Halaqa: Wednesday, 24 April 2013

Title: Love of God – What does it really mean? (Part 3)

Who was the Prophet Abraham?

* From which characteristics, can you know the Prophet Abraham?
* When you mention the Prophet Abraham, what comes to your mind?
  + Friend of Allah
  + He was the Prophet that reasoned
    - His reasoning is detailed and signified in the Quran
  + He doubted, questioned and actively sought answers
    - He was a person who thought about things and pondered about their truth
  + He fought against unbelief
  + He trusted instructions that were sent to him
    - He never harbored even an iota of uncertainty
  + Tactful and wise
    - Innovative and interesting ways to shed light
  + Courageous

**Surah 6, Ayah 76:**

**When the light covered him over, he saw a star. He said, this is my Lord. But when it set, he said, I love not those that set.**

What is going on here?

* Of course we see that the Prophet Abraham has been a very questioning person
* The Prophet was searching for the truth and at the end he got it
* In this verse, the prophet was searching and questioning for the truth
  + As he was searching, what was his most point/criterion in finding the answer?
    - Whoever is the creator of the universe, cannot be transient.
* The Prophet does not use reasoning in this verse
  + It doesn’t say that my reasoning disapproves of the fact that stars set
* RATHER, he talks about **love**

The center of the Prophet’s interest was, not about logical confirmation, but whether he loved it or not.

So if someone says: Are we really ready to question about religion and analyze our ideas?

* I don’t believe anything other than the creator could be the creator BECAUSE I don’t love these other things
  + Have we ever taught about religion this way?
  + That, because we do not love something, we cannot ascribe divine power to it.

We have always defines the Prophet Abraham as a man of reason BUT his main characteristics was to act on his emotions and source of the feelings

* We are not trying to diminish the value of iman BUT rather, we need to think about how we can apply this aspect of emotion to our practical lives.

**A commonly narrated story:**

Abraham asked God to demonstrate how he resurrects the dead bodies.

Allah says: Be careful, don’t you BELIEVE?

Abraham said: Yes, I believe BUT I want my heart to be satisfied

* We tend to think about the Prophet Abraham in terms of his logical reason and have never thought about the Prophet Abraham as a prophet of feeling and emotion
* But as we can tell from these verses and stories, He was very much in tune with his emotions.

You believe that God resurrects but you want to have satisfaction in your heart

* You look at the stars and think that they may be the source of existence but because they go away, your heart does not find peace in knowing that a creator can be transient

When we say that we are reasoning (using rational and logical arguments), we should also engage our emotions

* Do not miss the dimension of building a relationship with God through your sense of love
  + You should strive to find a sense of satisfaction in love

We have not been trained to establish our sense of belief using love and hence we don’t concentrate and utilize it as it should be utilized.

* In the verse, the Prophet said that when the stars set, and he does not love that which sets so I cannot believe that they are my Lord
* He is making sure that his beliefs are true and in synchrony with his feelings

The Quran presents this story to us to give us a sign:

* You should believe in God in a way that you love it
* Do not believe in anything that you do not love

What is the benefit/consequence of this line of processing developing your confidence in God?

* If you develop your belief/trust in God based on your love for him, your consequent relationship with the world, will be based on love

If you have a relationship with the world based on love – and being convinced in your heart – (your

being convinced in your heart does not mean that you need not be convinced in your mind) you are satisfying both the intellectual and emotional aspects of your being

* The steps to being convinced of an argument most naturally has to proceed with the mind first
  + Your mind perceives something and begins to analyze it
  + Only after a thought has entered your mind can it enter your heart

A very important part of the verse that we should try and memorise and apply in our lives ***: La-uhibul al afileen (I don’t love that which sets)***

* It means that you have to establish your belief in God on the basis of your love with His creation

Through this loving relationship with His creation, you have to reach God.

We usually do not take notice of this aspect in our belief matters.

The Prophet Abraham, was a prophet of love; a new perspective to be thought about.

The source of the creation is eternal, is Absolute. The creation itself is transient.

* We have to pay attention to the fact that creation is transient
  + We know, from our own experience, that we do not love transience
* If so, how are we to manage our life in this world since everything is transient?
  + Either we can be conscious that everything in this world points to something else (something that is not transient) OR
  + We attach a temporary image of eternity to the things that are transient
    - We wrongly then presume the things we attach temporary eternity to as the source of our happiness.

