Halaqa: Wednesday, May 7, 2014

Topic: Speech of God

**“The activity of divine power in the universe and the constant flood of beings are so meaningful that through them the All-Wise Maker causes all the realms of beings in the universe to speak. It is as if the beings of the earth and the skies and their motion and actions are the words of their speech; their motion is their speech. That is, the motion and decline arising from activity is speech glorifying God. The activity in the universe is the universe’s silent speech.”**

[The Letters, 24th Letter, 1. Station, 2. Sign – online page: 334]

‘The **activity** of divine **power**’:

* We are able to perceive power in the observation of activity
* An ACT necessitates an actor who has power

**‘Constant** **flood** of beings’: Nothing is static. Everything is subject to constant change.

* We see that everything in this universe is CREATED into being
  + It is ACTED upon
* This activity is a manifestation of divine power
* The act is a form of **speech** otherwise creation would be meaningless

‘Their **motion** and **actions** are the words of their speech’:

* We experience that NOTHING in this universe is static
* Everything is subject to the change
  + Change = a constant state of motion

Everything in this universe is SPEAKING to us.

* How can we claim that we are ‘bored’?
  + “Boredom is an emotional state experienced when an individual is left without anything in particular to do”
* We are constantly being communicated to BUT we choose to tune it off and disengage
* If you want to hear the word of your Creator, look at the universe around you because everything is a message from Him.

There are many allegories that the universe offers:

1. A book: Like a book, the universe carries a message

* Everything in this universe carries the qualities of the Divine
* However, such an approach is limited in that it perceives the universe as ‘static’ just as books are.
  + The message is ‘latent’ within creation

1. A mirror: Like a mirror, the universe reflects the manifestations of Divine Names

* Just like how images reflected in a mirror have no reality [ they are mere reflections of something external) , objects in the universe in and of themselves are meaningless UNLESS connected to its Source
* In comparison to the book allegory, the universe as a mirror offers a more dynamic comparison

1. A speech: Like speech, the universe is constantly delivering a message.

* Speech comprises of words
* Similarly, everything in creation is a word that is speaking to us
* Each act of creation is saying: There is no Creator, but Him.

Analogy: Eating

* When we are hungry we reach for food.
* The food is delicious and we enjoy it
* But while we are eating, are we aware that the Creator of our taste (and of the food) is communicating with us?
  + We have to make the food ‘alive’

Activity in the universe is the universe’s **silent** speech: We don’t hear a voice but there is a speech being communicated

The Quran is not the only speech of God.

All the activity in this universe is also speech, except that it is silent.

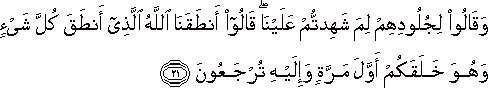
* To hear this speech, we have to be conscious

How can I train myself to see all the activity as the speech of God?

* See how things are created
* You will be directed to the Creator
* We have to train ourselves so that we can engage with the universe is a meaningful manner:

**Static (Book) 🡪 Dynamic (Mirror)🡪 Interactive (Speech)**

**041.021**



**“And they shall say to their skins: Why have you borne witness against us? They shall say: God Who makes everything speak has made us speak, and He created you at first, and to Him you shall be brought back.” (Surah Fussilat, Verse 21)**

Common understanding with respect to this verse: It is referring solely to an event that will take place after we die

* In the hereafter, will be questioned about our deeds and our skin will speak up for that which it witnessed.

But we have to ask: How is this relevant to me right now?

* If it only applicable to me in the hereafter, I will feel under a constant surveillance since I cannot rip my skin off so that it will not bear witness against me. But the problem is how I can be convinced that this news is really true?
* When reading the Quran, we have to adopt an inquisitive approach so that we can truly confirm its message and become believers NOT imitators.

*Antaqa:* Logically consistent

* God says in the Quran: I have made everything speak in a logical sense
  + I have to ask: Does everything make sensible speech?
  + To establish belief in this verse, I have to investigate and see if the statement is true or false

Analogy: Job interview

Your firm is searching for an architect.

Interviewee says: I am an excellent architect

You will not take his word at face value but will ask: Which buildings have you designed?

Similarly, when approaching the Quran, we have to question it and engage with it so that we may either confirm or reject the claims it makes.

* We have to alter the way we approach texts so that we may gather evidence and gain satisfaction in its statements
* This is the only way that you can come to a firm conclusion about which text is true or false

We have been given the ability to decipher right from wrong

* Our methodology in reaching conclusions requires us to gather evidence
* Only by gathering evidence can I find satisfaction in my conclusions

**God Who makes everything speak**:

* The verse is saying that EVERYTHING SPEAKS
* And everything speaks in a logical (*antaqa)* way
  + My role: Find out and investigate if this is true or not

The Quranic way: Investigate the consistency of His word with His actions (in this universe)

* Any reading of the scripture that is not accompanied with an evidence-based methodology misses the foundation of the Quran
* Why?
  + Because such a methodology is inconsistent with the way of the Quran’s verses that ask the readers to observe the world around them

Lack of evidence leads to doubt

* Hence why we see many people turning away from religion
* They are not being presented with evidence for all the religious claims

**He created you at first**

* Ask: Who/what created you?
  + If you do not begin with a question there is no way that we can reach a satisfactory conclusion that is TRUE beyond any other claim
* The question will lead you to a Creator
  + The Quran is proposing that its author is the Creator
  + Since you must have a Creator, investigate if the Quran’s author is your Creator

**To Him you shall be brought back**

* Ask: Will I be brought back?
  + Investigate the universe around you
  + While yesterday has passed, does it all go into annihilation?
    - No
  + Everything is preserved and simultaneously given a new existence in the next moment.

