

Illuminating Guidance on the Dropping of Self-Direction

by

Shaykh Ibn 'Ata'illah as-Sakandari

Translated by one who is poor before his Lord and endlessly enriched by His Bounty,
Dr. 'Ibrahim Hakim

SUMMARY

For gaining a better understanding of the book, a summary of its contents is provided below:

Chapter One: The author quotes proof-texts (dalil) from the Qur'an and Sunnah, showing how they form the foundation of the main theme of the book. He then analyzes the first of the Quranic verses, listing a number of elegant interpretations that can be derived from it.

Chapter Two: The author continues by analyzing the other proof-texts he originally quoted, demonstrating how the theme of tadbir is fundamental to living a life according to the principles of Qur'an and Sunnah.

Chapter Three: The author first lists the nine abiding stations (maqamat) of certainty (yaqin), and then explains how each one of them is not valid without the ceasing of self-management.

Chapter Four: After demonstrating the importance of the theme of the book in the first three chapters, the author gives a series of means or ways to actualize the ceasing of tadbir. He also illustrates certain lessons that can be derived from the stories of Adam peace be upon him and of the Children of Israel, and discusses the nature of servitude.

Chapter Five: In this chapter the author calls the reader to cease self-management and self-direction, and explains why this is the noblest of the Divine charismatic gifts which are given to the friends (Awliya) of Allah ﷻ. He explains how, when one directs his or her aspirations to Allah ﷻ and is content with His management, at that point Allah ﷻ Himself takes charge of his safety, protection and well being.

Chapter Six: The author discusses the Prophet Ibrahim peace be upon him as a model of pure surrender and servitude. The chapter ends with a beautiful poem.

Chapter Seven: The author differentiates between praiseworthy and blameworthy tadbir, and how one can safely deal with the world and its wealth without becoming impure.

Chapter Eight: The author first discusses the difference between having worldly means of livelihood and being divested of them, and then goes on to discuss how the one with means should live and work, and the proper courtesies associated with having a living.. Finally, the author explains how to overcome the suggestions and insinuations of blameworthy tadbir, and the value of contentment.

Chapter Nine: This very short chapter explains the wisdom behind the creation of tadbir in the servants.

Chapter Ten: At this point, the author shifts focus slightly and concentrates on daily provision and sustenance (rizq) and tadbir in it. He also discusses the wisdom behind the existence of human need, and illustrates this with examples from the life of the Prophet Musa peace be upon him.

Chapter Eleven: The author explains the purpose behind the creation of mankind, and how Allah ﷻ has taken the responsibility of providing for His slaves.

Chapter Twelve: Now begins a series of five chapters, each centering around a key verse of the Qur'an, focusing on the subject of daily provision (rizq). In this specific chapter, the author explains the uselessness of having anxiety over one's sustenance, since Allah ﷻ has already guaranteed it.

Chapter Thirteen: The second chapter on the subject of rizq. In this short chapter, the author shows how creation and provision are paired in the Qur'an, and concludes that if one is certain that Allah ﷻ is the Sole Creator, one should be certain that He is the Sole Provider.

Chapter Fourteen: The third chapter on the subject of rizq. The author demonstrates how the arrival of Divine sustenance comes after and as a consequence of commanding the family to prayer and patient persistence in it.

Chapter Fifteen: The fourth chapter on the subject of rizq. This short chapter goes further into the concept of the Divine guarantee of provision. The author argues here that if Allah ﷻ provides for all of creation, as can be plainly seen, and if the human is the noblest of the creation, then how could He neglect the human?

Chapter Sixteen: This chapter is the last in the series dealing with the subject of rizq. It specifically discusses the Divine 'swearing' upon the guarantee of daily provision, and provides argument after argument for why it is unnecessary and a sign of the lack of faith to be in doubt about one's provision.

Chapter Seventeen: This chapter deals with the wisdom behind and the benefits of taking a means of livelihood. It also discusses the proper courtesies in seeking one's provision from Allah ﷻ.

Chapter Eighteen: This important chapter discusses the nature of relying upon the Divine as well as saving up provision for the future (iddikhar). The author explains that it is better, according to the dictates of certainty and reliance upon Allah ﷻ, not to hoard and save. He also discusses how to withhold the provision properly, namely, that one should withhold for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and not out of a selfish lack of trust.

Chapter Nineteen: This chapter is an explanation of certain passages from the litany (hizb) of Shaykh Abu'l Abbas al-Mursi (the author's Shaykh).

Chapter Twenty: This chapter is a series of examples and parables which illustrate the necessity of abandoning both tadbir and worry over provision.

Chapter Twenty-One: This is the final chapter of the book, and is perhaps the most beautiful and eloquent of the Shaykh's writings. It is taken from the point of view of Allah Himself, ﷻ, and consists of 'Divine munajat,' or an intimate Divine soliloquy directed to the slave, calling him to cease tadbir. The book ends with a concluding supplication.

Author's Introduction

The Shaykh, imam, gnostic, exemplar, verifier of truths, crown of the knowers, tongue of the speakers, the leader of his time and unique one of his period, the proof of the early righteous ones and leader of the later followers, example for the voyagers to Allah ﷻ, and the argument of the God-fearing: Shaykh Ahmad Tajud-Din Abu'l Fadl Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Karim ibn 'Ataillah as-Sakandari may Allah be pleased with him said:

All praise belongs to "Allah, the Sole One in Reality and Regulation, the Only One in ordaining and decree, the Sovereign King like Whom there is none, and He is the Hearing and Seeing. There is no one for Him in His kingdom who can take responsibility for His duties.

- King (Malik): outside of His kingdom there are none, big or small,
- Holy (Muqaddas): in the perfection of His attribute from having or taking unto Himself a similar,
- Purely Transcendent (Munazzah): in the perfection of His Essence from having a form or likeness,
- Knower ('Alim): Nothing in the conscience of man is hidden from Him. "Does He not know Who created, and He is the Subtle, the Aware" (Q67:14),
- Omniscient ('Alim): whose knowledge encompasses the beginning and end of all affairs,
- All-Hearing (Sami'): for Whom there is no difference between declared sounds and concealed,
- All-Provider (Razzaq): the Giver to creation by bringing to them their sustenance,
- Self-Subsisting (Qayyum): the One responsible for it in all its states,
- Bestower (Wahib): and He is the One Who bestowed upon the selves the existence of their being,
- Capable (Qadir): the One who brings it back after the arrival of its final term,
- Accounter (Hasib): Who rewards it the day of its coming before Him according to its good and evil deeds.

Glorified be such a Lord, Who gave the servants through His generosity before existence, and took charge of their sustenance regardless of their states of acceptance or denial of Him, and sustained all beings by His giving. He Who, by His Being, has maintained and preserved the being of the world by the support of His everlastingness, Who is manifested on earth by His order and in heaven by His power.

And I bear witness that there is no god but Allah ﷻ, One without a partner, the witnessing of a slave committed to His Decree, submitted to His order and command. And I bear witness that our liege-lord Muhammad ﷺ, His slave and messenger, the favored over all His Prophets, the chosen by His immense grace and bestowal, the opener and seal (and that is for none other than him), the intercessor for all servants on the day when He will gather them for the enactment of His decree. Blessings and peace be upon him and all the prophets, and his family and companions.

As to what follows:

Know, my companion, may Allah make you to be from among His lovers and enrich you with His nearness, and cause you to drink from the cup of His beloveds, and safeguard you from His absence by His perpetual presence, and unite you with His servants whom He chose for His communion and message, those servants whose crushed hearts He consoled and comforted when they realized that their perceptions could not attain to Him due to the glorious lights of His manifestations. He opened for them the gardens of proximity and from them granted their hearts the inspirations of the fragrant breezes of His bestowal. He caused them to witness His pre-eternal planning for them, so that they submitted confidently to Him, and He revealed to them the secret distillation of His subtle mercy in His actions, so they left off contention with Him.

They are therefore submitted to Him, dependent upon and trusting Him in all affairs, knowing that no servant reaches contentment except through contentment and no one attains to sincere servitude except by complete submission to the decree. So they are not influenced by others, nor are they touched by turbidity, as one has said:

"The evils of the times are not guided to them,
and the bridles of the great misfortunes are in their hands.

His orders flow over them and they are subservient to His sublimity,
and surrendered to His commands."

So know that he who wishes to arrive to Allah ﷻ should enter from His door by the means He has provided. The most important of these is that he should purify himself from the existence of his own planning and his contesting the will of Allah ﷻ.

For this reason I have composed this book and named it "Illumination on the Cessation of Self-Direction", so that the very title should make clear the subject and the words should agree with the meaning.

And I ask 'Allah to make it solely for His noble countenance, and to accept it by His extensive grace, and to benefit by it the elite and the common, by Muhammad, upon whom be the greatest blessings and peace.

Indeed He is capable of what He wills, and fit to answer.

*as-Shaykh Ahmad Taju-d-Din Abu'l Fadl Ahmad ibn Muhammad
ibn Abdil Karim ibn as-Sakandari*

Chapter One

Submission and Abandoning Tadbir

Summary

The author quotes proof-texts (dalil) from the Qur'an and Sunnah, showing how they form the foundation of the main theme of the book. He then analyzes the first of the Quranic verses, listing a number of elegant interpretations that can be derived from it.

Text

"Allah has said: "But no, by your Lord, they can have no real faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their selves no resistance against your decisions, and submit with the fullest submission" (Q4:65).

