Halaqa: Wednesday, November 27, 2013

Topic: A Quranic Banquet – Food for the Soul

Our souls lack a lot but we tend to only pay attention to that which we lack materially.

**“Verily, We did offer the “Trust” to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be (intensely) unjust and (intensely) foolish.”**

Ahzab (33): 72



“unjust and foolish” : What does God mean? Why would he create me in a way that is foolish and unjust?

Methodology for reading verses

* Question the meaning and argue with it (not defensively but constructively)
* If the straightforward translation of the Quran contradicts my understanding, I have to realize that the Quran is presenting a metaphor AND have to read beyond the ‘dictionary meaning’.

Ask yourself:

* Do you like being unjust and ignorant?
	+ No.
	+ So why does the verse accuse you of being unjust?
		- Analyze it by forcing yourself to understand why the speaker is giving you this message

“We did offer the **trust** to the heavens, and the earth”

* I have never seen the ‘speaker’ offering the trust to the heavens, etc
	+ Neither have I seen them refusing
* The verse, if taken literally, seems contradictory and makes no sense

Go back to establishing the fundamentals.

* What does the word ‘trust’ mean within the context of the Quran?
	+ Do not limit the meaning to the worldly definitions we have so firmly etched in our minds

Example:

* Direct translation of “*ayah*” is verse BUT in essence “*ayah*” is a sign

You can only interpret the ‘metaphor’ in relation to the context of the speech, so the first step in understanding verses in the Quran that present a metaphor is to establish the foundation of the speech;

What is the purpose of the Quran?

* A guidance to man

Who are you?

What are you doing in this world?

* Ask these questions by removing yourself from the religious traditions we have come to associate ourselves with
	+ All humans have been given this innate ability to question our existence
	+ But as we realize, we cannot find an answer within this world
		- We only find ourselves immersed in ‘worldly’ actions
			* Eating, sleeping, growing, etc

Some people say, the purpose of our life is to satisfy myself

* What is the point of satisfying yourself if you are eventually going to die?
* It makes no sense

I have been given the ability to question my own reality, yet there is no answer within all of creation.

* Everything is working in a harmonious way and perfectly functioning
* They seem to be performing ‘meaningful’ actions
	+ Trees are growing and releasing oxygen
	+ Planets are rotating
* But I find no answer within creation in and of itself

I search and realize that there are two groups of people in the world

1. Followers of a religious tradition: The Prophets come with a message and people follow these Prophets (Followers)
2. People who try and discredit the claims brought by the Prophets (religions) and hypothesize other reasons for our life but yet none of these reasons make rational sense (Scientists/Atheists)

The people in the second category, however, cannot dispel the claims made by the first.

* Their approach is merely hypothesizing alternate realities, which if given due thought, are full of flaws

Through mere observation of things in creation, you will realize that there is a conscious creator

* He created you for a purpose
* What is this purpose?
* Messenger says: The purpose will be explained based on the messages revealed from your Creator

The purpose in the speech of the Quran is to tell me why I exist and what is expected from me.

* I exist and have been given certain qualities
* These qualities are not just to interact with the rest of creation BUT to decipher a meaning in their creation
	+ What is this meaning that I have to decipher?
		- The fact that there is a creator who is consciously putting everything in order

Through the qualities I observe, I am being taught who my Lord is.

* When I become aware of the Creator in all of creation, I start communicating with the Source through my abilities

We have been given ‘tools’ to use so that we may achieve our purpose in existence

You are aware that you can be thankful

You are aware that you can be truthful

You are aware that you can lie

You are aware that you can protect

You are aware that you can destroy

* We are aware of EVERYTHING
* I have been endowed with certain qualities, through which, I can communicate with my Source of Existence
* Who is the Source? The One who has given me these qualities
* What are the purpose of my qualities: To know the Source and to communicate with Him

SOURCE OF EVERYTHING (With whom lies eternal pleasure)

