Halaqa\_ Saturday, March 9

Title: How to experience Paradise now

Youtube Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHSZdW7EHfA&feature=plcp>

Last week we concentrated on the fact that when paradise is mentioned in the Quran, the description of paradise in the Quran is related to our lives here. We can use our experiences here to confirm the news we receive in the scriptures.

**He bestowed on them, out of His mercy, bounties so dazzling that no eye has seen them nor ear heard them nor have they occurred to the heart of man.**

* Paradise is described by the Prophet SAW as something so amazing that the eye hasn’t seen, nor the ear heard nor has it ever occurred to the heart.
* If so, how can I confirm this prophetic message?
* How do we approach such topics?
  + Why does the Quran or the Prophet tell us something that on the face of it might seem so distant?

Often, paradise is described as a place where there are lofty homes with gardens and streams running through them. Why is it so?

* Remember, the Quran is addressing our human sense
* When we read such descriptions of paradise, what do our senses feel?
* Are our senses evoked?
  + Whoever created the sense within me (that finds pleasure in the thought of having a beautiful home full with provisions)
  + The sense itself is witnessing the possibility of the existence of such an experience
  + But do not take this news literally, as the Prophet SAW said
    - Our feelings are constrained by this creation
    - What paradise truly is, is something beyond our limited capacities
    - Because I know the source of this universe is eternal and absolute, I can confirm the truth in the fact that there will be a new creation and a different type of paradise in the hereafter
* The one who has created me, has given me the sense to perceive and understand that there must be an eternal life
* He has made me realize the transient nature of this world and with that the understanding that there must be permanence
  + Though I may not be able to perceive exactly what eternity is, I understand that eternity exists
  + Because I know that my time in this world is transient, I confirm that there must be something eternal
  + Everything material in this life is transient

One way of looking at the matter could be to say:

Because you yearn/wish for an eternal life, you compel yourself to believe that there must be an eternal life (i.e. self fulfilling prophecy)

But the Quran argues:

The wish that you have, is something that I (God) created.

God is the one who created our wish for eternity.

* How else can you explain the existence of the wish for eternal happiness?
* The very existence of the wish is a sign that the creator of the wish is promising me
* All we need to do is to turn our face towards Him
* He is constantly demonstrating His infinity in this universe
  + Every moment this universe is changing, yet it still exists in accordance with the same principles and we seen a sense of continuity and order in the way things are created
    - Although the universe is subject to change, wisdom/purpose in the existence of things does not change
      * Proof that the manifestation of the power of the creator is always present in creation

Whoever is the reason of existence of this universe, is All Powerful. The signs are out there that He is knowledgeable, full of wisdom, all aware, etc.

This is how we should read the Quran and Hadiths.

* Steer away from literal reading
* Realize that when you read the Quran you are seeking guidance from God on the way to live

While we are reading the scripture, we have to be so comfortable with it to the extent that we can confirm it.

How to prove that the creator is All-Knowing? : I see that things are constantly changing but the manifestation of knowledge is always there

When Allah says He is capable of doing anything He wants, I can confirm it because I see it as such all around me.

An Arabic saying: The absolute truth can only be know through relativity.

* A fundamental way of understanding the Quran
* Quran speaks of the Absolute truth but gives example of relative truth (from the transient world)
  + Variables point to the one constant
  + We have to be aware that everything in this transient world points to the absoluteness of the creator’s qualities

Example:

* Different people have different preferences
* But through this relativity (constantly changing characteristic of life) we experience the existence of eternity
  + You run out of water and your neighbor comes with some water
  + You are cooking and you realize you don’t have onions. Your neighbor shares his onions
    - Different scenarios but what is the same?
      * Your neighbor is a helpful person
      * Regardless of your need he has something too offer you for it
* Constellations change but ORDER never changes
* I was given life on this earth on a certain day. I am gradually subject to change and find myself getting older till I die.
  + My life is a transient existence
  + But although I die, a new life is also being constantly created
  + There is change but there is also continuity in the system
  + Plants and animals also die but another being is given life
  + We are subject to death and change but out neighbor always responses with life
    - My life is transient but the one who gives my life the quality of life is permanent
    - I understand from my transience that the creator must be permanent
    - I have no capacity to understand permanence but I can conclude
    - Absolute truth hence can only be known through the relative examples
      * Quran repeatedly mentions that this universe is a Sign for us
      * Description of the eternal life is made through signs in this world