Example: You love swimming at the beach

But from your experience, you know that as you are swimming, your enjoyment of the act of swimming is passing at each moment

* Every moment, you are losing your pleasure.

We want to continue swimming so that we can continuously experience the pleasure. But at some point you will get exhausted and you will return to shore.

Then you will exclaim: That was such a pleasure!

* Reality: Pleasure is HISTORY
* Your feelings admit that it was enjoyable but your feelings are no longer satisfied.
* You realize that the act of swimming or the sea itself cannot be the source of your happiness.

You cannot accept something as the creator of your pleasure if it is temporal.

* This is precisely what the Prophet Abraham was trying to convey

Another example:

Marriage

* You will find happiness in companionship but you know that marriage itself is not a source of satisfaction
* The reason for marriage is that

1) It takes us to the source of existence of this world

2) We get a taste of eternity so that we will be enticed to work towards eternity

We are created in a way that we love these temporary experiences (be it marriage or eating good food, etc) and we try to grasp these transient moments for eternity but we realize that we can’t

* It is verily in this realization that we can experience *la uhibul (*as narrated by the Prophet SAW)
* Since these transient things do not have the quality of a deity, I do not love it

We ought to use our experiences as an indicator to jump to loving the creator of the experiences

* Your human feelings look for the eternity, the eternal one
* We are given the sense of loving temporary, transient things so that we can look for the eternal source of their existence

**\*\*In order to know the eternal source of their existence, we are put in touch with this world. This is despite the fact that we intellectually know that whatever we get in this world is subject to transience and it will definitely go away but yet we are always in contact with this world**

* This is how we are made
* I do not love things that *set* but I love what they point to (the eternal source)
  + I am transient. My experience of swimming is transient. But the creator of this universe and the pleasure I experience during swimming is eternal.
  + *La-uhibul al afileen*
  + If we do not suffer the pain of the transience, we will never find the eternal source (This is essential for human nature and the reason why we were created)

Re-orient ourselves from solely logical reasoning to a reasoning based on love

* It is not hypothetical or imaginary
* The ability to love is REAL
* I love eternal (in all it’s falsity even)
  + When people say that they will love you forever, we enjoy hearing it
  + We get satisfaction from the promise of eternal love but yet everything in this world is transient
  + Imagine if we truly connected with the Eternal!

Consult yourself: Can the creator of this world only sustain this earth for 10 billion years and then the whole universe will disappear? If so, I will most certainly fall into despair.

Only eternity satisfies human beings.

**\*\* When we get into belief of eternal life in the hereafter, only then can we sustain our lives here and we can take pleasure in our lives here.**

At the most, you may live for 100 years. You know that you will eventually die.

Then someone tells you, once you die you will live for 10,000 years in the afterlife . Although 10,000 years is a very long time, the fact that it will end is very unsettling. What will happen after that, you are bound to wonder!

* Just look at yourself and you will realize that we have been created to love eternity
* So then, why not love what is truly eternal?

**Human feelings can only be satisfied by eternity. We love things only when we find eternity in them.**

But in our relationship with the world, we are most of the time experiencing a ‘fake eternity’

* This fake eternity urges me towards the real eternity
* We don’t love the things in this world because it is transient (rather, we cheat ourselves and attach an eternity to the object/person/etc AND then love it)
  + You don’t buy a scarf that will disintegrate tomorrow
    - Rather, you buy it with the idea (fake) that it will last you for a number of years BUT you can never really know how long the object will last because EVERYTHING in this world is transient.

Temporarily we attach a kind of eternity to it and that is why we love it OTHERWISE we would not love things in this world at all.

We can live in eternity now if we train ourselves to see the Absolute in everything.

While your hands are experiencing the joys of swimming, you heart should be attached to the creator of that pleasure

* If you heart is not there, we are just cheating ourselves

The people who do not really attach their heart to the creator (source of existence), it is like as though they are just playing a game with this world

* They will never win
* The world then becomes like a casino in which people keep playing but will eventually lose
* The world is a playground because everything by its own nature is transient and unless you connect yourself to the eternal, everything is in vain.