"And your Lord creates and chooses as He pleases; they have no choice in the matter. Glory to Allah; He is far above the partners they associate with Him!" (Q28:68).

"Shall man have anything he wishes? (No), but the end and the beginning (of all things) belong to Allah " (Q53:24-25).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said:

"Indeed, he has tasted the sweetness of secured faith (iman) who is pleased with Allah ﷻ as a Lord, and with the Way of Submission (Islam) as a religion, and with Muhammad as a prophet."

"Adore Allah with contentment. But if you are unable to, then there is indeed great good in patience with what you dislike!"

There are many other such statements of 'Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ that point to the abandonment of tadbir and to contesting the Divine decrees of fate, either as plain statements or as subtle indications. The people of divine gnosis have said: "Whoever does not plan for himself is planned for by Allah." And Sidi Abu'l-Hasan ash-Shadhili may Allah be pleased with him has said: "If it is such that there is no other way of action than planning (tadbir), then plan not to plan (dabbiru an la tudabbiru)." He also said: "Make no choice upon your own authority in anything, and choose not to choose. Flee from that choice, from your flight, and from everything to Allah, for, 'Your Lord creates what He wills and He exercises free choice.'" So the saying of Allah ﷻ in the first verse ("But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith") demonstrates that true faith cannot be acquired or attained except by placing the judgment of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, upon one's self, in words and actions, taking and leaving, loving and despising. That includes the order of religious bindings, and the order of the disposal of management and submission. The yielding to both types of orders is obligatory on all 'believers' (mu' minin). The orders of religious bindings are the commands and prohibitions connected to the acquisitions of the servants mentioned in the sacred law. And the orders of management and administration are what He caused to come over you of the compulsions and obligations of what is desired by Him ﷻ.

It was therefore made clear by this verse that the reality of faith cannot be actualized for you except by two things: conformity to His command, and total submission to His overwhelming force and power.

Moreover, He has not contented Himself with denying the faith of those who do not seek His judgment, or those who do seek it but find in themselves an aversion to what He desires and decrees. But He has furthermore sworn upon that by the lordship particular to His Messenger ﷺ, out of

kindness and care, and out of His providential election of him. For He ﷺ did not say, 'But no, by the Lord,' but rather, 'But no, by your Lord,' because in that wording there is a confirmation of the swearing and of that sworn upon. For He ﷺ knew full well how the selves are predisposed to the love of supremacy and superiority, no matter if the Truth is for them or against them. And there is in the verse, as we said, an indication of His ﷺ providential care for His Messenger ﷺ, in that He has also made his judgment to be of His ﷺ judgment, and his decree of His decree. Thus He made mandatory upon the servants complete submission to his order, and the yielding to his command. He has not accepted from them their faith in His divinity until they have also yielded to the ordinances of His Messenger ﷺ, because he is as He described him: "And he does not speak from his own caprice; no, it is but revelation divinely revealed" (Q53:3-4). So his order is the order of Allah ﷻ and his decree is the decree of 'Allah ﷻ, as He also stated: "Indeed, those who make the pledge of allegiance with you make the pledge with 'Allah," and He confirmed that by saying, "The Hand of 'Allah is above their hands" (Q48:10).

And in the verse there is another allusion to his ﷺ tremendous stature and that is His saying, "But no, by your Lord." So He connected Himself to him, just as He said in another verse: "KAAAF HA YA 'AYYIN SAAAD. A mention of the mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariyya" (Q19:1-2). So the Real attached His Name (of Lord) to Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ whereas He attached Zakariyya's name to Him, so that the slaves may know the difference between the two stations, and the inequality of the two degrees.

Moreover, He ﷻ has not stopped with the outer command, so that they can become believers by obeying it, but has also made the absence of aversion from their inward selves towards his command, a condition of true faith secured by revelation. And that aversion manifests itself as a constriction of their selves in what the Messenger ﷺ has ordained, no matter if that ordinance conformed to their personal desires or not. Indeed the selves find this constriction only due to the lack of lights, and the existence of others besides Allah within them. From that comes their inner aversion, which is the 'constriction'. But the true believers are not like this. For the light of faith fills their hearts until they are expanded and enlarged. So their hearts are made vast by the light of the encompassing and the knowing, supported by the existence of His great bounty, made ready for the arrival of His commands, and committed to Him in His abrogation and confirmation.

The hidden mercy of Allah ﷻ towards His slaves upon the arrival of His commands:

Know that if the Real ﷻ desires to strengthen a servant for what He intends to bring over him from His order, then He ﷻ will clothe him with the lights of His attribute, and cover him with the existence of His quality. So when the decrees come down upon him, and the lights came to him from before, he is then established by his Lord and not by himself, and is therefore strengthened for their burdens, and is patient under their hardships.

Indeed the arrival of lights aids them in carrying the Divine decrees. You could also say:

"What aids them in the carrying of the orders is the opening of the gates of understanding," or

"What aids them in the carrying of the trials is the arrival of the Divine gifts," or

"What strengthens them for the carrying of His decrees is their witnessing the excellence of His choosing," or

"What gives them patience at the existence of His judgments is their knowledge of the existence of His supreme knowledge," or

"What gives them patience with what occurs is their knowledge that He sees," or

"What gives them patience at His actions is the manifestation upon them of the existence of His beauty," or

"What gives them patience with the decree is their knowledge that patience bequeaths contentment," or

"What gives them patience with the decrees of fate is the unveiling of the veils and the coverings," or

"What strengthens them for the carrying of the burdens of the task is the arrival to them of the secrets of Divine caretaking and disposal," or

"What gives them patience at His decrees is their knowledge of what is deposited in them of His subtle mercy and kindness."

So these are ten reasons that call for the patience of the servant and his constancy under the ordinances of his Master, and his strength upon their arrival. And He is the giver of all that by His bounty, and the bestower of His providential care on the people. We will now devote ourselves to each one of these reasons so that their benefits can be realized completely.

As for the first one: "Indeed, the arrival of lights aids them in carrying the Divine decrees," that is because when the Divine lights arrive, they unveil to the servant the nearness of the Real to him, and that these decrees come from none other than Him. And the knowledge that the decrees come from his Master becomes a source of consolation for him and bequeaths him patience. Have you not heard what Allah ﷻ said to His Prophet ﷺ: "Have patience at the command of your Lord, for you are verily in Our Eyes" (Q52:48)? In other words, this is not the command of other than Him, that it should become a source of hardship for you. Rather, it is the command and the decree of your Master, the very same One who supports you with His beneficence and comes to you with His benevolence. We have on this meaning:

"The suffering of this tribulation is lessened for me because of the knowledge that it is You Who is decreeing this trial for me."

"And there is for no one a substitute to what Allah has decreed," and

"There is nothing for him (from Him) that he could choose for himself (other than His choice)."

As if, for example, someone entered a dark, non-illuminated house, and was struck by someone but did not know who struck him. Then when a light entered he saw that it was his Shaykh, or father, or master who had struck him; then this knowledge would call for his patience in that event.

As for the second reason: "What aids them in the carrying of the orders is the opening of the gates of understanding," know that if Allah ﷻ sent His decree upon His servant, and opened up the door of his understanding concerning that decree, then know that Allah ﷻ willed to carry it for him. And that is by virtue of the fact that true understanding returns you to 'Allah, urging and inciting you towards Him, making you depend upon Him, as He said: "Whoever places his trust upon 'Allah, He will suffice him" (Q65:3). In other words, Allah ﷻ is enough for him as a protector and helper over others besides Him, and as a caretaker for him. Because understanding from 'Allah unveils to you the secret of servanthood in you. And He ﷻ has said: "Is not Allah enough for His servant?" (Q39:36). And all of the ten reasons previously mentioned revolve around understanding from Him, and each of the reasons is just an aspect of that divinely granted understanding.

The third reason: "What aids them in the carrying of the trials is the arrival of the gifts," is because the arrival of gifts that proceeded from Allah to you beforehand reminds you of what can help you in carrying the orders of Allah ﷻ. For just as He decreed for you what you love (i.e., the gifts), He decrees what He loves and desires for you (i.e., the trials and tests and judgments), so be patient. Have you not heard what He has said: "What! When a single disaster smites you, and you were smitten with one twice as great..." (Q3:165). (In other words, you were 'smitten' with a gift twice as great as this disaster). So Allah ﷻ comforted and consoled them in what they were smitten, by what they were 'smitten' from the previous gifts. And when the trials are compared with those gifts once they arrive, their severity and hardship is lessened for those slaves brought near by Allah ﷻ. For the great benefit

that was hidden in that trial was revealed to them, so they understood and took it. Of that consolation is what descended to them of constancy and great peace, and what came down upon them from the delicate subtleties of the hidden mercy, and the descent of the gifts - until some of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ used to say to Izra'il, the angel of death, "Strengthen your wrath and fury!" And one of the gnostics used to say: "I was sick, and I desired that the sickness not go away, because of the Divine provision and assistance that came with it, and what it unveiled of His hidden unseen."

The fourth reason: "What strengthens them for the carrying of His decrees is their witnessing the excellence of His choosing." That is because, if the servant witnessed the excellence of the choosing of Allah for him, he would come to know that the Real does not intend to hurt His servant, because He is the Merciful. "And Allah is to the believers most merciful" (Q33:43). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once saw a woman with her child, and asked: "Would this mother throw her child into fire?" And his companions answered, "No, of course not!" So he replied: "Allah is more merciful to His believing servant than the mother to her child."