Your experience in this world should make you realize that the life giver is an Eternal life giver

* Life of this world is a sign for the eternal world (hence why the Prophet SAW said that we should not the descriptions in the Quran literally but rather to remember that this universe is a sign)
* Through my transient life I can confirm that the life giver is an eternal life giver

Whoever has given the pleasurable taste of a date, He is demonstrating that He is the One who is giving the fruits.

* Every year the harvest of dates gets consumed and ‘disappears’ but then grows again the following year
* From this cycle of the dates, I can easily conclude that although the date itself is transient, the One who gives existence to the date is eternal
* The verse is telling you that when you go to Paradise,

From an existence point of view, every relative (non-eternal) being points towards the eternity of its source

* If someone says: I wish I had a perfect family life with no disturbance
  + This transient wish/hope in you is a sign to the eternal existence of this pleasure

How can you experience paradise here?

* You eat a date
  + You recognize that the date is transient
  + When you eat it, you enjoy it but you recognize that the date is a sign to its creator and a sign to permanence of His compassions
  + Hence, before going to Paradise you are experiencing the pleasure of eternity
  + When we eat something and enjoy its taste we naturally want it to last forever
  + What we should do, is to connect with the absolute and eternal happiness and not deny this feeling
    - This is called iman (belief in God); Always experiencing the absolute truth while in this transient world
    - Belief in God helps us to live with eternity while we are here in the transient world
      * This is the only way in which humanity can get satisfaction

Without belief in God, you cannot feel satisfied in this world

* + Human needs will never be completely met in this world. Our needs will only be satisfied with the eternal One.
  + We want a perfect life, one with no quarrels, etc.
    - If we say, don’t worry. This year you are enjoying dates and I will give it to you next year and the year after next as well
    - We can feel comforted for a while but only until the man who promised us the dates is alive
    - No community can be completely satisfied UNLESS the members of the community submits their real existence to God

If you do not submit to God, there is no belief nor there is any bliss

* We do not have to make up a God. We just need to submit to Him.
* You have to submit your reality to God
* \* (IMPT) It is not in order to have pleasure in this world that you believe in God but rather it is because you realize your reality that you submit to Him
* Through this transient world, which is a sign of the eternal source you conclude that it is with the Eternal source that all happiness lies.
  + Do not resist this conclusion but rather seek to surrender yourself to your own being/reality (this is when you will receive eternal happiness)

The reason why wars/fighting/competition, etc never ceases but usually always escalates is because for human who do not submit to the Eternal Source, there is a constant pursuit of power (our hopes and desires will never end) and hence human beings turn to such ways to satisfy their hopes

* What we should realize is that pleasure and happiness lies in believing in God
* **Belief in God should not be treated as something external to us nor as something ‘extra’**
* Religion is often discussed as something external (let me choose to believe, we read)
  + Rather, what religion is, is actually a way for us to be consistent with ourselves.
  + Religion and humanity is one and the same
  + We either surrender ourselves to our reality or we resist it
    - Only as a result of our submission can we believe

We should not externalize religion, nor should it be institutionalized in a way where religion seems as something ‘additional’

Your ideal social experience should then be living in constant awareness of this submission and performing actions with this in mind.

We are always in need of something; our needs are never-ending. But we know that we want a perfect life.

* We are aware of the transience in our life yet there is a constant giver of this transient
* We are given the desire for constant happiness
  + My need for eternal happiness can only be met by the Eternal

Only through manifestation of the relative truth can I get to know the Eternal creator.

* By witnessing death, I realize the transience of life. Yet the cycle continues and hence I can conclude that the giver of life is Eternal

The existent for the need of happiness in human beings is constant

* Regardless of what happens to us, we should be comfortable with the outcome because we are aware of the Eternal happiness

We have been given life. We do not want to lose it – This sense is given to me so that I can guide my free will to make choices that will lead me away from death.

