Halaqa, May 22 2013

Topic: Belief in Messengers of God – How can we relate?

When we say hadiths, we mean the sayings of the messengers of God.

* Sunnah, is the translation based on the readers interpretation of what hadiths are
* You cannot make a categorical definition of what sunnah is

How can we make the narrations of the messenger a part of me?

* Belief that you are a Muslim, does not really make you a Muslim
* To be a Muslim you have to confirm the truth in the statement



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The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and do the believers. They all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers….

-This is the sequence of the Islamic creed that we learn from the Quran and from the Messenger

We have to believe in God, then we have to believe in angels, then in the message of God (the books) and after that we have to believe in Messengers.

* What is the significance of these steps?
* Why does belief in the messenger come in the fourth step?
* Is it possible to read the messenger’s words without first establishing the belief in God?
* The belief in angels comes directly after belief in God which means belief in angels is very important
	+ You can concentrate on establishing your belief in the messenger as a later step

These are the steps that we have to undertake BUT we have to know that my belief in God must have such a foundation that on it I can establish my belief in angels and subsequently from the foundation of belief in angels and God, I can firmly believe in the book of God and then belief in the Messengers.

Just by listing that we believe in the books of God – the Quran, Torah, Bible, etc will never make you a believer in the message.

* It is equally true for the listing of names of the Prophet. Just by listing their names has nothing to do with your belief in the Messengership
* The concept of messengership needs to be confirmed by some kind of evidence that you have.

Knowledge is not belief. Knowledge is information gathered.

Belief requires certainty and confirmation in one’s understanding of his/her life and existence.

* How do I establish my views on the existence of the universe, angels, God, etc
* Believing in the message means that you believe that God is speaking to you and if He is speaking to you he must do it through messengers
* God employs messengers to convey the message
* All of this needs to be established and not just something of lip-service

What are hadiths: Actions narrated by a certain person who claims to be the messenger of God

* I need to locate what the messenger says within this claim
* All his actions needs to be understood within his role as a messenger
* See how his actions transfer the message of God
* Treat the narration accordingly and also interpret the relationship and make it a way of life for you (sunnah)

Establishing belief is not easy but all it requires is awareness and consciousness.

If we just narrate a hadith WITHOUT identifying the prophet’s locus of communication, we are simply narrating a culture.

* “The prophet used to do so and so”
* It becomes a reduction of the nature of messenger as God’s guidance for you
* God’s guidance cannot be reduced to something cultural
* Receiving guidance from the creator and from creation is very different
* Since we sat that Prophet is a messenger, he is transferring message directly from the creator. What he says is as Mohammed but as the Prophet Mohammed.

Books, in our context, means the speech of God (*kalamullah).* Don’t reduce it to the *mushafs/*printed matter.

Belief matters need to be ontologically (in relation to the essence of your being) confirmed

* The existence of the content of an article must be ontologically well-based from my perspective
* I must be absolutely sure that this world has a creator called God
	+ God, is the result of my view of the universe
	+ I conclude that all of the characteristics I see in creation, and creation itself, has been created
	+ My God, is the one who created all of this

The immaterial side of the creation is absolutely much more important than the material side of creation

* When we only look at the material side of creation, it is most likely because we are attached to the material aspect
* But have we, or has anybody, thought of the qualities which have been embodied in a physical object that appears to be ‘matter’
* Can you really extract the qualities from ‘matter’?

Look beyond the veils of matter!

How to establish your ontological confirmation of the existence of a creator?

* I am looking at a tree (matter)
	+ People might say that it is just a tree
	+ We should take it one step further
		- What you see are the qualities manifested in the tree
		- The tree is a sum of it parts? Just as humans made are a sum of different parts (soul, intellect, limbs, etc)
			* Humans have an intellect and a soul but we also have a physical side - cells (think of all the characteristics of the cells, all of which are made of atoms, parts, etc…)
				+ We do not deny the existence of matter but all the qualities in existence have been embodied in a form that is matter

A stone has different qualities which is why I can distinguish between the stone and the tree

Don’t alienate yourself from the ‘matter’

You need the ‘matter’ in order to see the qualities

But be aware that all matter is only a sum of its qualities (these qualities can come from animal cells in animals or plant cells in plants but the ‘matter’ itself is limited)

When you see it this, you will say: All you see in creation, is nothing but the congregation and conglomeration of qualities.

Example: As a result of our familiarity of seeing ‘matter’, we fail to see beyond and discover the qualities.

* When we see a painting we say that it is a combination of paint, paper,
* The qualities manifested
* What we call a painting, is in reality a manifestation artistic qualities AND it includes ‘material paint’
	+ When you look deeper and understand what material paint actually is, you will realize that it is another layer of art
	+ Paint itself is comprised of qualities that make it function as paint.
	+ The deeper you go in deconstructing matter, the more you will realize that it merely consists of qualities
	+ How then can you explain the existence of these qualities?
		- Can you refer the existence of these qualities to anything else other than the Artist who manifests His qualities of art to the painting?
		- No. Because rationally you know that the qualities manifested in the art cannot come from the paint itself
		- Rather the art is a platform as that reflects the qualities of the artist

There is no matter in the world that has ‘fixed qualities’. They are renewed all the time which means that the qualities in the object are subject to continuous change.