In addition, He decrees for you these sufferings because of what is in them of rewards, benefits and blessings. Have you not heard Him say: "Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure" (Q39:10). And had the Real ﷻ left the servants to their own choosing, they would have by their actions prevented His favors and gifts from coming to them, and would have prevented their entering of the Garden of Paradise. So praise be to Allah ﷻ for His unparalleled choosing: "And it may be that you hate something and it is good for you, or that you love something and it is harmful to you, and 'Allah ﷻ knows and you do not know" (Q2:216). The compassionate father might come to his son with punishment, but he does not intend his destruction or harm; no more does the sincere doctor, who treats you with painful medicine, even if it hurts you. And had the choice been left to you, your health and recovery would be far away. And for whoever is deprived and knows that the deprivation is a mercy to him, then that deprivation is in reality a gift. The compassionate mother denies her child an excess of food for fear of indigestion.

Shaykh Abu'l Hasan al-Shadhili may Allah be pleased with him said: "Know that the Real, if He deprived you, did not deprive you out of stinginess or niggardliness, but rather out of mercy for you; so deprivation from Allah ﷻ is also a gift, but none understands the gift in the deprivation except the utterly sincere." We have written in another book (the Hikam): "The pain of trial is lightened for you by your knowledge that it is He who is trying you; for the One who confronts you with His decrees of fate is the same One who has accustomed you to His good choice."

The fifth reason: "What gives them patience at the existence of His judgments is their knowledge of the existence of His supreme knowledge." That is because the servant knows that the Real is looking at him in what He tries him with, and this softens the suffering and eases the burden of the afflictions. Have you not heard what He said: "Have patience at the command of your Lord, for you are verily in Our Eyes" (Q52:48).

In other words, 'What you experience, O Muhammad, from the rejecters and disbelievers of Quraysh, such as their stubbornness and their rejection and perfidy, is not hidden from Us.' This is also related to the reason above. And there is the famous story: a man was whipped 99 times, but did not cry out of pain, but when he was whipped the hundredth time, he did cry out. They asked him about that and he said: "The one because of whom I was being whipped was in the gathering for the 99 times, but when he left me, I felt the pain."

The sixth reason: "What gives them patience at His actions is the manifestation upon them of the existence of His Beauty." That is because when the Real reveals Himself to His servant at the moment of the intensity of the afflictions, then this revelation of Divine Beauty carries away the intense heat of the affliction, and he tastes the cool sweetness of the Divine manifestation. That absorption

makes him absent from sensing pain, and it is enough for you to read what Allah has said: "When they saw him (Yusuf), they extolled him, and in their ecstasy and amazement at his beauty cut their hands with the knives" (Q12:31).

The seventh reason: "What gives them patience with the Decree is their knowledge that patience bequeaths contentment." That is because Allah bequeaths contentment and good pleasure from Himself to whoever is patient at His decrees; so they take the heat for the sake of seeking contentment, as the sick man bears the bitter medicine for the sake of recovery and health.

The eighth reason: "What gives them patience with the decrees of fate is the unveiling of the veils and the coverings." That is because, if the Real ﷻ desires to carry the burden of what He sent down upon the servant, He will unveil the veil from the insight of his heart. In this manner, He shows him His proximity to him, so that the intimacy of His nearness makes him absent from the perception of the afflictions. Also, if the Real were to reveal to the people of the Fire His ﷻ beauty and perfection, that revelation would have made them oblivious to the torments of the punishment. Just as, if He ﷻ veiled Himself from the people of Paradise, then the pleasures of Heaven would have no effect on them and no reality in their eyes. Therefore, the true punishment is the existence of the veil, and the many kinds of punishment are only the various manifestations of the veil. And the true bliss is in the revelation and unveiling, and the many kinds of bliss are only various manifestations of that unveiling.

The ninth reason: "What strengthens them for the carrying of the burdens of the task is the arrival to them of the secrets of caretaking and handling." And that is because the tasks are a burden upon the servants, and the kinds of tasks are in conformity to the commands: avoidance of the prohibitions, patience at the hardships of the decrees, and gratitude at the existence of blessings. There are four kinds of states: obedience, disobedience, fortune and misfortune.

And Allah ﷻ has upon you in each of these four states a specific servitude that He demands from you by the rights of Lordship. If you are blessed, then what Allah requires from you is thankfulness. If you are tried, then what Allah requires from you is patience with Him. If you are obedient, then what Allah requires of you is the witnessing of His blessing upon you in that. If you are disobedient, then what Allah requires from you is asking forgiveness from that.

And what carries the burden of all that from you is divinely granted understanding. So if you understood that obedience returns to you with a benefit for you, then that would cause you to be perseverant in fulfilling and performing that obedience. And if you understood that repeatedly entering into disobedience causes the punishment of Allah ﷻ later on, and the removal of the light of faith soon afterward, then that would be a reason for your abandoning it. And if you understood that patient endurance brings to you its rewards, and surrounds you with its blessings, then you would run to it and depend on it. And if you understood that gratitude causes an increase from Allah ﷻ, as He has said: "If you are thankful, I will give you an increase" (Q14:7), that would be a reason for your rising to it and your perseverance in it. And we will, Allah ﷻ willing, devote a separate section to these four states near the end of the book.

The tenth reason: "What gives them patience at His ﷻ decrees is their knowledge of what is deposited in them of His subtle mercy and kindness." That is because Allah ﷻ has placed His subtle mercies within the hardships, for as He has said: "It may be that you despise something and it is beneficial to you" (Q2:216).

And the saying of the Messenger ﷺ: "Paradise is surrounded by hardships and Hell is surrounded by cravings. And in affliction and trials and sickness and distress are secrets of subtle mercy that none grasps save those with insight." Do you not see how the afflictions extinguish and

humiliate the ego, and prevent it from seeking after its desires, and that with this humility is victory?
"Allah helped you at Badr with victory, when you were a contemptible little force" (Q3:123).

Chapter Two

Complete and Total Submission

Summary

The author continues by analyzing the other proof-texts he originally quoted, demonstrating how the theme of tadbir is fundamental to living a life according to the principles of Qur'an and Sunnah.

Text

Let us now return to the verse, the saying of Allah Most High: "But no, by your Lord, they can have no real faith, until they make you (Muhammad , ﷺ) judge in all disputes between them, and find in their selves no resistance or aversion against your decisions, and submit with complete submission" (Q4:65).

Know that the states in relation to the Divine commands are three: before the judgment, during it, and after. As for before the judgment, submission consists in coming to Him in complete surrender to what he is about to decide. And as for during the judgment, their servitude consists in faithfully fulfilling the command. And as for after the judgment, their servanthood consists in the lack of resistance and aversion in those affairs.

And if you say that the lack of aversion did not have to be mentioned because it goes without saying, when it is said, 'until they make you judge,' then the answer is that not all who seek the judgment of the Prophet ﷺ are free of aversion and resistance to him in their inward hearts. For one could seek it openly while his reluctance exists inwardly. So the ruling of the decision must be combined with the absence of resistance and the existence of total submission.

And if someone had said: "If there exists no inward aversion, then that means they have submitted fully. So what is the purpose behind adding the words 'and submit with complete submission' after the negation of aversion which necessarily implies the acceptance of submission?", then the answer would be that this saying applies to all of their affairs. And if you said, "That is already clear from the words, 'until they seek your ruling'," then the answer is that the ruling of the judgment is only for the disputes that arose between them. So the verse contains three points:

- the judgment in the disputes that arose between them
- lack of any inward resistance or aversion towards the ruling
- the existence of complete submission, in relation to what came about among them in themselves. It is a generalization after a particularization. So understand!

The second verse: "Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses; the choice is not for them. Glory to Allah, far above the partners they attribute to Him!" (Q28:68).

The first lesson: the saying, 'Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses' demands from the servant his abandonment of tadbir with Allah, because if He creates and chooses what He wills, then He plans and manages as He wills; so whoever does not create, has no tadbir. "Is He Who creates like he who does not create?" (Q16:17).

And His saying: 'He chooses (what He will)' shows His uniqueness and singularity in choosing, and that He does not act out of necessity or pressing need, but out of the quality of free will and choice. And implied in that also is that the slave is obliged to drop and cease his tadbir and choosing with Allah ﷻ. For that which is His prerogative cannot belong to you.

And His saying, 'They have no choice in the matter' has two sides to it:

1) It is not fitting that the choosing be for them, and that they be more worthy of it than He Most High; and

2) They have no right to choice, and We did not give it to them, for they are not worthy of it.

And His ﷻ statement, 'Glory be to Him above the partners they ascribe to Him,' means that 'Allah, is transcendent above having others share in the choice with Him as partners. And the verse makes it clear that whoever pretentiously claims to have any personal choice alongside 'Allah is one who associates (mushrik), who claims Lordship for himself; and Allah is free from what he claims.

The third verse: "Shall man have anything he wishes for? And to 'Allah belong the beginning and end of all things" (Q53:24-25) contains proof of the necessity of leaving the tadbir with 'Allah 0,, by His saying: 'Is it for man to have what he wishes (which does not exist), and is not fit for him, because We did not give it to him (i.e., the choice)?' And He confirmed that with His saying: 'To Allah belongs the end and the beginning.' Implied in that is also a call and an order for the servant to cease tadbir with Allah ﷻ.