WHO CREATED THESE QUALITIES? 🡪

QUALITIES

(e.g.sense of taste) 🡪

We have been given the ‘tool’ of appreciation

* We enjoy good food
* (We are conscious of this enjoyment)
* And we are conscious of our ability to express gratitude
* I am also conscious that the earth itself, cannot be the creator of the food
	+ So I must ask: Who is so Merciful as to send me this food?
		- I must thank the Rightful Owner
	+ **The earth is being employed**
	+ **My consciousness is being employed**
	+ **My sense of gratitude is being employed**
		- **All to fulfill the purpose of my existence**

This is the foundation and pillar of our existence. We have to establish it in all our actions.

(back to the ayah in discussion - 33:72)

We have been offered this ‘trust’ to communicate with our Lord and to get to know Him

A) I want to be healthy, and I find myself healthy

* I turn to him and thank Him for giving me health

B) I want to be healthy but I find myself ill

* I turn myself back to the Creator of my needs

In both instances, you turn back to Him and acknowledge Him as the health-giver

* The whole universe is created so that I can get to know my creator, acknowledge Him and to, then, submit to Him

In the definition of the Quran,

Trust is having ‘consciousness’ of my Lord.

“trust was offered to the heavens and the earth BUT they refused to bear it”

* They have no ability to do that which is why they refused to accept it
* The verse is teaching us the reality of creation

“Yet man took it up”

* Look at yourself, don’t you have the ability to be ‘conscious’?
* We have been given the ability to ‘communicate’ with creation

Animal: Eats and walks away

Human: Eats and has the ability to question about its existence

* But we aren’t always loyal to this ability that we have been given
	+ We don’t question how our food gets digested, etc
	+ Everything in creation has so much meaning so that our attention may be drawn towards it
		- Only then can we communicate with the One who sent ‘creation’ and our ‘qualities’ to us

Understanding the concept of ‘man took it up’

* When we lose our memory, we go to the doctor because we want to ‘take’ it back
* When something in our system goes haywire or we fall sick, we do everything we can to get our health back.
	+ You are given the ability to ‘want’ it
	+ This is within my ability
	+ I am made this way

We want our health back and when we get it, we **take** it

- But as soon as we get it back, we tend to not use it as we should

You don’t want to lose it, but what a pity, you don’t use it

“for, verily, he has always been prone to be unjust and foolish”

* A reminder to us, that we tend to ‘waste’ that which we take back because we are foolish

Example:

You are admitted in the hospital for a major condition

You pay money, hire the best doctors to get your health back

As soon as you get it, you use your health to ‘waste time’ or find yourself engaging in mindless activities to ‘kill time’

Aren’t we being ‘unjust’ to the ‘trust’ we have been given to know our creator?

* We have been given all of these qualities to know my creator
* But then I waste my qualities and don’t use them to know my creator
* In wasting my qualities, am I NOT being unjust to the purpose of my existence?

Analogy:

You pay tuition but don’t go for any classes OR do any homework OR use the facilities available to you

* In doing so, you are harming yourself NOT the university

When it comes to our worldly benefit, we take extreme caution BUT when it comes to our reality (the real meaning of our existence), we almost never pay attention.

* We did not come to this world to amass wealth
* Our ultimate purpose is to know God
	+ Use your qualities to acknowledge your Creator and communicate with Him
	+ Don’t be unjust and foolish (something you are prone to)
		- The Quran is warning us.

If you don’t make the existence of your abilities meaningful (to know their Source, who is the Lord of the whole universe), your abilities are being ‘wasted’ and you will lose your ‘human qualities’

Example: When people lose their jobs, they say, ‘I feel worthless’

* Do you get your sense of worth from an office?
* Are all these amazing qualities given to you so that you can work in an office for 8-10hrs/day
* Can you really equate yourself to such a base purpose?
	+ How foolish!

Analogy: Would you use diamonds as a glass?

