Halaqa: Wednesday, September 24 2014
Topic: Divine Determining Part 10

**“Human Beings are connected with the whole universe. They have infinite aims and desires. But since their power, will and freedom are insufficient to meet a millionth of these desires, it may be understood how awesome is the burden of distress they bear.”**

Do we really feel that we are connected with the whole universe?

What are we connected for? I may be connected by heart to a place where innocent people are killed. I would like that inhumane act to stop but there is not much I can do on my end. Similarly, let’s assume there is a volcano erupting somewhere and I want to stop it. Can I stop it? No.

 -That’s the problem, we have a lot we want to do but we can only do maybe a millionth of it.

* If we expand our human feelings into obtaining eternity (i.e. I want to be happy forever or I do not want to die…), we will realize that we cannot really do anything at all, not even a millionth of it.

 **“Thus, belief in Divine Determining throws that burden in its entirety onto the ship of Divine Determining, allowing them to roam free within its perfections, with perfect ease and perfect freedom of spirit and heart.”**
What does it mean throwing that burden onto the ship of Divine Determining?

 -Belief in Divine Determining throws the burden which is above and beyond our capacity and it includes not only a part of the millionth of our concern, but more. All of that will be loaded into the ship of Divine Determining. What does it mean?

 -Let us first review some concepts we already developed:

* The One who creates this universe is absolutely powerful.
* The One who creates this universe has absolute, infinite knowledge.
* The One who creates this universe is wise. (His wisdom is everywhere in the universe)

Therefore, the Owner of the universe, humans and human feelings is Absolute. This is Divine Determining. Who is determining that the universe (or the ship as used in the metaphor above) is moving? It is the ***Divine One***.

What does ***Divine One*** mean?
 -Not from this Universe, the Absolute One.

In part 9 of this series (please refer to the previous notes and videos), we established that belief in Divine Determining is in accordance with one’s belief in God and other fundamentals of belief (i.e. Angels, Prophets, Books and day of Resurrection).
If you observe that everything in the universe has no meaning, then the Creator of the universe has no meaning either. On the contrary, if you understand (by examining the universe) that the One who creates the universe is the wise one, and so if you throw your problems into the ship of Divine Determining, you are trusting the wise One.

 -For example, it is very cold in some place, the crops are being damaged and there is a risk of developing hypothermia. You can do as much as you can to protect yourself by staying warm; the rest goes onto the ship of Divine Determining. This implies that when we cannot do anything anymore, we ought to put our trust in Him alone.

When an event occurs, I may not like it. But I have to remember that this feeling of dislike has been given to me by Him. This does not mean that the One who gave me this feeling is doing something bad. We ought to remember that:

* Creation of any event is wise.
* When presented with options, we are responsible for utilizing our freewill.
* We learn from events what not to follow, what not to encourage…
* After trying to stop something and if it goes beyond our freewill, trust the One who creates the universe.

If someone does not believe in Divine Determining, it means that he/she does not believe in the absoluteness of the Creator.

* Not believing in Divine Determining means that I do not see that this universe has been created, this universe has a Creator, an owner who is absolute.
* Not believing in Divine Determining means that I am attributing the existence of this universe to meaningless sources with no conscious will such as accidents, nature or by itself.

Submitting yourself to the creator is not belief in Divine Determining. This universe has a conscious owner.

 -If a calamity befalls, you do not like it, and at the same time, you do not deny that you do not like it. This sense of feeling is given to you and you will experience sadness. What is the sense of dislike good for? There is a clear dilemma here that it should not have happened and you cannot stop it. You are hopeless and desperate. What should you do? Solution**:** Turn back to the Creator and say: “I don’t want it and you made me not like it, please help me.” That is the channel to turn to God in humility: “please God I do not want it!”

 -The ***beauty of Divine Determining*** is that it gets you in contact with the Creator: “By using the ability You have given me, I am coming back to You, please you stop it for me, I cannot stop it!”

* As soon as you connect yourself to your Creator, the ***purpose of your existence*** has been accomplished.
* We did not come to this world to correct everything; we came to this world to know who our Lord is.