What you see in this world is the manifestation of the qualities of the One who gave existence to this universe.

* This is only the result of us changing our view of the world

Once you understand that everything is nothing but the manifestation of the creator’s qualities, it should bring you to the belief in angels.

This is because you will ask: Ok, so a creator is behind all of the qualities I see BUT how are the qualities in the ‘matter’ transferred to me?

There needs to be a link between the object you see and how it interacts with you.

* Angels transfer the qualities of the creator which I see manifested in creation
* Everything in the world is subject to change and with every change, we still see qualities that are manifested
* The qualities shout out and say: My source is absolute, eternal and universal
* We have heard and read numerous verses in the Quran which says that there is nothing in world that does not proclaim God’s qualities (*tasbihat)*
	+ Everything makes tasbih of Allah
	+ There is nothing but that which glorifies God
	+ I am not doing nothing but manifesting the qualities of my creator

The qualities which I see are manifestations of the qualities of the creator that are reflected to my consciousness.

Leave this baggage which we are carrying around – angels are made by light, etc.

* Seek to always confirm statements you make. Otherwise you are merely imitating and imitation counts for nothing.

When I stand in front of the mirror, the mirror reflects my external appearance but it does not consciously proclaim the qualities embedded within me.

Similarly, matter is like the mirror. It reflects the qualities of the creator but for you to know what these qualities are, you need angels.

Don’t just say you believe in angels, without establishing conviction within yourself.

* It is much easier to believe in God than to believe in angels
* We can refer the existence of this universe to an agent (to a source outside the universe which we call God) AND be absolutely convinced that this source of the universe exists.

When it comes to angels, believing in them is more challenging because of our ‘cultural/religious’ baggage.

* If belief in angels does not follow my belief in God, it means that I have not understood what belief in angels is. I will just be imitating what I hear.

If you have confirmed that all matters in this universe (are created by God) and they are nothing but the conglomeration of qualities you have to ask yourself how those qualities are communicated to me.

Analogy:

If the knowledge of the author has not been imprinted in the pages of a book, the book is no longer a book

* What makes it a book is the fact that the author’s idea is manifested in the form of words on paper
* The mirror only reflect the objects outward form but when you look at a book, you are interacting with the author’s thoughts

Matter only reflects the conglomerated qualities of the creator

Similarly, the ideas (qualities) of the author make a book, a book.

* You communicate with the ideas NOT with the ink or the paper
* By doing so, you are in direct communication with the author
* As far as the book is concerned, you are seeing in it the ideas of the author manifested.
* You see the words and paper as the manifestation of the ideas and thoughts of the author
* You are communicating with the qualities of the artists
* Illustrations and the words reflect the one who made it
* You see nothing but manifested qualities in the book
* But it is not like the mirror

The mirror reflects outward forms of creation. The qualities we see in creation are shouting, announcing them to conscious beings.

Everything you read in the book announces that the author wanted to convey that to the reader.

Similarly, everything you see in the universe, is announcing the names and qualities of its creator.

* This announcement (which we can comprehend only if we train ourselves to see everything in this universe as made up of qualities) of the qualities of the creator is done by angels.

When you see a baby, you love it.

* In reality, you love the qualities in the baby which are announced to you by the angels who are constantly glorifying God through His qualities
* When you see a flower, you see the angels are conveying the message to you that ‘my maker is beautiful’
* When you smell a nice fragrance, the angels are announcing that your creator is entertaining you
* This is the angelic aspect of life that we have to become aware of.

The matter as it seems to be (the stones, wood, etc) are all dead – from our perspective. But when we really concentrate on the qualities manifested in the body of all matter, a conscious proclamation is speaking to you and establishes a relationship between your power of perception and the message the object brings to you.

* That is why the Quran says that the angels are nothing but the *rasul* (messengers) of the creator
* They bring the news from ‘ghaib’ and letting you know that the Absolute world is addressing and communicating with you
* Without establishing this understanding of angels, you have failed to come to a holistic understanding of creation

All that you see in this world, are angels; they manifest the qualities of the Creator

* + Both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ things are angels
	+ When we see a red light, we may think it is bad but in reality, the red light is what helps us to prevent a state of commotion
	+ What we consider good and bad are results of our own perceptions but in reality everything is good
	+ If something happens that we don’t like, we call it evil BUT in reality there is no evil
	+ My expectations may contradict what I see but I have to see everything as a message of my creator and He is speaking to me to show me the qualities He possess
	+ Everything should make you aware of the world beyond this world

All that we see (alam-ul-shahada) are the manifestations of alam-ul-ghaib

* This conversation has been carried by the angels.

Don’t divide God, universe, angels, etc.

We have to make the distinction between knowledge, information and belief

* You cannot inherit, borrow or imitate belief
* Belief needs to be confirmed

When you say you love flowers, what do you really mean?

