Halaqa: Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Topic: Longing for Paradise without entering

The faculty of discernment (a comment of the chapter A’raf)

* A’raf = discernment

In the Surah about the Prophet Joseph, there are many other characters that are included in the story and discussed BUT we have to remember that whatever we study in the Quran, it is a reminder to ME.

* If we reduce what we read in the Quran to stories, we are no longer reading it as a book of guidance and reminder
  + *NB: When reading the Quran, we are not emptily saying that it is book of guidance and HENCE take everything in it as truth. The Quran presents itself as a book of guidance so our approach is to confirm/reject what it says by reflecting on my own life.*

Analogy: If we open a math textbook and decide to see all the math problems as merely words on a paper WITHOUT remembering that the problems are meant to teach me how to apply certain formulas, I am misusing the book.

In any surah, the characters can be classified into 3 groups:

1. Believers
2. Caught-in-between
3. Unbelievers

All the narrations in the Quran are guidance to ME. All the characters refer to a single person (ME)

* Each character highlights the different tendencies within an individual
* Why? Because the Quran addresses us, human beings.
  + Every part is speaking to us
  + Don’t alienate one’s self from parts of the Quran by referring it unto others and not upon yourself.

All the characters - people of elephant, Quraysh, Nimrod, Pharaoh, people of paradise, people of hellfire – all have to be teaching ME something. The only way it can teach me is if it refers to me.

* If we don’t, we alienate ourselves from the Quran and as a result are distancing ourselves from the reminders.
* Quran: Creator’s guidance to you

As humans, we all have ‘tensions/opposites’ within us (good versus bad)

* We see that while we desire something, we don’t necessarily always get it
* I have certain aspirations BUT I may never be able to achieve it
* Our responsibility is to balance between these two emotions and the dilemmas we find ourselves in

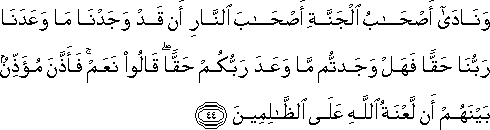
Example: Methodology when reading Surah Yusuf

* Which part of me is Joseph, Jacob, Joseph’s brothers…?
* Which part of me really wants to get rid of Joseph?
* Which part of me wants to attract my father’s attention?
* Which part of me desires Joseph?
* Which part of me wants to send Joseph to prison?
* Which part of me suffers from the absence of Joseph?

Every part of the Quran becomes relevant

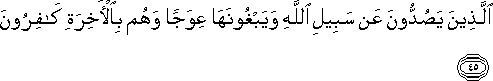
* With this methodology, I can conclusively know that God is not wasting his words on telling me something in the Quran that is not meant for me

**007.044**



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**007.045**



**“And the companions of Paradise will call out to the companions of the Fire, We have already found what our Lord promised us to be true. Have you found what your Lord promised to be true? They will say, ‘Yes.’ Then an announcer will announce among them, ‘God’s rejection is due to the evil doers who turn others away from God’s path and try to make it appear crooked, and who were disbelievers in the hereafter.’”**

**A’raf (7): 44-45**

Evil doers: Not submitting myself to the truth that I recognize. Rather, I chose to hold on to the claim that everything is happening haphazardly or naturally. (evil to myself)

Righteous: Submitting myself (and my ego) to the Creator of the universe.

* Externally: We wear coats when it is cold. In doing so, we are submitting (externally) to the Creator
* Internally (righteous) : Being aware that the weather happens as per the Creator’s Will.

Ego: A part of me that insists on imposing my own choice on creation and on my own human nature

* Despite acting on my ego, I know that I have to ask for forgiveness when I have done a mistake against my own nature (*fitrah)*
* Evil doers: Despite knowing that is wrong, I consciously choose to not support and submit to the truth
  + I cheat myself by inventing excuses
  + Human beings are definitely aware of what they are doing

When I do something good, I don’t feel myself in a state of tension.

* Innate in our being is a tension which guides us between that which is right and wrong
* My responsibility is to acknowledge the truth, which is right
* I realize that when I acknowledge the truth, I am at peace
* If I don’t acknowledge it, I find myself in a state of tension

**075.014**

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**Sahih International:**Rather, man, against himself, will be a witness,

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**Sahih International:**Even if he presents his excuses.

Analogy: You hit an innocent child

* Within yourself, you know that it is not the right thing to do
* I am made in a way that only finds solace in acknowledging the truth

How do we make choices?

* Our Creator has endowed all human beings with the ability to know (discern) if they are doing something right or wrong
  + If you don’t know, you are innocent
* I am only responsible for what is within me (Have you found what your Lord promised to be true?)

Turn others away from God’s path and try to make it (the right path) appear crooked

* It is within our nature to share ideas and spread them because it is a way of being comfortable and finding assurance in them.
* When others believe in what we do, it is comforting

People of paradise: They spread the truth and call people to reflect upon the truth WITHIN themselves and that which is verifiable by observing the universe.

People of the Fire (evil doers): They call people against their own nature (*fitrah)*.

* Examples:
  + Don’t think, just believe; But we see that thinking and contemplating is an innate aspect of my reality as a human being
  + This world is all that matters; But everything in this world is temporary. My desires are eternal so by just limiting my existence to this world, I am cutting myself immensely short.