In other words, if both beginning and end belong to Allah ﷻ, then man has no share of that for himself. So it is not fit that he manage and direct the dominion of another, but rather that the One Who owns both worlds be the one to direct and manage them; and that is 'Allah (the Glorified and Exalted!).

And the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, "Indeed he has tasted the sweetness of faith who is pleased with 'Allah as Lord..." proves that whoever is not like that has not experienced the sweetness of faith, and has not perceived its taste. His faith is only a form with no spirit to it, and only an outward with no inward to it, and only a picture with no real life to it. And in it there is also an indication that those sound hearts which are free of the sicknesses of forgetfulness and passion are in bliss in experiencing the meanings, as the selves find bliss in the pleasures of delicious food.

Indeed, only the one who is pleased with Allah ﷻ as Lord has tasted the sweetness of faith. Because when he was pleased with Allah, he submitted to Him, and yielded to His order, and left his control to His leadership, abandoning his own tadbir and choice to the excellence of the management and choosing of Allah ﷻ. So he has found the sweet taste of true life, and the comfort of trust in and commitment to Him. And when he was pleased with Allah as a Lord, he deserved the good-pleasure from 'Allah, as He said: "'Allah was content with them and they with Him" (Q5:119). And whoever has the good pleasure from Allah, Allah causes to experience the sweetness of that, so that 'Allah o informs him of what He has favored him with, and informs him of His beneficence towards him. And there is no contentment with Allah, except with Divinely granted understanding. And there is no understanding, except with light. And there is no light, except with proximity. And there is no proximity, except with Divine providential care. So when the providential care previously came to this servant, then the gifts came out to him from the treasuries of plentiful bounty. And when the supports and lights of Allah ﷻ arrived to him, his heart was cured from sicknesses and diseases. So his perception became sound, and he perceived the sweetness and delight of faith due to the soundness of his taste and perception.

And if his heart became diseased through forgetfulness of Allah ﷻ and inattention, he would not have been able to perceive that, just as the one afflicted with fever tastes sugar as bitter, whereas in reality it is other than that. Therefore, if the sicknesses of the heart were to be removed, the heart would perceive things as they really are. So it would perceive the delight of faith and the sweetness of obeying 'Allah and the bitterness of rebellion and separation from Him. And when the heart perceives that sweetness of faith, it rejoices in it, and witnesses the favor of Allah upon him, and seeks what would preserve that faith in him, and what would attract more of it. In the same way, its perception of

the delight in obedience would cause it to persevere in it, and see the favor and blessings of 'Allah in it. And its perception of the bitterness of disbelief and rebellion would cause it to abandon it, flee from it, and not lean towards it. So the meaning includes abandoning sins, and not having an attentive eye for them. For not all that look at them abandon them, and not all that abandon them abstain from looking. And that 'Allah and forgetfulness of Him is the fatal poison of hearts, so that the fleeing of the hearts of believers from rebellion against Allah ﷻ, is like your abstaining from poisoned food.

And his saying ﷺ, "...and with the Submission (al-Islam) as his religion..." If he is pleased with the submission as a way of life for him, then he is pleased with what Allah has chosen for him, as He has said: "Truly the religion before 'Allah is Islam" (Q3:19), and, "Whoever desires other than Islam as a religion will not have it accepted from him" (Q3:85), and, "Indeed 'Allah has chosen for you the religion, so do not die except that you are Muslims" (Q2:132). And if he is content with Islam (the surrender) as a religion, then that would necessarily imply: conformity to the Divine commands, avoidance of the Divine prohibitions, the commanding of the good, the forbidding of the evil, and jealousy for this religion should a rejecter come and argue with him, so that he overcomes him with his arguments, and destroys his stance with his clear evidence.

And his saying: "...and with Muhammad as his prophet..." If he is pleased with Muhammad ﷺ as a prophet, that means he must take him as an intimate friend and take on his character and virtues, such as doing without the world and leaving it, forgiving and pardoning those who treat him wrongly, and other similar character traits that come from truly following him, , in words and actions, in what he takes and leaves and what he loves and hates, inwardly and outwardly.

Therefore, whoever is pleased with Allah ﷻ, submits fully to Him, and whoever is pleased with Islam, acts according to it, and whoever is pleased with our master Muhammad follows him. And none of these states are actualized without the others, for it is impossible that one would be content with Allah as Lord but not with Islam as a religion, or be pleased with Islam as a religion but not with Muhammad ﷺ as a prophet. And that is clear.

Chapter Three

The Stations of Certainty (*Yaqin*)

Summary

The author first lists the nine abiding stations (maqamat) of certainty (yaqin), and then explains how each one of them is not valid without the ceasing of self-management.

Text

Once what has been mentioned above becomes clear to you, then know that the stations of certainty are nine: repentance and returning to 'Allah (*tawba*), doing without (*zuhd*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*raja`*), trust and reliance (*tawakkul*), love (*mahabba*), and contentment (*rida*). Not one of these stations is valid without the ceasing of tadbir and personal choice alongside 'Allah.

Repentance (*tawba*):

Just as the repentant should turn away from his sins, he must also turn away from his tadbir with 'Allah ﷻ, because management and choice are among the enormities of the hearts and innermost secrets. Repentance for them is: returning to 'Allah from all that does not please Him, due to its being either an association in His Lordship, or ingratitude for the blessing of the intellect, and 'Allah is not pleased with ingratitude from His slaves. And how could the repentance of the servant over-concerned with the management of his world and heedless of the excellence of his Guardian be sound and valid?

Doing without (*zuhd*):

This is also not valid except with the abandonment of tadbir, because what you are asked to leave and do without is your tadbir. For doing without is of two kinds: outer and apparent, secret and inner. As for the outward zuhd, that is doing without excess in what is permissible, such as food, clothes, etc. As for inward zuhd, that is doing without the desire for fame, or the desire to be in a position of leadership, and this kind also includes doing without tadbir.

Patience (*sabr*):

Neither patience nor gratitude can be sound except through the dropping of tadbir. The patient one is the one who is patient from doing what 'Allah ﷻ does not like, and perseveres against it; and one of the things 'Allah ﷻ does not like is tadbir and choosing with Him. For patience is of different kinds: patience in regard to the forbidden things, patience with regard to the obligatory things, and patience with regard to management and choice. Or if you wish, you could say patience against the human appetites and gratifications, and patience in servitude and what it requires of you. One of the things required by servanthood is the ceasing of tadbir with 'Allah the Exalted.

Gratitude (*shukr*):

Gratitude is not correct and giving thanks is not valid except from the servant who has abandoned his tadbir; for gratitude is like what al-Junayd *radi Allahu anh* said: "It is that you not disobey 'Allah ﷻ with the blessings He gave you." And had it not been for the intellect by which 'Allah ﷻ differentiated you from others like you, and made it a cause of your perfection, you would not be

of those who make tadbir with Him. For the inanimate objects and animals have no tadbir with 'Allah ﷻ, because they lack any intellect, the characteristic of which is looking with concern towards the future and the consequences of decisions and actions.

Fear and Hope (*khawf and raja`*):

If the authority, influence and control of the fear of 'Allah ﷻ came over the heart and dominated it, that fear would prevent it from finding rest in the existence of its own tadbir. Similarly, the one with hope in 'Allah ﷻ. has his heart filled with rejoicing by 'Allah ﷻ and his time is filled with his dealings with 'Allah ﷻ.

Trust (*tawakkul*):

The one who trusts in 'Allah ﷻ and relies on Him places his control in His Hand, and depends upon Him in all his affairs. This calls for, among other things, the total lack of tadbir, and complete submission to the decrees of fate. And the connection between the ceasing of tadbir and the station of trust (and contentment) is clearer and more evident than its connection with any of the other stations.

Love (*mahabba*):

Indeed the lover is immersed in the love of his Beloved, and the abandoning of his will with Him is the essence of what he seeks. The time of the lover does not allow for tadbir with 'Allah ﷻ, because his love has made him too busy with 'Allah to even notice it, as someone has said: "Whoever tastes of the sincere love of 'Allah ﷻ, that preoccupies him from other than Him."

Contentment (*rida*):

This is clear, and there is no confusion about it, because the content one is satisfied with the preceding tadbir of 'Allah ﷻ for him, so how could he have tadbir with Him while he is content with the tadbir of 'Allah for him?! Do you not know that the light of contentment washes away from the heart the impurities of tadbir? Therefore, the one who is content with 'Allah ﷻ is expanded by the light of contentment so that he may carry out His orders. So he has absolutely no tadbir with 'Allah the Exalted, and the excellence of the choice of the Master for the servant is enough for the servant...so understand!

Chapter Four

The Means of Abandoning Tadbir with Allah

Summary

After demonstrating the importance of the theme of the book in the first three chapters, the author gives a series of means or ways to actualize the ceasing of tadbir. He also illustrates certain lessons that can be derived from the stories of Adam peace be upon him and of the Children of Israel, and discusses the nature of servitude.

Text

Understand that there are certain means which enable you to abandon and cease *tadbir* and personal choice with Allah ﷻ.