* You actually love the qualities in the flower NOT the particle itself
* The transferal of *alam-ul-ghaib* to *alam-ul-shahada*  is done consciously by angels who have been given existence by the creator of the universe
* The information is transferred to me
	+ We are not really imagining it
	+ When you look at a flower, you love it
	+ Because we are used to seeing the world from the perspective of ‘matter’ we don’t draw the link between God’s creation and how the beauty we witness is transferred to you
		- The beauty you witness is the result of angels communicating the qualities of *alam-ul-ghaib* to you in this world

The creator of the rose as well the creator of your appreciation capacity of beauty have been given existence by the creator of the whole universe

* Complete the picture of your existence
* Don’t just say that you love something. Delve in into why you love something

As the Prophet has said: I have been made to love three things..

* He does not say that he loves
* He is aware that love has been given to him to communicate with the things he loves
* The whole word is a means of communicating with your creator
* By communicating with Him, you are getting to know him

Inalilahi wa inailahi rajeoon – Everything says that I am from my creator and I am waiting to be returned to my creator (by you conscious beings)

* If you don’t return them to the creator, you are out of the teachings of the Quran

Can you say that beauty is coming from the rose itself? Is the art coming directly from the painting?

* Obviously not

Rasul 1: The messengers

Rasul 2: The angels

We have to align our understanding of angels to the understanding of the message

If you say that yes, you believe in God and yes, you believe in angels (because you cannot explain the world in any other way) then you have ontologically confirmed their existence.

* And it leads you to your next step
* You begin to feel comfortable with messages
* The universe is a kind of a message

The entire belief system is very real and easy but we have to get rid of our old baggage

* Iman is certainty in the perception of your existence and the existence of the universe

Is there any other way for me to explain that the book I read is the work of its author? No. Nothing else makes sense.

* My belief in the author of the book is confirmed!
* What I read cannot be coming from the words or the paper itself.

My worldview: All that I see in this world is a means of communication between me (conscious being) and the source of existence (God)

* This makes sense and I feel comfortable about the idea
* I can say that God is Loving, Just, Wise because I can see it
* The author of this book (universe) is speaking to me
	+ The transferors of the information are angels

Angels do nothing except follow the command that they have been given

* They are always in obedience
* Nothing happens in this world against the will of the creator
* Everything is the manifestation of the will of the creator

Epistemological confirmation (knowledge form) VERSUS ontology (belief form)

* Once you establish your position in this world that God exists and everything in this world is angels, you move on to the next step
* The qualities of the creator are transferred to me by angels (a concrete understanding)

Without this world, no one can really believe in God

* Everything has been created by God to communicate with God

If we continue this line of thought…

* When we speak, we express what we want to convey through speech
* The creator made you with this ability to express what you want through action and speech
* Similarly, the creator must communicate with me through action (the universe out there) and through speech (*kalam)*
* One of the fundamental qualities of Allah is He who speaks
* If the creator of the universe does not speak, our ability to speak makes no sense
* He made me in a way that I can communicate my thoughts and desires through speech and through physical actions so the same creator must speak to me in words OTHERWISE He will contradict himself.

Through speech, I will receive the expressed form of meaning from my creator

* I can say that whatever message I receive from the universe must be accompanied with language
* Hence, the importance of trying to understand the message of the Quran alongside the message we receive from the universe
* The meaning of this universe must be expressed to me in the form of language
	+ We have to look for the message expressed in the form of words by the creator

If you are not happy with the Quran as the word of God, you have to look for the speech of God.

* God must speak; He must reveal Himself to me not only through action but also through speech
* You cannot ignore the reality that the creator of this universe must speak to me
* You are a human being with the ability to speak and to understand speech so your creator must reveal Himself to you in speech
* Quran is the *kalamullah;* His speech
* We can communicate with the universe and in the same way He must speak to me in a way that I understand
	+ Don’t get trapped in the idea about needing to know Arabic etc
	+ First, assess yourself to see whether you are comfortable and have conviction in the idea that your creator must speak to you in a way that you understand (a human language)
		- The Quran’s Arabic is simply in the form of a human language
		- *Tanazul:* Coming down/ Descending to human level to convey the message from the unseen world and revealing Himself to me in a language that I can understand
			* That is why the Quran is a *nuzul*, descending.

If there is a message, it must not be abstract. It must be in a way that is understandable to me.

* I can’t hear angels
* But I can hear humans
* So God, must have put His words in the mouth of a human (the Prophets)

The creator definitely speaks and His speech must be transferred to me in a way that I understand (these human beings are Prophets)

If you are not happy with Jesus, Mohammed as messengers, you have to look for a messenger

* Messengers must exists otherwise the whole universe and your capacity will contradict
* There must be messengers
* Our perception of the existence will be contradicting
* There must be a message and there must be a messenger; so look for it

As a rational human being, you might say that you don’t believe in Mohammed, the Quran, etc BUT you cannot deny the very existence of God, Angels, the Message, and the Messengers.

* If we deny them, we contradict our own reality.

Next week: Quranic understanding of messenger and how are we expected to live with the messengers and the messenger’s message in this world?

There should be no way to live in this world without belief in the message and the messengers