* Don’t waste your precious qualities!

Example: You encounter traffic when you are driving and get angry

* Are all these beautiful and amazing senses given to you for such a ‘non-event’?

If you locate yourself within the teachings of the Prophet, you will see that the Prophet says: Look for Eternal happiness. Don’t be satisfied with a loaf of bread.

* The sense of happiness has been given to you to be happy with the Eternal Creator NOT to be happy with just a loaf of bread
	+ Stop wasting your qualities

Imitating actions and following blindly has no value. It is baseless.

* It has no reality in and of itself

Belief is something that we can confirm as a result of our free choice.

* How are you using your free choice/consciousness?

Regardless of the situation you find yourself in (whether good/bad), always locate your position as a human being and identify the purpose of your existence.

Don’t bargain with God – ‘I prayed but I am still suffering’

* Are you praying to get a prize?

Prayer is not bargaining.

* Go back to the fundamentals and understand what prayer really means

Prayer = submitting to God

We all have to establish our religion from scratch

* A taking for granted approach has no value

Does it make sense that a child born into a Muslim family is more ‘favored’ than a child born into a Christian family?

* It would be contradictory and would mean that God is unjust
* Can such a perception of God be real?
	+ Look around you

We are all born equals – with the same innate ability to question!

The more we realize the nature of our relationship with God (and God’s relationship with me),

Humans are created in a way that our physical qualities works

The better I realize my relationship with my Eternal Source, the more confidence I will establish in Him, and the more hope I have

* Whatever you give me, you give me for my betterment

Anything and everything is a trust

* By being ill, that too is a trust
* I know that health is from You and You give health
* My illness is a way of connecting with you
* This positive way of understanding your reality connects you to the Eternal One who gives health to EVERYTHING
	+ He is the One who is the Source of Health

You are no longer in ‘tension’

* As a result your biological system starts working in a positive way
* You start receiving better health, as per the order in His creation

Alternative medicine/Reiki, etc – These are all ‘physical’ prayers

* It is all part of the Sunnah
* If you are positive, you will get it

As I get older, I get ‘younger’ (getting closer to my Eternal Lord)

Do physical sports, exercise, etc because this ‘hope’ makes you active

* By doing sports, you have a conscious sense of hope (not an imaginary sense of hope)

By being aware of the Eternal Source, you establish a positive sense of hope.

Belief – Good action

* If you believe that you belong to the Creator of the Universe and everything in creation is a message
	+ God is the greatest and I give no attention to things in the creation because they are all just means
* Your actions with creation will be ‘good’

When you pray, and make dhikr,

* It takes you back to your source
* These good actions then fortify your belief because it reminds you of your Creator
	+ But these ‘*amal’* must be based on conscious belief AND not imitative, repetitive action
	+ If it is repetitive, there is no feedback

The more aware we are of our *iman*  the more effective our *amal* becomes

Analogy: If I don’t eat good food, I cannot taste it. If I cannot taste it, I cannot be thankful for it.

* Food is not the point
* Taste is what matters
* But just enjoying the taste leaves you with nothing
* You have to express your enjoyment of that taste to that One who created the means of enjoyment

Similarly, created things are not what we should be obsessing over. Rather, focus on the message in things.

* If you just carry the ‘things’ around, you are nothing more than a donkey carrying things
* Similarly, if you perform your actions with no belief, you are like a donkey carrying these actions

If actions start with *iman,* they return to *iman*

Iman – action –(as much as there is consciousness within the action) – your iman increases

If your actions are just repetitive, how can the action increase your belief, when there was no belief to start with?

History: Most of the companions only accepted Islam after 20 years.

They had to be convinced and once they were convinced, they performed all the actions.

* Establish belief first!

There is no free religion.

* Everybody is born Muslim.
* No one has a right over another
	+ When we deviate from the right path, it is our choice
	+ Don’t get drawn into tradition
		- You have to establish your own religion