First Cause:

Your knowledge of the previous *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ for you: namely, that you know Allah ﷻ was for you before you were for yourself. So just as He managed your affairs before you were and before you had any *tadbir* with Him, likewise He manages for you after your coming into existence. So be with Him now just as you were with Him before; He will be for you now as He was for you before. Because of that, Husayn al-Hallaj said: "Be for me as you were for me, when I was not." He asked from Allah that He be for him in *tadbir* after his coming into existence, just as He was for him in *tadbir* before his existence. For before the existence of the slave, the slave was already managed in the foreknowledge of Allah ﷻ, and the slave has no independent existence of his own that he should pretentiously claim any *tadbir* for himself, and thus fall into fooling himself. And if you said: "When he was previously nothing, how could *tadbir* be applied to him?" know that things have a certain being in the foreknowledge of Allah (as archetypal essences), even if they cannot be said to possess any existence of their own in their essences. And the Real takes charge and regulates its affairs while it is in His foreknowledge. In this question there is great deception, and this book is not the place for it.

Know that the Real ﷻ has always taken the best of care for you throughout all of the stages of your life since He brought you into existence on the Day of the Decree, the Day of, "Am I not your Lord?" and you said, "Yes, we bear witness!" Among the signs of His excellent care for you on that Day is that He caused you to know Him and so you came to know Him. He revealed Himself to you and you witnessed Him. It was He who made you speak and inspired you to affirm His Lordship and so you confirmed His Oneness. Then He made you into a drop of sperm placed in the loins, and took care of you with His management therein, protecting you and guarding you in the state that you were in. He took you from Adam peace be upon him to your father through the intermediaries of fathers between them, then ejected you into the womb of your mother. He continued to take excellent care of you by making the womb like an earth for you, providing you with your sustenance from it and giving you life in it. He combined the two (sperm and ovum), so that you became a sign of His Divine Wisdom, in that all of existence is based on the secret of the pairing of the two opposite sexes.

Then He made you after the drop of sperm into a blood clot, ready and prepared for what He desired to move you to. Then after that into a fetus lump, from which He cleft your form, and established your constitution, and then breathed into you of the Spirit. He nurtured you and fed you with the blood of the womb and provided for you your nourishment before He brought you out to the world. He kept you in the womb until your muscles and joints were strengthened so that you could be

ready for delivery to what He allotted for you or against you, and so that He might take you out into an abode in which He makes Himself known to you through His bounteous favors and justice.

Then when He placed you upon the Earth, He knew that you were not able to eat rough foods because you did not have any teeth to use. So He fed you through the breasts with a soft gentle food, and made them a means for the mercy in the heart of your mother to care for you with unending care even after the milk stopped. Moreover, He moved your father and mother to search for that which would be wholesome for you, and to be compassionate towards you, looking towards you with the eye of love. It is nothing except the compassion that He sent to you and to the servants through the outward manifestations of father and mother, as a means of making you come to know of His love. In reality, nothing cared for you except His Lordship, and nothing nurtured you and satisfied you except His Divinity.

Then He compelled the father to bring you up to your coming of age, out of compassion from Him for you. Moreover, He lifted away the pen of duty and responsibility from you until the time of the completion of your understanding and your maturity. And when you reached a mature age He did not cease bringing to you His favors and graces. And then when you end in old age, and go before Him, and are resurrected to Him and brought before His Hands, He makes you safe from His punishment, and causes you to enter the abode of His reward, and lifts His veils from you, and sits you down with His friends and lovers, as He said: "Indeed, the god-wary ones are in gardens and rivers, in an assembly of Truth in the Presence of an Almighty King" (Q54:54-55).

So which of His favors do you give thanks for, and which of His bounties do you mention?

Listen to the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And you have no blessing nor favor except that it is from Allah" (Q16:53), and you will know that you have never left, nor will you ever come out of the circle of His beneficence, and never will the existence of His favors and blessings leave you. And if you seek an explication of the evolving of your stages and states of life, then listen to His saying: "We created man from a quintessence of clay, then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed. Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a fetus lump; then We made out of that lump, bones, and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators! After that, at length, you will die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection you will be raised back" (Q23:12-16). You will catch a glimpse of those stages and their illuminations upon you will increase. All of that, O slave, calls for your utter surrender to Him, and complete reliance upon Him, and compels you to leave *tadbir* and the contesting of the decrees of fate. And 'Anglo, is the grantor of success.

Second cause:

That you understand that your *tadbir* for yourself implies your ignorance of what is best for it, for the believer knows that if he leaves the *tadbir* to Allah ﷻ, then Allah ﷻ will be for him by His excellent management. "Whoever relies on Allah ﷻ, He is enough for him" (Q65:3). After this understanding you plan to stop planning, and your looking after the good of your self lies in not looking after it. Understand from this saying from Allah ﷻ: "Enter the houses by their doors" (Q2:189), for the door to the *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ for you is the ceasing of your *tadbir* for yourself.

Third cause:

Your knowledge that what happens by fate does not happen by or according to what you intend or decide, and that most of what occurs does so without your *tadbir*, and little of what you plan actually takes place. The intelligent person does not build his house on shaky ground. Tell me, when will your house be completed and all the while the Decrees destroy it? As the poet said:

"When will the day come when the building reaches its completion if you build it and other than you destroys it?"

And if the *tadbir* is from you, and the Decree goes against what you decide and plan, then what is the benefit of *tadbir* which the Decrees do not support? It is more befitting that the *tadbir* be with the One in Whose Hands are the reigns of fate, as the poet said:

*"When I saw the Fate proceeding on its course
without doubt in it and without suspicion,
I relied truthfully upon my Creator
and cast myself with the flow (of the Decree)."*

Fourth cause:

Your knowledge that Allah ﷻ is in full charge of managing His Kingdom, its high parts and low parts, its hidden parts and manifest parts. And just as you submit to Him His *tadbir* of the Throne, Footstool, Heavens, and Earth, then similarly submit to Him His control of your existence in these worlds. For the relation of your existence in comparison with these tremendous worlds necessarily mandates your diminishing and disappearing. Just as the relation of the seven heavens and seven earths in comparison with the Footstool, is as a ring flung in the vast desert; and the Footstool, seven heavens and seven earths are in relation to the Divine Throne as a ring flung in the vast desert. So what are you in His vast Kingdom? Therefore, your anxious concern with yourself, and your *tadbir* for it, is in ignorance of Allah ﷻ, as He said: "They did not measure with His true measure" (Q6:91), i.e., they did not know Allah ﷻ as He should be known.

Had the servant known his Lord, he would have shied away from *tadbir* with Him. And nothing casts you into the sea of *tadbir* except that it veils you from Allah ﷻ. Because the people of certainty, when the faculties of insight in their hearts were unveiled, saw themselves (already) managed, not managing; and controlled, not controlling; and moved, not moving.

Also, those in the Highest Assembly (of archangels and prophets and saints) witness the direct manifestation of the Decree, and the enactment of the Divine Will. For them, the Decree is directly attached to the decreed, and the Divine Will, to the willed, and the secondary causes (*asbab*) are removed from their sight. Because of this, they have been purified from pretension and making claims, due to what they are in of the existence of providential Divine care, and the establishment of face-to-face communion. Because of that, He .0 said: "It is We who inherit the earth and what is upon it, and to Us do they all return" (Q19:40). In that is a purification for the angels from the stain of any selfish notion, and an indication that they do not claim for themselves what "Allah ﷻ has given them, and do not refer to themselves with what He has attached to them of greatness. If it had not been so, He would have said: "It is We who inherit the earth and the heaven." But their connection to Him, and their awe of Him, and their infatuation with His Immensity, prevents them from leaning towards other than Him.

So just as you surrendered the management of heaven and earth to Him, surrender the management of your existence to Him. "The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the people" (Q40:57).

Fifth cause:

It is your knowledge that you are a property of Allah and you do not have the right of *tadbir* for what belongs to Someone Else. You have no management or authority over what you do not own.

And if you, O servant, do not contend in what you own, and you have no possession except what He placed under your possession, (and in truth you have no possession or kingdom at all, but rather it is only tied to you by the Shari'ah which has established the right of property and dominion for you even though there is nothing in you that would necessitate any right for you to have any dominion), then not to contend with Allah ﷻ in what He owns is more appropriate and more suitable. Especially since Allah has said: "Verily Allah ﷻ has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth..." (Q9:111). Therefore, it is not fit that the servant, after this selling and contract, should have any contention or management or right of direction, because what you sold to Him is what you submitted and gave up control over (*taslim*); and the *tadbir* in it nullifies the contract.

I entered one time into the presence of my Shaykh, Sidi Abu-I 'Abbas al-Mursi may Allah be pleased with him, and I complained to him about some of my problems. He stopped me and said: "If your self belongs to you, then do with it as you please, but you will never be able to do that. And if it belongs to its Maker then submit it to Him, letting Him do with it as He pleases and wills." Then he said, "Ease from troubles is in complete and utter submission to Allah ﷻ, and the abandoning of *tadbir* with Him; and that is true servitude."

Ibrahim ibn Adham may Allah be pleased with him said: "I slept one night and missed my daily devotional exercise (*wird*), then I awoke and was regretful; then I slept after that for three days and neglected the obligatory actions (*fara'id*), and when I awoke I heard a voice saying to me in poetry:

*'Everything is forgiven you save your negligence
and forgetfulness of Us,
We have pardoned for you what has passed,
but what has come from Us has remained.'*

Then the voice said to me: 'O Ibrahim, be a slave.' So I became a slave and found peace."

