Halaqa: Wednesday, September 03, 2014

Topic: Divine Determining Part 7

Methodology: Read verses by taking into consideration the entire context of the Quran instead of restricting it to a specific historical context.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَن شَاء فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَاء فَلْيَكْفُرْ

**Verse #1: “And say, “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills – let him reject it…’” Kahf (18): 29**

We are free to deny or to reject; the freedom has been given entirely to us.

* The verse emphasizes that we, humans, have been created with a free choice
* Your Lord: The Lord of the one who reads the verse and the Lord of the whole universe
	+ Rabb; an attribute of the Creator that speaks of His Lordship
	+ Truth: There is nothing in this universe that is not the Truth (i.e. pointing to the Creator)
		- It is an undeniable fact that points to the qualities of the Creator because nothing owns or sustains itself. The only thing that is TRUE about anything in creation is its Creator.
		- Everything that we see in this world contains an undeniable and absolute truth which points to the Creator

This message in the universe is that there is truth in EVERY object but it is up to each one of us to believe or reject it based on our free choice.

Believe: Refers to believing in the unknown (*ghaib)* through this created universe

* By observing creation, we are led to the Creator (*ghaib)*

Speaker in the Quran is the owner of this universe

* In this verse, the owner is reminding me that I have been given the freedom to read the signs in the creation or turn blind to the sings thereof.
* It is up to me to confirm/reject it
	+ I do not have to take what is said in the Quran at word value
	+ I HAVE to confirm/reject it through investigation
* Quran is not meant to be imitated; We have to go through a process of investigation in order to confirm the truth

I have to ask: Is the truth really from someone who claims to be my Lord?

* The Quran states the conclusion
* It is my responsibility to investigate the claim

The potential to confirm and discover the truth that is prevalent in CREATION is innate within all humans.

* We should not waste these given potentialities by being deluded and occupied with the transient and worldly aspects of creation.
* Stop being lazy when it comes to investigating and only then confirming the religion

If Islam is not your choice, it is not your religion.

**Verse #2: “You cannot will, unless God wills. Verily, God is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise.” Insan (76): 30**

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How does this verse compare when juxtaposed against the first?

* They seem apparently contradicting; First verse says that we will, whereas the second says, we cannot will

Agent in verse #1: The reader

Agent in verse #2: God

* Who is God?
* An Absolute Being who is All-Knowing and who exists beyond time and space
	+ As far as the Source is concerned, we have to think of this universe beyond the limitations of time and space

I exist as a result of God’s Will

* I have been given my free will by the Creator
* I did not choose to have free will
* Everything exists in this world because of the Absolute Creator

Our human will power is not self-created

* It has been given to us by the Creator for the purposes that we may freely choose
* Yes, I am free to choose BUT the freedom to choose has been given to me by the Creator
* Within my realm of freedom, I have to exercise responsibility in my choices

The Creation side of any event depends on the Creator’s Will BUT within the realm that I have been given the freedom to choose, I am responsible for my choice.

Everything is under the cover of the One who creates

* I cannot create my free will
* Therefore, when I will for something, I can only do so by using the ability to will freely which is given to me by my Lord.

Verse # 2 describes God’s Absolute qualities

* It does not contradict verse #1 which is referring to the will given to me by my Creator
* There is no such thing as independent will power
* The creation of my free will is dependent on my Creator
* Everything that exists in this world is decided entirely by the Creator
	+ So is my free will and its limitations
	+ I have been GIVEN the ability to choose and there is no way for me to not be ‘free to choose’
		- Even when I do not choose, I am making a choice not to choose!

The existence of my free will is dependent on His will.

When I make a good choice, I should: Be thankful to my Creator who facilitated me towards making this good choice by endowing me with the power to choose.

When I make a bad choice, I should: Be aware that I have misused my ability to choose and repent. This is the way I learn how to utilize my given free will.

* It is God’s choice that I have been given free choice and I have no other reality but to use my free choice. How I use it is what is important!
* At every moment we are making a choice
* We have to think about the basis of our choices
	+ Am I choosing based on worldly/societal pressures?
	+ Am I choosing based on the purpose of my life?

If someone has a mental illness, s/he is not responsible for the choices made

* But when I make a choice based on my free will, I then become responsible
* We are responsible for our choices in as much as we are aware of our existence
	+ To make responsible choices, we have to take notice of the purpose of our existence in this world.

No one knows the essence of existence but every one is aware of the fact that every thing in this universe has a meaningful existence

* We may give terms and terminology to objects in existence but most of us may be far from perceiving the meaning in existence

When I am exercising my free will, does my Creator stop me?

