cultural understanding whereas the scripture is completely different from what that prior understanding is. The scripture is talking to my present condition right now. **DO not completely reject Islamic cultural heritage but Start with a fresh understanding of the concepts!**

I cannot define my existence according to the definition of a community, family, tradition… I need to define it for myself and earn my freedom in my own understanding. Not being ready to question cultural heritage was the problem of the tribal people at the time of the Prophet (pbuh) and is our current problem. We need to get out of this trend. The Quran keeps emphasizing on not to follow/imitate your ancestors. We face the same challenge right now (as emphasized earlier) i.e. when we read the scripture, we do not get anything new from it because we simply repeat the same understanding we had previously established. **We may use the same response of the Meccan opponents of the Prophet to the prophetic message we receive: “we already follow the Abrahamic tradition”.** There is a side of me that does not want to question the tradition (*represented by Abu Jahl*). **If I am not ready to question my heritage and refresh my understanding, I would not be able to expose myself to the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet. What I would be doing is simply reading a story or history!**

***Faqeeh*:** one who gets into the heart of the matter of truth. Prophet (pbuh) encouraged the young companions such as Ibn Abbas and ibn Masud to be free thinkers. These young companions were interpreting the Quran, trying to decipher the meaning.

* I should also interpret the Quran with a free mind according to my conditions.
* I should not be imitating the Quran by saying that ibn Abbas said so because that will not be my conclusion.
* I can take into consideration what they said, but ultimately I need to come to my own conclusions!

In my practical life, I should try to find out the truth in narrations. There is truth to be found in the classical works as well but I have to look for it. I should benefit from the teachings of ibn Abbas for example and apply the teachings to my case, under my conditions here and now. I should not isolate myself from the life story of the Prophet (pbuh). I should make it my story according to my conditions. **The companions of the Prophet applied the verses shared by the Prophet (pbuh) within their own conditions. I should also benefit and apply the message to my conditions.** When we hear and read about battles in narrations, I should question my own conditions in my world i.e. am I experiencing a battle right now? **The stories and events must be related and applicable to us here and now!**

Finally*, do I have questions a*s in “Existential questions”? Only then the Quran is the answer to my questions. That is, in my feelings and my human side, the questions must be alive while I go on about my daily routine.