Sixth cause:

Your knowledge that you are a guest of Allah ﷻ, for this world is the abode of Allah, and you are a visiting guest to Him in it. And among what is incumbent upon the guest is that he not trouble himself worrying about whether the host will give him his right. It was once said to Shaykh Abu Madyan may Allah be pleased with him: "Our Master, why is it we see the other Shaykhs entering into the secondary causes and means (*asbab*), while you do not?" He replied: "My brother, judge our cases. I say that this world is the house of Allah ﷻ, and we are His guests in it. And the Messenger ﷺ said, 'guesthood is three days,' so Allah ﷻ is our host and we are His guests for three days. Allah ﷻ has also said: 'Indeed one day with your Lord is as 1000 years of your reckoning' (Q22:47). So we are the guests of Allah for 3000 years, from which comes our duration here on earth, and He will complete it by His favor in the Final Abode, and will add upon that term the life everlasting."

Seventh cause:

The servant's consideration and understanding of the establishment (*qayyumiyya*) of all things by Allah ﷻ. Have you not heard His saying: "Allah, none other than He, the Living, the Eternally Subsisting" (Q3:2). So He is the One by Whom subsist the world and the hereafter, Who establishes the world with His freely given sustenance, and the hereafter with His rewarding. Therefore, if the servant recognizes his Lord's supporting and establishing him, he throws his reigns to Him, and casts himself in submission between His Hands, considering what comes upon him of the Decrees of Allah ﷻ.

Eighth cause:

The servant's busying himself with the commands and exercises of servitude, which is the goal of life, as He said: "And serve your Lord until the certain death comes to you" (Q15:99). If his energy and aspiration are spent in maintaining his servitude, then that preoccupies him from *tadbir* for himself or anxiety over it. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan ash-Shadhili said: "For each moment there is an allotted portion for the duties of servanthood that the Real ﷻ requires of you by the right of Lordship, which you are held responsible for. The same applies for each breath you take, which is a trust of the Real given to you. So where is the 'free time' for the people of spiritual insight from the rights of Allah the Exalted, that they should be able to manage and direct themselves, and that they should consider its well-being from the view of its personal gratifications and desires? No one attains to the Grant of Allah ﷻ except by his being absent from his self, and doing without it, directing his eager determination and aspiration (*himma*) towards Allah, alert to fulfill whatever He calls for diligently persistent in His service. In accordance with your absence from yourself, and your annihilation from it, Allah ﷻ will cause you to submit through Himself." He also said: "O you who race on the way of success by Him, yearning ardently for His Presence, diminish your attention to your outer self if you desire the opening of your inner self to the secrets of the dominion (*malakut*) of your Lord."

Ninth cause:

You are a vassal-slave (*marbub*), and it is incumbent upon the servant that he not have any misgivings or suspicions about his Master, Who is characterized by bountiful nobility and the lack of negligence and carelessness. In truth the spirit of the station of servitude is confidence in Allah ﷻ and complete surrender to Him ﷻ. Each of these two characteristics is opposed to self-management, direction, and choosing with Allah ﷻ. For the servant, instead of these, should establish his service to Him, and the Master will establish him with His bountiful grace and apportioned sustenance. Understand the saying of Allah ﷻ "And command your family to the devotional prayer and stick steadfastly to it; We do not ask you for sustenance, for We sustain you" (Q20:132). In other words, 'Rise to Our service, and We will support you by bringing to you Our pre-apportioned sustenance for you.'

Tenth cause:

Your lack of knowledge concerning the outcome of events. For it might be that you planned for an affair which you thought was for your benefit, whereas it turned out to be against you; or that benefits came to you through hardships, and hardships and trials through benefits; or harm through ease, or ease through harm. It might be that gifts are hidden in trials, and trials hidden in gifts, or that you benefited from the hands of enemies, or were harmed from the hands of friends. If the situation is as we said, then how could the understanding person make *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ, since he doesn't know where true felicity lies that he should go to it by himself, or where true harm lies that he should avoid it by himself? For that reason Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him prayed: "O Allah ﷻ, we are powerless to thwart from ourselves the harm that comes from a source and in a manner we know. So how could we not be powerless to do it from whence we know not, in a manner we are not aware of?" And it is enough for you to reflect on the saying of Allah ﷻ: "It might be that you despise something but it is good for you, or that you love something and it is harmful to you, and Allah ﷻ knows and you do not know" (Q2:216).

How many times did you desire something that He kept away from you, which caused inner hatred and rancor to enter your heart and your self and thus you became agitated (at Him!) — only that when He unveiled for you the result or outcome of that thing you understood that He ﷻ was all along looking after you with His excellent care in a way you could not fathom, and choosing for you in a way you did not know? How despicable is the seeker (*murid*) without understanding, a slave who does not surrender to his Master! So be as the poet said:

"After how many things did I desire

*which You chose to avert from me,
and You have not stopped being
more kind and merciful to me than myself!
I have resolved that I not have a thought occur to my heart,
except that I place You before it in consideration,
and that You never see me in what You have forbidden me, for You
are in my heart Most Great and Immensely Tremendous!"*

It was related of someone that if he were afflicted or tried with something, he would say: 'Good, God willing.' On a certain night a fox came and ate his rooster, and when he was told about it, he only said: 'Good.' Then in the same night his dog died, and he said, 'Good will come out of it, God-willing.' Then his donkey died, and he again said, 'Good.' So his family were very annoyed with his repeating that word without any apparent sadness showing upon him. Later that night, a band of raiders came to his town and killed all the people there, except him and his family. That was because the raiders could only find out where a certain family lived from the crowing of the rooster, or the barking of the dog, or the braying of the donkey, since it was night and they could not see. So the deaths of his animals saved him and his family from being killed. So glorified be the Wise Regulator of affairs!

The servant does not witness the excellence of the *tadbir* of Allah except after the outcome of a situation is revealed to him. As for the elect of the servants of Allah, those who understand by Allah ﷻ they witness first hand the excellence of the *tadbir* of Allah before the end of the situation, and they occupy varying groups and stages in regards to that witnessing.

Of them are those who made their opinion of Allah ﷻ beautiful and good, so they submitted fully to Him when He made them used to the beauty of His dealings and the existence of His hidden subtle mercy and kindness.

Of them are those who made their opinion of Allah ﷻ beautiful and perfect after they realized that their zeal, *tadbir*, or contesting (the Divine Will) did not prevent what was decreed already allotted for them.

Of them are those who perfected their opinion of Allah ﷻ due to His saying to the Prophet ﷺ: "I am with My servant according to his opinion of Me." So if they had a good opinion of Him, He would be good to them, according to their opinion of Him. And Allah ﷻ has made the way to His bounties and grants easy for the believers, since He was with them according to the opinion they had of Him (namely, that He is Generous). He said: "Allah, desires for you ease and does not desire for you any hardship" (Q2:185).

And the stage which is more exalted than all of these stages is the complete submission, selfless utter surrender, and commitment to Him, only because the Real deserves that (and it is His right), and not because of any motive or reason originating from the slave. As for the first group, they are not free from indulgence in entertaining their wishes, in that they only submit sincerely when He first treats them kindly (since that is what they are used to), so their submission is dependent upon His prior giving. And if that is not the case, they will not submit fully. The second group is similar, since leaving *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ only because you are unable to have an influence in causing things to happen, does not mean you are leaving it for Allah. For if this servant knew that his *tadbir* could cause something to take place, then he would not abandon it. As for the one who submits to Allah and perfects his opinion of Him so that He could be for him as his opinion dictates, he is only striving for his own selfish desires, looking after his own portions, fearing for it lest he not arrive at what he wants. As for the one who surrenders to Allah and perfects his opinion of Allah due to the Immensity of His Divinity and the Qualities of his Lordship, then this is the servant who has truly hit the mark. It is more

appropriate that these are the ones referred to when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah has servants whose one glorification (of Allah) is weightier than the mountain of Uhud."

Indeed, Allah ﷻ has entered into a covenant with all of His servants that they cease all *tadbir* with Him, as He said: "And your Lord took forth from the children of 'Adam, from their loins, their seeds (or essences), and made them witness concerning themselves, saying, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they answered, 'Yes indeed, we witness— (Q7:172). Their agreeing that He is their Lord (*rabb*) calls for their abandoning and ceasing of their own *tadbir* with Him. And this contract was before the creation of their selves, which are the places of agitation and which contend with Allah ﷻ in *tadbir*. Had the servant remained in that previous state, which is the unveiling of the covering and being in the Divine Presence, it would be impossible for him to have any *tadbir* for himself alongside of Allah ﷻ. When the veil was lowered, agitation and *tadbir* came to be. For that reason, the people of direct gnosis of Allah, those who contemplate the secrets of the spiritual dominion (*malakut*), have no *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ for themselves. Their being face to face with Allah utterly destroyed the resolutions of their *tadbir*; and how could the servant in the Presence of Allah have any *tadbir* with Allah, when he witnesses the Tremendous Greatness and Immense Majesty of Allah ﷻ.

Section One

The consequence of *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ.

Know that self-management and choice are a great danger and affliction.

We reflected upon the story of 'Adam peace be upon him and found that what caused him to eat of the forbidden tree was his *tadbir* for himself. Shaytan said to 'Adam and Hawa peace be upon them, as is reported in the Qur'an: "Allah has forbidden you both the tree only because (by eating it) you would become like angels or of those who live forever" (Q7:20). So 'Adam peace be upon him thought to himself that eternity with his Beloved is the highest aim, and his going from the human state to the angelic state of being, either because the angelic state is superior or because 'Adam peace be upon him thought that the angelic state was superior. So when he made this *tadbir* with himself, he went to the tree and ate from it. That was only out of his own planning, whereas the desire of the Real was to cause him to descend to the earth by that action, and make him His Representative (*khalifa*) on it. It was a fall in form, but an ascent in meaning. For this reason Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "By Allah, Allah did not place 'Adam on earth to demean his status or make him deficient, but rather to perfect him." And 'Adam peace be upon him still continues to ascend to Allah ﷻ, one moment in the ascension of nearness and election, and one moment in the ascension of humility and lowliness, and in reality the latter is more complete.