* No.
* God’s determining includes my individual free will
* He determined me to have my free will

**Always stay focused within our individual realm of responsibility; do not try and make baseless claims about the Creator. Claims about the Creator are bound to be baseless because He is Absolute. We can only come to a conclusion about the Creator as a result of our perception of the meaning inscribed in the created objects. We can only say: According to my observation the Creator of this object must have an Absolute Power, Knowledge, Will, Wisdom etc. This is the way how we should speak from our perspective.**

* While I am in this world, I have to pay attention to my responsibility
* Everything exists according to the Will of the Creator, that is called God’s *takdir* (as He determined.)
* When something happens beyond my will, I have to acknowledge God’s Will and take lesson from it
	+ Lesson: The world does not belong to me, nor does it work according to my Will. I am not the Lord of this world.

The universe is set by the Creator. Within this set universe, I exist with free will that has been given by Him to exercise it freely.

God knows whether we will be a rebel or a worshipping slave because He exists beyond the limitations of time and space.

* But I have to choose within the realm of free will given to me.
* We need to be careful not to confuse our free choice with God’s Absolute Knowledge of it without being subject to time and space.
* **God knows according to my choice, not that I choose according to God’s knowledge.**

**Verse #3: “Unto God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth: He forgives whom He wills, and He chastises whom He wills; and God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.” (Al-Imran, 3: 129)**

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* Seemingly contradictory verse; on one hand the verse says that God chastises whom He wills and on the other hand, He is much-forgiving.
* God is speaking; We have to understand that He is speaking from His Absolute position
	+ But, it does not disqualify that I have been given free will
* Creation belongs to the one who Created this universe
	+ The Creator says: I can do everything
	+ We are created according to the Will of the Creator

These types of verses describes the qualities of the Creator:

* It does not disqualify my free will
* When the verse ends with the claim that God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace, we are being reminded of His qualities
	+ He says: Everything is created by me and it is Me Who Forgives and it is Me Who Chastises.
	+ He says: You have free will
		- When He talks about my free will, He says: When you make a mistake, come to me; I am much-forgiving
		- It is my choice if I want to ‘return’ to Him when I make a mistake or stay disconnected

Don’t get confused by God’s Absolute-ness and our created-ness

* All that I am, is from God (including my free will)
* The Creator can do everything BUT He has given me free choice
	+ He knows I will make mistakes
	+ He is encouraging me to ask for forgiveness because if I ask, He will forgive.

Quran: A guide for humankind so that we may know how to use my human potentialities

* It is up to me how I choose to use my free will
* God is guiding us as to how we should use our free will
	+ God reminds me that He is forgiving, and asks me to connect to Him when I make a mistake while using my free will.
	+ It is up to me if I want to use my free will to ask for forgiveness.

**Verse #4: “And God’s is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He will, and punishes whom He will. And God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.” (Fath – 48:14)**

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In the same vein as the previous verse, He has given us the free will to ask for forgiveness

* These verses are invitations to us that we may ask for forgiveness.

**Verse #5: “Surely, God is not ashamed to set forth any parable – (that of) a gnat or any thing above that; then as for those believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve, they say: ‘What is it that God means by this parable?’ He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors.” (Baqara – 2:26)**

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* We are free to believe
* We ought to understand that we are created, as is even the smallest insect, and be aware that there are great signs in all of Creation since they point to the Creator.

Absolute encompasses EVERYTHING at once. It is not defined by magnitude (big or small) because that would mean that we are still seeking to define the Creator within this universe.

‘He causes many to err’:

* God is telling me that I have been given the choice to deny or to accept the claim of His ownership over anything **(it)**
* If you investigate even the smallest object and are looking to confirm the signs of the truth manifested on it, the smallest object is sufficient for you
* But if you are not looking to confirm the truth, even the whole universe will be insufficient

To err or to be led aright – is the result of our own choice. It is not us who create the result; it is the Creator of the universe. **We choose, He creates as far as what human free will exercises is concerned**.

* Hence, the verse says: “**But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors.”** That means, if I choose to be honest with myself and with the signs I observe in the universe, God says, He does not cause me to err because I have not chosen the option to err..
* If we deny the truth (that I am created), I am transgressing and looking for an excuse to not submit to the truth (*fasiq.)* At the end I will be created as a person of error because of my choice to be a person of err: Not to submit to the truth (*fasiq*)
* Do not look for a reason to not be a man of truth
* If you look for an excuse not to confirm the truth, as a result of your choice, you will be created as an unbeliever
* He creates as a result of my choice

Pre-destination is a human concept because it is limited in time; as far as the Creator is concerned, we should use the term Divine Determining

* We are all pre-disposed to acknowledge the truth and have been given the free will to reject or confirm it
* Confirming the truth is our nature and when I am seeking to confirm, everything is an evidence in my favor
	+ Within this nature, I can choose to deny. If I choose to deny, I will find that I have no evidence to support my denial.

Remember the following methodology when reading the Quran:

* When a verse refers to humans, think of it in terms of human free choice/will
* When a verse refers to God, think of it in terms of Absolute