This is the ***nature of this universe***, things are transient; either today or tomorrow every one of us will die.
 How can you stop this dilemma?
 -By knowing that things have been created on purpose.
 How do you know that?
 -Look at the universe.
 Is there anything unwise in the existence of the universe?
 - Everything is perfectly ordered by the Creator; even the calamities are taking place within the order of the creator. For example, if a Tsunami is happening somewhere, don’t you know it is within the order of the universe. Can you stop it? No. You do what you can; the rest is left for Divine Determining. It means the one who is doing it is calling you to turn to him to accept that:

* I am impotent.
* I cannot control the world.
* I acknowledge that the Creator of this universe control this world.

That is ***belief in Divine Determining*** which should not be confused with our freewill. We have studied that we should be using our freewill in any way we can i.e. we have to discover the rules of existence, the order of universe, how the laws of creation are taking place and take measures or benefits from it.

***Ways of communicating with your Creator-***Realize that we are impotent, we cannot really control everything and we cannot make sure that everything is happening as we want. Therefore, we turn back to the Creator in humility and acknowledge it.
 -When we pray, we should state our acknowledgment: “I cannot do it but you can”.

Unfortunately, we take prayers as a way to bargain with the Creator. For example, if you want something you say: “God, I want this”. Then you wonder if he is going to do it which is a different matter. Your business is to acknowledge that you are not able to do what is beyond your capacity and the One who creates the universe is able to do everything. Acknowledgment is realizing that:

* He is the One who owns this universe
* He is manifesting His qualities in this universe.

 -If you get what you asked for, then you ought to acknowledge that:

* I am happy with what You have created. (*Thank God*)
* I acknowledge that all the goodness in the creation of this belongs to You. (*Praise be to God*)

 -If you dislike what is given to you, know that the sense of disliking is given to you on purpose; you did not create it or develop it. The sense of disliking is deliberately given to you in order to dislike that event. This is the purpose of your Creator, it is not yours.

The problem is that we start owning our senses and appropriating it to ourselves, then compare it with God i.e. “I don’t like it, how come He creates it”. There is a dislocation with this analogy. In other words you are saying that “If I was God, I wouldn’t do it”.

If something happens, try to understand the wisdom in its creation, that’s why we say ***His plan***.
 -We need to understand that the One who creates this universe is wise.
 -We may sometimes fail in our understanding, even in this failing; the Creator must have wisdom in it.
 -Our creator teaches that I should not like it and so, we turn to Him by acknowledging that only He can create, not me.

If something doesn’t happen, it means there will be no alternative for us to choose and decide.
 -We need to attribute our feelings to Him and use those feelings in His name.
 -Don’t say you do not like it or your Creator doesn’t like it. Say, my Creator wants me to like it or dislike it by endowing me the sense of liking and disliking.
 -Our Creator is pushing us to find wisdom in the “like or dislike feelings”.

Universe is always created with two poles. That’s what the Quran keeps saying that He has created everything in pairs (***zaujain***). Options don’t have limit for us. Nature of existence is that everything has beginning and end. This is the world of training, “not trial”. We are educating ourselves here to know who our Lord is.

We have to acknowledge who is the Giver and who decides when not to give. What do we have? Nothing. Even the awareness of that “nothing” is given by Him so it needs to be acknowledged as well. That’s why ***belief in God*** is practiced through acknowledging this reality. That’s what submitting means, acknowledging this reality.
 -If I have something, I need to be aware that I am just using what is already created.
 -If I cannot get what I want, I need to take it as a sign that it is not me who is deciding what will be created.

In both cases, you are realizing your reality and your ***relationship with the Creato***r has been established in *two* ways:
 1. Asking- please I need it.
 2. Acknowledging- it is you who gave me, thank you.

Belief is acknowledgment. That is what ***abd, yaboudoon, ouboodiya*** means. Unfortunately, we reduce religion to certain rituals, which should also be a means to express this acknowledgement. But we should be careful not to become a bookkeeper on our deeds i.e. on the night of Qadar in Ramadan, if I pray this much, I will get that much reward in the hereafter…

Every action is acknowledgment because nothing belongs to us.
 **Hadith:** A man kicked a rock while walking in the desert. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Why did you disturb it?” The man replied: “It’s just a stone”. The Prophet (PBUH) replied: “Don’t you know there are living beings underneath it, you disturbed their house.”
 **Lesson:** If you don’t need it, you have no right to disturb the life of a living creature. If we do not have any purpose in cutting a tree, we should not cut it. Similarly, if we do not have any purpose in an animal or we do not intend on eating it, then we should not kill it.