How to find eternity in this world? (We are all always seeking eternity and we can do it in 2 ways)

1. Connect yourself to the creator of this world who is Eternal (by acknowledging the creator of everything in this world)
2. Attach a fake eternity to things in this world and like a ‘fake’ life

Human beings can only be satisfied with eternity and we find eternity in the things we love either by attaching a fake, temporary eternity to them OR we find the real eternity through the transient nature of objects around us.

* Human heart cannot love transient things

How we sustain our life in this world depends on how we perceive eternity

* We can either cheat ourselves by attaching fake eternities to transient things
* OR we can truly find eternity in them
  + Life is then, truly worth living, because we are experiencing the Eternal One through transient creature

We need the transient creatures because without them we would not be able to experience eternity

* Eternity is not something out of your imagination
* It is within your heart

The creator of the pleasure that we find in swimming, is Eternal. He is reflecting his Eternity in this transient world.

* If I attach my heart to the eternal source, I will find satisfaction in my belief
* Otherwise, belief will only remain a rational activity

Human beings consists of rationality and emotions so we have to satisfy ourselves as human beings in both aspect.

* If our connection with God is not as a whole, parts of us will remain unsatisfied.

Q: Once you have learnt to love nothing but Allah through your marriage, then what do you do with your marriage?

A: If you cut off your relationship with this world (while still living in this world), you are cutting yourself off from experiencing love from the source of love

When our creator takes us away from this world, we are consent and content with the action because we know He is going to take us to eternity, and into His presence.

* If we were not comfortable with the fact that death is the beginning of the eternal life, then the idea of death will be very troubling
* Your heart will be very uncomfortable

It is very human to desire the eternity of the after life.

* Even if you know that swimming is not the source of pleasure and that Allah is the source of pleasure, you need to swim to experience the manifestation of the eternal source of pleasure
* Otherwise, you are ‘killing’ yourself because you are depriving yourself of experiencing eternity from the Eternal creator.

You realize that sharing your life with another person is not the source of pleasure, the food you eat is not a source of pleasure itself, etc

* If you cut yourself from each one of these, you will eventually kill yourself
* The reason we are placed in this world is to experience the manifestation of the eternal creator in this world.

Without *lailaha* you cannot say *illAllah*

*-*without living in this world, you cannot believe in God

Don’t have an imaginary belief in God by renouncing everything in this world

* I don’t need beautiful things
* I don’t need good food
* I don’t need marriage
  + It is not realistic and it is not what meant God to have created us for
  + In order to really love God, you have to experience His creation

Interact with the world, the people, the fruits, the flowers, the beauty and destruction and death because only through it will you learn to love God

* I am not interested in the things in and of themselves because all of it is temporary and will disappear
* What I am interested in is the eternal connection that all the temporary things have

**\*To detach ourselves from the world will end up in us detaching our heart from its Lord**

To say that we love God and don’t need anything else, is a fantasy

* God is the one who has put you in this world
* So use it to know Him

Do not cheat by yourselves by attaching permanence to temporal things

* Rather, love God in the things in which He has displayed signs of his eternity
* This world is the place where God’s eternal qualities and attributes are manifested.
* When you love something, love it for the sake of God’s eternal qualities.

Mirror VS Sun

* I don’t love mirror, it is not the source of light
* But if you break the mirror, you will lose the sun
* Without the mirror, you cannot see the sun’s reflection
  + This is because, the sun is not of the nature of this universe
* We should respect and preserve the mirror for the sake of it’s function
  + Don’t love it for the wrong reasons
  + It does not produce light
  + But it reflects light to you

Be skeptical of the fantasy language associated with love of God

* You can and have to experience God’s love in this world through your interactions.

**We human beings love only the eternal One and take pleasure to submit ourselves to it. We can only be satisfied when we submit our free will to the Eternal One.**

When you love someone, you have to commit.

* Actions ought to follow the love you proclaim
* When you make decisions, you make them according to His choice not yours
* This is because you have acknowledged your status in this world

When you keep the mirror, you can choose to turn the mirror on it’s back, to break it or to look at it.