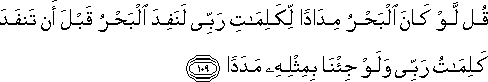
Since nothing goes into annihilation and EVERYTHING in creation is speaking, it is most definitely true that my skin (created) witnesses that everything is preserved.

- My skin’s very existence says: None other than the Absolute Creator can give me my existence.

What we learn from this verse: We should return our existence back to the Creator

* There is nothing apart from Him whom I can attribute my existence to
* I cannot give myself an independent existence OR attribute parts of me to my parents/nature/etc.
* Nothing in this universe has the quality to give existence to anything, including itself. That is my human conclusion.

**018.109**



**“Say, ‘ If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.” (Surah Kahf, Verse 109)**

Words: It cannot be referred to the ‘Quran’

* The ‘Quran’ itself is a book that can be written in a limited amount of ink
* So obviously, this verse is not referring to the Quran

Rather, EVERYTHING in this universe are words of God.

We have to train ourselves to see everything in Creation as a word of God that SPEAKS to us.

* And we know that the universe is constantly changing, so the words (and speech) NEVER ends

The act of creation is the speech of God

* So when I say that “there is no God,” it does not void the fact that God exists
* The creation of that speech is an ACT by the Creator and it points to the Creator.
* My free choice to say those words is also CREATED by the Creator

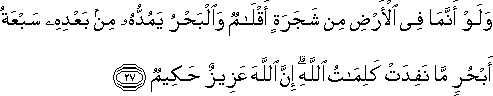
No one can create anything.

* Everything is CREATED
* I am only responsible for the choices I make
  + But be clear that my **ability** to choose freely itself, is given.

Example: Only the Creator of the universe can create death

* When I see death, I do not have to be sad
* Rather, I see the Creator of it

**031.027**



**“And if al the trees on earth were pens, and the sea [were] ink, with seven [more] seas yet added to it, the words of God would not be exhausted: for, verily, God is almighty, wise.”**

God’s words are continuously flowing into existence

* We see that the universe is subject to continuous acts of creation
* Each aspect of this continuous creation is the Word of God

‘**Seven’**

* A way of referencing the multiplicity of layers
* There is no way to get to the end of it

**036.065**



**“That Day We shall set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.”**

Everything ‘speaks’

* We are used to only ‘speaking’ with our mouths
* But this verse reminds us that our speech (through our mouths) has a layer beneath it
  + Our limbs, emotions, existence ALL are speech first
  + They are saying: I have been Created and everything is given existence by a Conscious, Perfect and Absolute Creator
    - Whoever made my limbs is revealing His qualities to me
      * They say: He is the absolutely Powerful One. He is the Creator.

Just by seeing my limbs, I am able to conclusively say that the One who made my hands most definitely can create me in a different existence.

* Whoever made my creation can create another existence
* Every single cell of my body is proclaiming that it has been created and that there is a Single Most Absolute Creator.
  + Belief means the acknowledgement and awareness of His constant Creation
  + Otherwise, what’s the point of saying ‘I believe in the Creator’ if we do not witness the truth of this.

Analogy: The architect who built the tallest skyscraper, can most definitely make another skyscraper.

This methodology of understanding the Quran’s applicability in this world does NOT negate the claim that these verses point to a ‘hereafter’ beyond death.

* What it does is to establish a foundation that is convincing
  + To be convinced, you have to see the evidence
* Once you are convinced in the ‘here and now’ you can be as convinced that it will happen in the hereafter as well because you have proven that the text has no contradictions.

Example: Unique fingerprints

* How can we explain the uniqueness of our fingerprints?
  + It cannot be an accident
* The fact that each is unique proves that the Creator is making a conscious choice
  + It demonstrates the Absolute and Infinite will of the Creator.

Always orient yourself to source of creation in everything

* You will be led to the Absolute Creator because NOTHING can create anything, but yet everything has a real existence.
* As a human being, I have to investigate how these things have been preferred to existent rather than to not exist.
* My human intellect must necessary conclude the existence of a Creator because of the fact that everything, which exists, is the result of a conscious (preferred) choice.
* It is this Creator that we call God. Belief in God means belief in the existence of the Creator.
* Through the act of creation, it is this Creator that conveys His message to me, introducing Himself to me through the qualities of the things He endowed in His creation.

This methodology was highly common in the past so what is being presented is nothing NEW

* It got lost during the Enlightenment period in the Western Philosophy and rise of the secular states in the Muslim World.
* We have to make this methodology easily understandable so that it can reach everyone

Why is this methodology important?

* Speaking about the hereafter as something that will happen after you die is like telling a toddler about college-level matters
* College-level matters cannot be understood by toddlers; it is pointless
* We have to present any matter related to belief, within the capacity of my being in this world, so that I will relate it to my understanding capacity.
* Belief cannot sustain itself if the person has not been convinced within his capacity while living in this world.

The scholar must be like a sheep

* She has to eat the hay, digest it, and produce milk for her lamb
* Knowledge must be made accessible

The scholar SHOULD NOT be like birds

* Picks up worms and feeds it directly to her young

We have to unlearn our traditional (baseless, with no evidence) methodologies and adopt a way of understanding that is convincing and grounded in evidence.

Our current society is filled with secular ideas

* As students of the Quran, we have to present what the scripture says in a way that the people will understand and thus convinced about the truthfulness of it
* We have to make it accessible and NOT isolate people