Every believer must believe that the prophets and messengers do not move from a state except to a more perfect state. Understand from that what Allah ﷻ says: "And indeed the end is better than the beginning" (Q93:4). Ibn Atiyya commented: "In other words, the final state is better than the first." If you know this, then know that the Real possesses the Will and the *tadbir*, and that His *tadbir* came before and willed that the earth would be occupied with the children of 'Adam peace be upon him, and that they would be as He wills, "Some of them excelling, and others clear oppressors of themselves" (Q37:113). Among that which His Wisdom decreed was that this intention must be completed and manifested in the visible world. So Allah ﷻ willed that his eating from the tree would cause his descent to earth, which would cause the manifestation of the degree of vicegerency, which He granted to him. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "The noblest of misdeeds was the one that bequeathed the Divine vicegerency and established the way of repentance for those after him until the Day of Rising." Also, his descent to the earth was by the command of the Decree of Allah before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him also said: "By Allah, Allah ﷻ indeed sent 'Adam down upon the earth before He created him, because He said: 'I will place upon the earth a representative'" (Q2:30). Therefore, the eating of the

tree, and his descent to earth, and Allah's ennobling him through the vicegerency and leadership, are from the excellence of the *tadbir* of Allah for 'Adam peace be upon him.

Section Two

Allah's providential care for 'Adam peace be upon him

Let us now delineate the benefits and lessons given to 'Adam peace be upon him in this event, so that we can know that the people of election have with Allah ﷻ a special state not shared with other than them, and that Allah ﷻ has for them a *tadbir* that He does not have for other than them. In 'Adam's eating of the tree, peace be upon him, and his descent to the earth there are many beneficial lessons. Among those lessons:

That when 'Adam and Hawa' peace be upon them were in Paradise, Allah ﷻ made Himself known to them through provision, gifts, blessings, and beneficence. So the Real willed (from His secret hidden tender mercy in His *tadbir*) that they would eat of the tree, so that He could make Himself known to them through forbearance, covering-up of deeds, forgiveness, relenting, and choosing.

As for forbearance, that is apparent in the fact that He did not immediately punish them for their action. For the forbearing is the one who does not punish you immediately for what you did but withholds and indulges you until your appointed term, when He either takes you to His graceful blessing and pardon, or to the awesome domination and force of His vengeance.

Secondly, Allah ﷻ made Himself known to them through His attribute of covering-up and hiding. For when they ate from the tree and their private parts were exposed to them because the garments of Paradise fell from them, He covered their shame and body with the leaves of Paradise. "And they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies (to cover their shame)" (Q7:22). That was from the existence of His covering-up.

Thirdly, Allah ﷻ wanted to make 'Adam know of His choosing Him, and to form from that choosing two stations: returning to Him repentant, and guidance from Him. In this way Allah ﷻ desired to make Himself known to 'Adam peace be upon him through His direct choosing and His previous providential care for him. So He decreed the eating of the tree, but did not make his eating a cause for His leaving him in neglect, nor the cutting off of His support from Him. In fact, in that was the manifestation of His great love and care for him, as it is commonly said:

*"For those for whom the providential care has gone before,
their offenses will not harm them in the least."*

It is not true love that is broken by opposition or disobedience, but true love is what remains for you whether you are compliant or a contender. As for the saying of Allah ﷻ "His Lord chose him (for His Grace)" (Q20:122), that does not mean that the choosing was new or that it came after, but that it was there even before he was. As for what happened after the sin, that was the outward manifestation of the effect of the election of Allah for him. And that is the reason for His saying: "His Lord chose him..." And part of that effect was the facilitating for him of his turning to Allah, and the provision of direct guidance. So in this verse are three affairs: the choosing, the repentance that results from that choosing, and the divine guidance that is a result of that repentance...so understand!

When He made him descend to the Earth He made Himself known to him through His wisdom, as He made Himself known to him in Paradise by the splendors of His power. For this world is the place of intermediaries and secondary causes (*asbab*). So when 'Adam peace be upon him descended to the earth he learned farming and planting and other skills needed for his survival; and all this so that

Allah ﷻ could make real His promise to him before his action when He warned him: "So let him (Shaytan) not cause you both to leave the Garden so that you are loaded in misery" (Q20:117).

The intended meaning of His saying 'misery' (*tashqa*) is the tiring of the outer body, not the misery that is the opposite of happiness and felicity. And the proof of that is in His saying 'or you might end up miserable', and not 'you might both end up miserable.' Because the strenuous obligations and tiring duties are for men, and not women, as He said: "Men are caretakers of women due to what they have been favored with from Allah" (Q4:34). Had He intended by 'misery' the separation from Him or the existence of veils, He would have said, 'or you will both be miserable.' His singling out 'Adam *peace be upon him* in this address is a proof that the misery is not a separation or distancing. Even if it had been revealed in that manner, we would have interpreted it in a most respectful way, and explained it to mean the tiring of the outward body in its obligations.

Another beneficial lesson:

Know that his eating from the tree was not out of opposition or disobedient transgression, but was either out of forgetfulness of the command not to eat from it, as some point to, because of the saying of Allah ﷻ "We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant with 'Adam but he forgot, and We found on his part no firm resolve" (Q20:115); or, that he ate from it while heedful of the command, but probably did it anyway because he was told: "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you would become angels or such beings as live forever" (Q7:20). So out of his love for Allah go and passionate ardor for Him, he wanted what would make him dwell eternally next to Him, remaining with Him, or what would make him an angel. Because 'Adam *peace be upon him* saw the nearness of the angelic state to Allah he therefore wanted to eat from the tree so that he could attain to the angelic rank, since he conceived it would be better (than his current state of being) — especially after Shaytan told him "I swear to you both that I am giving you sincere advice" (Q7:21). He later said: "I never thought that anyone would swear by Allah and lie." But Shaytan "led them on in error and deceit..." (Q7:22).

Another Beneficial Lesson:

Know that whenever 'Adam *peace be upon him* would eat something, he would never have a need to relieve himself. Instead, he would perspire with a perspiration that would smell like musk, just like the inhabitants of Paradise. However, when he ate from the forbidden tree, he felt that he needed to relieve himself. So it was said to him: "O 'Adam, where? In the groves, or on the shores of the rivers? Descend to the earth wherein such a thing would be appropriate," So if the sin (in his excrement) would have an effect on the Garden, then how could the sin not affect its perpetrator? So understand!

Subtle point: Know that everything forbidden is a tree, and the Garden of Paradise is the Presence of Allah ﷻ so it is said to the 'Adam of your heart, and the Eve of your self, "Do not come near this tree or else you oppress yourselves."

As for 'Adam *peace be upon him*, he was specifically surrounded by special care, when he ate of the tree and descended to earth to become a Representative. But you, on the other hand, if you eat from the tree of forbidden things, fall to the Earth of Separation from Allah ﷻ, so understand! If you eat from the tree of prohibition, you are taken out of the Garden of Obedience to the Earth of Separation, and your heart is made miserable. Because misery is found at the moment of the heart's separation, and not the self's, because in that moment of separation are found the self's passions and desires, and its diving fully into heedless forgetfulness.

Section Three

How Allah ﷻ made Himself known to 'Adam peace be upon him:

Know that Allah ﷻ made Himself known to 'Adam through His originating him, so he called Him: 'o Powerful' (Ya Qadir)!

Then, He made Himself known to him through His special Will, so he called Him: 'o One Who Wills' (Ya Murid)!

Then He made Himself known to him through His decision of prohibiting the tree, so he called Him: 'O Judge' (Ya Hakim)!

Then He decreed that he should eat from it so he called Him: 'O Irresistible Compeller' (Ya Qahir)!

Then He did not punish him immediately when he ate, so he called Him: 'O Forbearing' (Ya Hakim)!

Then He did not humiliate him in that so he called Him: 'O Coverer of sins' (Ya Sattar)!

Then He relented to him after that so he called Him: 'O Relenting' (Ya Tawwab)!

Then He caused him to see that his eating from the tree did not separate him from His great Love so he called Him: 'O Lover' (Ya Wadud)!

Then He caused him to descend to the earth, and facilitated for him the means of his living, so he called Him: 'O Tenderly Merciful' (Ya Latif)!

Then He strengthened him in preparation for what He would demand of him so he called Him: 'O Helper' (Ya Main)!

Then He caused him to behold the secret behind the eating and the prohibition and the descent, so he called Him: 'O Wise' (Ya Hakim)!

Then He gave him victory over his enemy (Shaytan) and his tricks, so he called Him: 'O Grantor of Victory' (Ya Nasir)!

Then He helped him in the difficulties of servitude, so he called Him: 'O Helper' (Ya DHahir)!

Therefore, He did not cause him to descend to earth except to perfect for him His authority (*tasrif*), and to establish for him the duties of His appointment (*taklif*). So when these two forms of servitude were perfected in him, the Grant of Allah ﷻ was magnified upon him, and His Generosity to him became abundant...So understand!