 -We have to connect our feelings to their real owner and acknowledge it. The ultimate purpose of existence of this universe is to be used as a means of knowing who the Owner is. Do not turn your relationship with God into enmity.

**Question:** Does His will encompass my freewill?
 -He willed me to have a will and the will He gave me must be free, that is His will. I am set free. If you say encompasses, it means you got to choose what he imposes on you. Human freewill is given to human being in order to exercise the will freely.

**Question:** Is it good to have high expectations then?
 -Expectations are given to you. Expect to be the leader of paradise but it’s not you who is going to create it. Present it to the Creator. I want the highest level in paradise; I want the best life in this world. Present it in the form of acknowledgment not bargaining. It is my duty to acknowledge that He is the One who decides to create, I cannot create. I am the one asking for help.

The reason why we cannot solve our problems is that we use the wrong approach to communicate with God. Worship doesn’t mean praying, fasting, doing rituals…in order to receive the payment in the hereafter. If waiting for rewards in the hereafter is based on acknowledging that only God can give them, then this expectation is a means of worship as well.

God has not given you these senses to struggle with Him. He has given you these senses in order to know Him through these senses. It is so simple. We are making religion look irrational when we turn the rituals into a means of bargaining. We ought to be aware our reality, be aware of what is going on.

**Note:** If God dislikes something, it is for me. Never speak on behalf of God. God’s disliking is for me. We have to read the Quran as a guide for me, not guide for God.
 -If you are aware that you have been given a sense of not telling a lie and God says: “you should not lie, God dislikes those who tell a lie.” This means that God is telling you that He has given you this sense which does not like telling a lie. This sense does not belong to you. God has taught you that.
 -When you read the Quran, you have to understand it in your terms, at your level and not in God’s term.
 -The problem many of us face is that we were taught to read the Quran from God’s perspective.
**Quran is a Divine guidance, but for me; I have to read it in my terms**. For example, God says: “I created the universe”; it is guidance for me. What does it means? It means that you (the addressee), you have to study the universe and come to the conclusion that only God, a Divine being can create it.
 -Imitation is not belief. Saying that it is written in the Quran that God has created the universe is not belief.
Unfortunately, most of us may be imitators of the Quran, not confirmers. For example, if you believe that the Quran will be a means of receiving mercy, so you got to believe. And, if you believe, you are already saved. This reasoning has no base because Quran actually says that you have to receive mercy, healing when you follow the guidance of the Quran and if you can confirm the Quran through your experience of its guidance; then you become a believer.
 -Belief is not the prerequisite; it is the conclusion.
 -You have to get guidance and confirm the conclusion of that guidance, and then the Quran is your teacher. You have to understand and confirm that the teacher said the truth. Otherwise you are just getting information and not learning anything.
 -“*All praise belong to God*” read it if you see mercy in this guidance. Everything in the universe has some qualities which are worthy of praise. You cannot attribute these qualities to anything but their Creator; He is the owner of the universe.

**Question:** Should we all read the Quran with the same approach i.e. read, experience and confirm.
 -When you read the Quran, you don’t say I believe in it or I confirm it because human reason says: “what are you confirming”? Well, whatever the book says. What does it say? I do not know. Do you think it is a human attitude?
 -When we read the Quran, we have to read it as it claims to be, a Divine Speech, we do not have to confirm it at the beginning. If someone says the universe does not have a Creator, then he is just reading the book from Muhammad or another Prophet because he does not know who the Creator is. If you do not know who the Creator is, there are two options:
1/ universe exists by itself.
2/ universe is created by a wise and conscious will.

Let’s assume #1. Investigate the universe and see if it is possible for the universe to be existing by itself.
Let’s assume #2. Investigate the universe and see if this option makes sense to you.

And then, make a decision which one is correct.

 -You may not be satisfied with #2 but it’s a possibility. Now, you go to the universe (because you have not confirmed nor rejected the existence of a Creator) and investigate it. You look for evidence that supports #1 or #2 such as “I have never seen anything coming into existence by itself” or “there is another possibility of a conscious will, I have to investigate it and read the Quran as a guiding speech of this Creator and check it with the universe because He says that He is the creator of this universe. “If you are the Lord of the universe speaking (***rabulalameen***) in the Quran, I have to confirm what you say by referring it to the evidence in the universe, not the religious sources.

You have to see the compatibility between:
a/ what the Quran says
b/ what the universe demonstrates
c/ whether human beings’ feelings agree with it.
These 3 elements (above) must work in ***harmony*** and then you are a ***believer***.