* The owner of your heart, guides you as to how to place the mirror
* We are told to reflect on our human qualities and to be aware and conscious of our Creator
* If you love your God, you have to choose the way that will take you to God
  + Otherwise, we will lose ourselves in an imaginary world
  + We need to put our love into practice

Look for the traces of what your Lord wants you do because you love Him.

We commonly hear things like: I will suffer in this world so that my creator will be pleased with me

* Do you think your Lord needs to be satisfied by you?
  + Think about such statements!

The more I get pleasure from His creation, the more I am happy with Him as the source of that pleasure because in doing so I am further recognizing my place and status.

Example: If you have a laptop and only use it as typewriter, you are not using it in its fullest capacity.

* He is wasting the qualities in the laptop
* I am at loss because I cannot fulfill the benefits from the laptop

We have to really think about how we are going to manage our free will

* I have to use my free will in a way that my creator wants me to use it
* So that I can get the fullest satisfaction in this world and experience the manifestation of the eternal benevolence in this world
* That is why He created us with endless needs

If we use this creation in the way that takes me to Him (using them in the best way), the creator will be happy because we are using the qualities that He has placed in me for the best purposes.

* Unfortunately we don’t think of it this way
* We think that by doing what God wants, we are satisfying Him
* And that our being in this world is to suffer
  + If you reflect on such words, you will realize they make no sense and are just emotional rhetoric that we have allowed ourselves to be swayed by

Once you acknowledge that you have a creator, you will naturally ask, what does my creator want of me?

You will realize that there is a purpose to be in this world and we have to fulfill this purpose

* Get in touch with it and look for the eternal source in everything
* Get the fullest benefit from His presence

When the heart is transferred to the eternal life, the will be at peace because they were worshipping the same One lord in this life as is in the next.

We need to stop using burrowed language without noticing what it really means

* Burrowed language kills us because it stops us from developing ourselves
* We end up imitating

If people start using rhetoric that exploits people’s emotions and drag them to certain ways, we have to be careful and pay attention to what we are listening to.

We can only be satisfied when we submit our free will to the eternal One

* I will get the most pleasure in His creation if I submit to Him
* If no one benefits from the creation of this world, the world will be destroyed because no one will be using it (Doomsday)
  + If I don’t benefit from this world, that is my doomsday (it means I am dead)

The Prophet said: The world will end when there are no more believers left in the world

* The Prophet is not a fortune teller
* When he says this, he means: the sustaining of this world rests on my benefiting from it for the right purpose
  + Otherwise the world is no good for me

Example:

I have a laptop but I do not use it

-It sits on the shelf and gets dusty

- It’s as if the laptop does not exist for me

Read the verses in the Quran and the hadiths very carefully

* When reading hadiths, read them from the persective that the words were said by the MESSENGER of Allah
* Not just a wise or an honest man

Sharia law is nothing but an external form of pleasure.

* What do we mean when we say Sharia

Analogy: You have a very precious stone and it is in a box

* If there is a diamond in a box, the box is worth being preserved
* If there is no diamond, the box can be thrown away
* Sharia gives a form to your love of God
  + Sharia is like the box within which is the love of God

Sharia gives us direction on how we are supposed to use our free will in a way that it will meet God’s will

* We need direction as to how to use our free will in our relationship with things in this world

I cannot tell my wife, I love you and when she asks me to do something I refuse

* I am refusing to listen to her will
* I am contradictory the very love I proclaimed for her

Example: In order for me to benefit from the laptop, I have to follow instructions so that I can benefit from it in the fullest sense

* If I use it according to my own whims and fancies, the engineer of the computer will be upset because it wasn’t created to be broken
* The engineer of the computer does not gain or lose anything from the way I use the laptop
* But if I use to its fullest potential, the engineer will be happy because I am able to comprehend the intelligence in His creation
* Sharia gives a form to our free will

Our free will is simply floating – there is no restriction to what we can do with our free will.