* But, this is a sign that I have to put my trust in the Eternal life giver because only He can sustain eternal life

When something negative happens, we tend to often say that God has given us unhappiness since God creates everything.

* This is a confusion experienced by most people
* But, through the principle we have discussed today, I realize that only through the unhappiness I realize my need for eternal happiness.
  + Happiness is transient in this life and it is something that is given to me. I should not take happiness for granted.
  + Believing in your need for eternal happiness is going to be met by the one who has given you this sense for eternal happiness
  + The reason why you can be kept away from despair is because you are aware of the Eternal giver of happiness.

This is why religion/belief cannot be something external. If it is, you will never truly feel the effects of religion.

If you want to help someone in despair, you have to speak to them in relation to their own reality and show them the signs of *la ila ha illAllah.*

* You (your wife, husband, food, house, money, children) are not the source of your happiness
* The source of your happiness is the ONE who created you with the need for happiness
  + I want to be happy.
  + Where did I get this feeling?
  + Make religion internal, experiential to myself.

We are often made to become slaves of various systems

* We get manipulated by different campaigns, things, etc
* Horrible things are going on in the world; how then can you be happy?
  + Yes you can be happy if you go back to your original existence
    - The source is giving you the news that you have been created with the need for eternal happiness and eternal life
    - He is the giver of life and the giver of death because He is Eternal

Rule: We can only know the absolute truth only by relative truth we are experiencing in this world

There is no absolute happiness in this world. The only way to get rid of this relativity is by submitting ourselves and our choices to my reality

* Reality: All the qualities of my existence point to the absolute and infinite qualities of the creator
* Unless you believe, there is no happiness

People may describe instances of happy family yet we know that within these families, feelings of envy, competition, jealousy, rancor, etc are rampant

* They may seem to be happy
* But when the rich person dies, what is the lesson to be learnt?
  + There is no eternity here. Only the source of creation can answer of needs.

We can establish eternal happiness only by submitting to our creator, God.

* Belief is the only way to experience happiness.

This is why the Quran says:

* For the people who believe, they lay their trust in God
* You can also achieve this state.
* You can be very happy despite being under stress by being under the presence of your creator
  + This world is transient and He is calling me to His eternity

The more you expand your realization of who your Lord is, the better your appreciation of His eternity.

You may become homeless but you realize that the creator of your homelessness is alive.

* You realize that it is not the home that is satisfying you but rather is your creator who is satisfying you

When you are in building, you first acknowledge the fact that you are in building and conclude that the building’s existence is

The building symbolizes the universe.

* He brought me through the building’s door into the room
* In the building He has provided for me a living room, a kitchen, a washroom, a fan, water, a basin, soap ….etc
  + That is why, the Prophet SAW used to make supplication everyday that He would be increased in His awe and amazement of creation
* Delve deeper into all the blessings in the house
* Although this universe is limited, it has a beginning and an end, but human beings cannot get to the end of the macro world nor can they get to the end of the micro world
  + There is no way for a human being to say that they have been completely amazed
  + There is always more qualities of the Absolute One to be experienced
* This transient world is the source of my religion
* If you ignore your experience (good or bad) you cannot reach God

That is why, something that we don’t like is bound to happen throughout our lives

* If life is static and monotonous you will be unable to realize the eternal qualities of the eternal being
* Realize the blessings in everything

If something that I dislike happens, I should be happy because it is a way for me to realize that the source is Eternal.

* The scripture is telling me what my nature is and who my creator is

Only when you have trust in your own reality will you realize who your creator is.

Example: You are under a stressful situation

* Do not take the shortcut and say that God is ansry with me
* It is through my reality that I can realize who my God truly is
* That He is the one who gives me happiness, peace and calm and it is only with Him that I should seek solace

Because we are not physically experience the eternal life, we can through our experience of the transient life, experience eternity.

Just by praying two rakah salah will not make you feel better UNLESS you are internalizing your belief

* If you are performing religion actions without knowing the reasons for them, you will not feel the benefit of them
* Religion needs to be internalized
* It is an internal connection with the Absolute