 -Do not read the Quran as the book written by Muhammad because everything in it will be contradictory and thus meaningless then. You have to confirm what is written in the Quran by looking at evidences in the universe and using your given abilities to investigate it.
 -Listen to the speech as it claims to be and if it makes sense then confirm it.
Analogy: How do you confirm if a building is made by a random event or an architect? You investigate the building, you do not go out and look for the architect; you see the qualities in the building. These qualities will witness to something; either it is made out of chaos or by a conscious being. You yourself investigate the qualities of the building. Then, you conclude that it must be made by a conscious being because everything is deliberately done. I acknowledge that there must be an architect who designed this building. Don’t expect architect coming to you and say I made the building.

All this is just a necessary foundation in order to go further in the understanding of religion. We must have a foundation for everything we say.
 **“Belief in Divine Determining only negates the petty freedom of egoistic claims of Pharaoh like tyranny and Lordship.”**
 If you want something and it does not happen, you feel like wanting to condemn whoever is not accepting your want. You are actually condemning the owner of the universe. In other words, you are challenging your Creator.
 -You are claiming your independent existence (I exist by myself, my feelings exist by themselves…)
 -You are also claiming that you want this world as it fits your desires.

Because it is not happening, you are waging a war against the owner of the universe.
 -This is a false claim.

Think about your existence first, who are you? You are made by the owner of the universe.

That’s why belief in Divine Determining does not negate your power of choice but negates your false claims because you are challenging the Creator by appropriating his properties to yourself. For example saying everything is yours, your mind, your feelings, you know what is good or bad for you and you prefer it this way...
 -If you are ready to challenge the Creator, why don’t you create things as you like? Therefore, you ought to:

* Humble yourself. You cannot create anything.
* You cannot really give the ultimate decision about the form of existence to anything.

 -That’s why we are here, to acknowledge that whatever exists, everything I have, is all given to me and **I am not the owner**.
 -If someone doesn’t believe in Divine Determining, this person is claiming to be Pharaoh. Pharaoh is the symbol of the person who claims to be the Lord of some part of the world. Egoistic claims are false, selfish, have no base, and are not realistic.

God wants you to be happy, but how? In finding Him and attributing your given qualities to Him. Only then, you realize that **your boss is the One who owns this universe**. I belong to Him. This is comfort. But if you understand comfort as doing luxurious activities, wearing the best outfit… that is your misconception. At the same time, we do not want to be homeless or want to die or have a miserable life. Ultimately, all these senses are given to you in order to know who your Creator is. This establishes the connection, which is belief.
 -Belief is not something imaginary. It is acknowledgment, connection and knowing who your lord is. For example if I am ill, this is given to me in order to know who I am and who my Lord is. Through understanding and realizing that this is training for me to get to know my Lord. I should never say that I can never get ill because health is given to me and can be taken away.

Traditionally, it’s hard for the rich to get to paradise. Rich in this context refers to the person who feels that he is self-sufficient. We should not use vocabulary of the text according to culture but according to context of the text itself. For example: Anytime you brush your teeth or wash the outer part of the body, think about who is cleaning the billions of cells in your body. Every time your cells are being maintained, think about who is cleansing them. If you have to clean your cells, who is the cleanser? He is the cleanser, ***Ya mutahhir***.
 -You are just exercising your reality; you are powerless, completely in debt of your Creator.
 -The purpose of Quran and Messengership is to connect you to your Creator.
 -Everything is here to connect to your Creator.

Belief in Divine Determining only negates the egoistic claims of human beings otherwise belief in Divine Determining never makes you limited, oppressed, hopeless or invaluable. You have to feel great i.e. He knows what He is doing to me, I belong to Him.
 -Do you think He is aging you or torturing you? No, He is teaching you that you cannot guarantee anything or stop yourself from dying. You have to know who you are. You are nothing but a created being. Never forget that. **That is the way of feeling at peace i.e. I belong to him not myself.**

Self-confidence of this culture must be redefined. It should not be understood in an aggressive way or egoistic way.
 -Self- confidence can only be obtained by attributing your existence, your being to the Absolute being.
 -I belong to him, I trust him. He knows what he’s doing. Look at the universe, I belong to Him.
 -I have my self-confidence in my connection with my Creator.
The person who says that he is going to build his self- confidence within himself, is bound to fail and he shall see that when he dies.