Only by denying my eternal existence can I persist in doing wrong here on Earth

* If I am aware that this world is only temporary, all my actions and perceptions will change because I know my life is eternal and my actions are not fleeting.

Example: We tend to be more cautious with our family because we know that we have to spend many years with them.

* Similarly, if we live with the awareness that my life on this earth has eternal consequences, won’t we act differently?
* But, if I don’t take my eternal existence into consideration I will act heedlessly and selfishly

Example: I lie so as to gain a worldly benefit

A believer’s reality: I might get the benefit today BUT I will be taken into account for my actions eternally

* I will be more likely to abandon the wrong action if I take my eternal life into consideration

Fire is promised for going against one’s nature

* The fire is within me
  + Fire is not something imaginary in the hereafter
* We see the fire in denying the truth (it affects us internally; guilt/regret)
* We see paradise in confirming the truth
  + The promise (feeling/capability of knowing right from wrong) is within us

I know lying is bad. But I do it anyway.

* I may acknowledge it BUT when I lie I am not submitting to awareness placed within me.

I should be in the presence of the Creator’s manifestation all the time because His attributes are manifest in everything. But I am not always in His presence.

* The message of the Quran is not to make us perfect BUT it is to make us realize that we should acknowledge our mistakes and our right actions

I want to be the best. But I cannot

* My responsibility: **Acknowledge** that I am weak

Before determining right/wrong actions, we have to first define our principles.

* We have to set the compass in the right direction otherwise how can we decide which is right or wrong
* Actions are only as valuable as the awareness behind it
  + Where is my compass (i.e. my life’s direction) leading me?
    - Hereafter/Eternity

OR

* + - Temporal worldly aims

We tend to have problems in making choices because we haven’t convinced ourselves about the value of the action

* First, be educated in matters of belief
  + Without a strong foundation in belief, actions will be imitative
  + You get rewarded as much as you are aware of the action.
    - Reward: Different levels of being at ‘peace’ within yourself

Analogy: You get angry and hurt someone

Punishment: The regret and guilt that you feel within yourself

Analogy: You do a kind deed for someone in need

Reward: Awareness of the fact that the deed is good and comfort within yourself

We have to read the speech of the Quran as per my life in this world

* This world is a training ground to be in the presence of our Lord.
* We have to prepare our soul by paying attention to my reality in this world so that it will not be wasted

Worldly experience: As much as I educate myself, I am able to contribute to my job

🡪 Extrapolate this worldly experience to your role as a candidate for an eternal being:

* + As much as I educate myself about my Lord, I will be prepared for my final meeting (to be in the presence of my Lord)

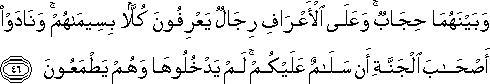
In this world, hell is in denial of God. Paradise is in submitting to God.

* **If I don’t experience hell and heaven here on earth, religion becomes nothing but a mythological phenomenon**

*When a person does not experience the truth within her/his own self, s/he has a conception of an illusionary lord in his/her head*

*When a person experiences and then confirms the truth within herself/himself, s/he is submitting to the Absolute Lord of all of creation.*

**007.046**



**“And between the two there will be a veil. And there will be persons who were endowed with the faculty of discernment [between right and wrong], recognizing each by its mark. And they will call out unto the companions of paradise, ‘Peace be upon you!’ – not having entered it themselves, but longing [for it].”**

A’raf (7):46

Methodology: Read the Quran from a personal perspective

People who have been endowed with the faculty of discernment between recognizing right from wrong (Me)

* I have the ability to discern (to know what is right and what is wrong)
* This is themessage within me
  + NB: Everyone has been given the messenger (the faculty of discernment)
* And I have been given the faculty to choose
  + If someone has not been given the faculty of reasoning, they are not responsible at all
  + We are responsible for that which we know is right and wrong

We want to run away from being put on trial

* As a result we carve out religious rules for ourselves and try and adhere to them because we don’t want to identify with the wrong
  + If I go to Friday prayers, I’ll be saved
  + If I perform Hajj, I’ll be saved
* This itself is a sign that we are aware of right/wrong
* I know which attitudes are wrong. I should face it. Even if I fail in adhering to the right attitude, my responsibility is simply to acknowledge my mistake.

We have to be brave in acknowledging RIGHT from WRONG

* The universe is either being CREATED or exists independently
  + The One who created human beings has endowed us with the ability to discern right from wrong.
* In our practical lives, we tend to ignore this reality.
* **To be a perfect man is not the way of salvation. To be a man of truth is the way of salvation.**

I have ego (reality). I don’t want my ego to come in the way (ideal)

* Accept reality that I am weak
* This opens up the way to ask for forgiveness
* **God does not say that we have to be the perfect person but to be truthful**
  + Acknowledge that I have ego AND ask for forgiveness that you did not submit at that moment
  + When we are truthful, we will aspire to be the best. But as we strive and fail, we are not in despair.
  + The circle of righteousness

You see someone of high character. You aspire but find it difficult.

Your responsibility: Try. But don’t give up.

**055.019**

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**Sahih International:**He released the two seas, meeting [side by side];

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**055.020**

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**Sahih International:**Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses.

Belief and unbelief run side by side BUT they are always distinct.

Right: Submitting to the Creator

Wrong: Claiming an independent existence/action

*La ilaha/ illAllah*

* Nothing can have a teeny bit of deity qualities except the Creator
* **It is an either/ or matter**