I can use the mirror according to my free will

* Since there are 360 degrees of directions I can angle the mirror in whichever direction I wish
* But, by using Shariah, I am aligning the mirror like a compass
* Shariah helps me and guides me to the best way of benefiting in this world

Example: In our financial transactions if everybody does things his/her own way

* There will be anarchy
* You have to follow the rules on how to deal with people
* You cannot just go to the grocery stores and start picking what you like and walk out without paying claiming that the properties belong to God
  + We understand that our Free will needs guidance BUT am I using my free will in the best way?
  + Sharia only tells me how to benefit from the sun’s light by using the mirror
    - Sharia is not the light
    - The light comes from your connection with the creator

Life is based on sharia

* If you follow shari’a you will get the most from life.

If you are really aware of the nature of sharia (outward form of things)

* Pigs are created by God as are cows
* Since God is giving you the direction to acknowledge His will, you don’t eat pig
* What is important is not the action itself but ACKNOWLEDING His will in your actions
* But, no one is perfect, and we may not be entirely aware of what is right and wrong.
  + Keep in mind that you have to follow you free will in order to meet your creator’s will
  + Remember, what matters is INTENTION

You don’t have to lose yourself in the rules of Shari’a

* We have to lose ourselves in the connection we derive in the object that the Shari’a sets rules for (i.e. in the love of God)

Analogy: When you buy an orange, you don’t buy it to eat the skin. The skin is like Shari’a. It encloses the fruits, which is what we are really after. Yet, you will not buy a skinless orange.

* Although you are not going to eat the skin
* The covering (sharia) gives value to your relationship with the creator.

If someone says that I love God but does not submit his free will to Him, it is contradictory

I love God, I believe in God BUT there is no need Shari’a

We learn from the Quran that we should not eat pig.

* We do not have to rationalize the pig itself but we have to rationalize our action
* You are obeying the rule of God because you are acknowledging His rule over you
* God helps me to direct my life with Sharia

\*But before you can live according to the Shari’a, you have to first establish your belief in God and the fact that He created you. If you try and follow rules without believing in the REASON for following the rules then you are imitating.

When you ask what kind of meat is being served?

* Your intention is there
* You acknowledge the owner of the meat you are going to eat

1. In His Name: the food belongs to Him (you follow Shari’a with His permission)

Example: You come to my house and you take something

* You say that it is belongs to me but you did not get permission from me to take it
* Similarly, you may say that you love God and that He is the owner of all of the world but when you are eating, you don’t acknowledge that He is the owner of the food you are eating and of you and hence you need to eat according to His rules (sharia)

Shari’a teaches me how I should ideally interact with things with His permission

* But you cannot do anything with my permission if you do not confirm that the object belongs to me
* If someone does not have love of God, following the shari’a is a false claim
* But if you do have love of God, then by following the shari’s you are ascending to the second step and establishing this love practically

If you love of God and you are not practicising Shari’a you will find yourself living in contradiction.

* You acknowledge that everything belongs to God
* By stealing, you are contradicting you own self because you say that everything belongs to God but yet you are not using God’s things as you ought to
* You are choosing to use them as you wish
  + You have to really train yourself to live in this world in His name with His permission.

Following of the shari’a is based on your intention

* You may not follow rule A but you may follow rule B
* You will act in accordance to how you will feel
  + And your feelings will guide you
  + When confronted with two opinions on a particular practice, ask yourself which feels ‘right’
    - As long as you are performing an action based on belief of your Lord, that is what matters for yourself
    - When you choose one opinion over another, you are sometimes choosing the ‘easier’ option but you will know in your heart that you your intention for choosing it was because it was easier and not because it was true
    - Always check your intentions

Don’t say things like ‘ I am following the strongest path OR the best path’

* They are all exaggerated statements
* Rather, submit your will to the will of the creator
* Do not contradict yourself.

**Summary -**

The roots of love:

1. Belief in God (foundation) – *imanuAllah*

* If you don’t really believe that there is a creator, you cannot go further
* If you establish this, then you can go to #2

1. Knowledge of God – *ma’arifatulAllah*

* Being aware of God
* There are multiple stages in this
  + Biology in middle school and the phD level are very different
* It is a never ending process

1. Love of God - *mohabbatulAllah*

* Your emotional attachment are satisfied
* You are fully satisfied with where you are

The fruit of love

* When you experience the love of God in this world, the result is peace and pleasure of the spirit
* You get eternal pleasure in this transient world
* You are fully satisfied with your creator
* *Lazzat-ul rohani*