Section Four

The Station of Servitude ('Ubudiyyah):

Know that the most sublime abiding station in which the servant could be established is the station of servitude; and know also that all the other stations of the Path are a way to it, 'serving' it. The proof that servitude is the noblest of stations are the sayings of Allah ﷻ: "Glorified be the One Who

made His servant ascend by night..." (Q17:1), and: "And what We made to descend upon Our servant..." (Q8:41), and: "A recital of the mercy of your Lord, on His servant Zakariyya..." (Q19:2), and: "Yet when the servant of Allah stands forth to invoke Him." (Q72:19). And when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was given the choice between being a servant-prophet or an angel-prophet, he chose servanthood to Allah the Exalted; and in this is an indication that it is indeed the most blessed of stations, and the greatest means to draw near to Allah. And he said: "I am a servant, I do not eat while reclining. I am indeed a servant of Allah, I eat as the servants eat."

In reference to the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "I am the master of all the children of 'Adam, and I say this without boasting," we heard our Shaykh Abu-l Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say: "Meaning, I do not boast of that leadership but rather the pride is because of my servitude to Allah, and that is the purpose of existence." Allah ﷻ said: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Q51:56). Worship (*ibada*) is the outer form of servitude, and servitude is its spirit.

If you understand this, then understand that the spirit of servitude and its secret is to abandon self-choice (*ikhtiyar*), and not to contest the Divine Decrees. It is clear from this that the reality of servitude is the ceasing of *tadbir* and personal choice alongside of the Lordship. Furthermore, if the station of servitude, which is the noblest of the stations of the Path, is not complete without the ceasing of *tadbir*, then this means the servant is obliged to abandon it, and to walk the path of utter submission and commitment (*tafwid*) to Allah ﷻ. By this he can reach the Perfect Station and the noblest pathway.

It is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ heard Abu Bakr reading the Qur'an in a soft, low voice, and he heard 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him reading it in a raised, loud voice. So he said to Abu Bakr: "Why do you lower your voice in reading?" and he replied: "The One I speak to can hear me." And he said to 'Umar, "Why do you raise your voice?" and he answered, "To wake the sleeping, and drive away the Shaytan." So he said to Abu Bakr: "Raise your voice a little," and to 'Umar: "Lower your voice a little." In this respect, our Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas said: "The Prophet ﷺ desired to take each of them out of what they wanted to what he wanted."

Reflect strongly on this hadith, and you will come to know from it that leaving personal will is the greatest worship. Because both Abu Bakr and Umar did what they were told to do, leaving what they personally desired for what he desired, purposefully following him.

Section Five

The *Tadbir* of the Children of Isra'il:

Know that when the Children of 'Isra'il entered the wilderness, and were provided with the manna and quails, (for Allah ﷻ chose that as a provision to sustain them with, coming from the spring of His Generosity, without toil or hardship on their part), their unrefined opaque selves reverted to the familiarity of their habits. They became absent from witnessing the *tadbir* of Allah for them and preferred what they themselves were used to eating. So they said, "Call upon your Lord that He may bring to us that which grows from the earth, from its pot-herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, and its onions. He (Musa) said, 'Will you exchange what is better for what is worse? Go back to Egypt, and you shall find what you want!' They were covered with humiliation and degradation, and drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah..." (Q2:61). That is due to the fact that they left what Allah ﷻ chose for them for what they wanted for themselves, so they were rebuked and reproached in this manner. The apparent meaning of what he said was 'Do you exchange the manna and quails for garlic and onions and lentils, when their taste is not the same, and one is much easier to come upon than the other?' And the secret meaning of what he said was: 'Do you exchange what Allah desires for you, which is better, for what you desire for yourselves, which is worse?' Go back to Egypt, for what you want can

only be found in the cities.' The secret meaning of that: 'Go down from the heaven of commitment to Allah and the perfection of His choice and *tadbir* for you to the earth of your *tadbir* and choosing for yourselves, characterized by humiliation and degradation, coming from your *tadbir* and choosing alongside Allah for yourselves.

Had this community of Muslims been situated in the wilderness, they would not have said what the children of 'Isra'il said, due to the translucency of their lights, and to the penetration of their innermost secrets. Do you not see that in the beginning of their affair the Children of 'Isra'il said to Musa peace be upon him (which was the cause of their wandering for 40 years): "Go, you and your Lord, and fight the battle, while we remain here and watch" (Q5:24); and they said in the end of their affair, "Supplicate your Lord for our sake..." (Q2:61)? So they refused in the beginning to comply with the orders of Allah ﷻ, and in the end, they chose for themselves orders of Allah ﷻ, and in the end, they chose for themselves what Allah did not choose for them. Many incidents of theirs that were reported in the Revelation show how far they were from the source of the Reality. As, for example, when they asked Musa to: "Show us Allah openly!" (Q4:153), or after they left the Red Sea and their feet had not yet dried from the wet sea-ground they walked on, they saw the people on the other side devoting themselves to idols they had with them, and they asked Musa peace be upon him: 'Give us gods as they have gods.' And they were as Musa rightly stated, "Indeed an ignorant people" (Q7:138).

Similarly, Allah ﷻ said: "When We shook the Mount over them, as if it were a canopy, and they thought it was going to fall on them, We said 'Hold firmly to what We have given you....Q7:171).

This community of 'Islam has, over their hearts, the mountains of Divine Awe and Tremendous Immensity, so they have held firmly to the Scripture with the strength of faith, and they were strengthened and helped in that, and were protected from the worship of the 'calf' because Allah ﷻ chose this nation and chose for it, and praised it in His saying: "You are the best of communities brought forth for the people" (Q3:110), and His saying: "And as such We have made you to be people of the center, (or middle)" (Q2:143), meaning balanced and righteous.

Chapter Five

The Abandonment of Tadbir is the Noblest of the Divine Miraculous Gifts (Karamat)

Summary

In this chapter the author calls the reader to cease self-management and self-direction, and explains why this is the noblest of the Divine charismatic gifts which are given to the friends (Sawliya3) of Allah ﷻ. He explains how, when one directs his or her aspirations to Allah and is content with His management, at that point Allah Himself takes charge of his safety, protection and well being.

Text

You have now understood from what preceded that *tadbir* and personal choice are from the greatest of evils and sins. So if you desire that Allah ﷻ choose for you, then cease choosing for Him. And if you similarly desire that He be for you with His Perfect *tadbir*, then do not pretentiously claim

any *tadbir* for yourself alongside His. And if you wish to attain the Desired Goal (*murad*), then that is by virtue of not having any personal will (*murad*) with Him. For that reason, when it was said to Bayazid Bastami may Allah be pleased with him, "What do you want?" he said: "I want not to want." So he did not wish for anything from Allah ﷻ or ask anything from Him except the ceasing of his will alongside of Him, because he knew it was the greatest miraculous gift (*kararma*), and the greatest of means in drawing near to Him.

Sometimes an outward divine gift (*kararma*) is bestowed on one chosen, but the residue of *tadbir* is still hidden within him. The true divine charismatic gift that is hidden and perfect is: full abandonment of *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ, and commitment to the decision of Allah ﷻ. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "There are two divine graces which are all-encompassing, gathering in them every good. They are: 1) the *kararma* of faith from the abundance of certainty and direct eye witnessing, and 2) the *kararma* of religious works based on imitation and following, and on the avoidance of pretentious claims and hypocritical deceptions. So whoever is given these two, but then yearns after other than them, is a liar, forging his own servanthood, or greatly mistaken in his understanding of correct knowledge and action. The possessor of every *kararma* that does not come with contentment from Allah ﷻ and with Allah ﷻ is either led on step-by-step to deception, or is deficient, or destroyed."

So know from this that the *kararma* is never truly a *kararma* until it comes with contentment with Allah ﷻ and one of the conditions of this contentment is the leaving *tadbir* with Him, and the ceasing of self-choosing before His Hands.

As for those who say: "Bayazid's remark that he wanted not to want was really a want," this is the saying of those without gnostic knowledge. The truth of the matter is that Bayazid desired that he have no personal desire or will, since Allah ﷻ wanted for him and all other servants that they have no personal will or desire alongside of Him. Therefore, in his desire that he not desire, he is conforming to what Allah ﷻ desires from him. For this reason, Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him also said: "All choices and orderings of the Shari'ah are the choosing of Allah ﷻ, with which you have nothing to do. So listen and obey. This is the place of divine understanding and direct knowledge from the Presence, and is the ground for receiving the science of reality that descends from Allah ﷻ, for anyone who is mature."

What the Shaykh really means by these words is that all of the choices of the Divine Law do not nullify or invalidate one's choosing the station of servitude, which is founded on the abandonment of personal choice. This is so that a deficient intellect will not be deceived into imagining that the various religious practices and obligations and daily occupations, and the choice of which of the extra voluntary actions to perform, take the servant off the carpet of servitude because he thinks he has 'chosen.' So the Shaykh made it clear that the various choices, provisions, and orderings of the religious Law have nothing to do with you (in the personal sense). You are only requested to leave what you decide for yourself and what you choose for it, not to leave the *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ, and His Messenger ﷺ.

For you will come to understand that Bayazid did not desire except that Allah ﷻ desired that from him. Therefore this desire did not take him out of servitude. You will also have to come to realize, from that which preceded, that the way of arriving to Allah ﷻ is through the effacement of personal choice, and the rejection of personal will. Shaykh ash-Shadhdhuli may Allah be pleased with him said: "The friend (wall) does not attain to arrival to Allah while he has any *tadbir* and personal choice." And I heard our Shaykh Abu-I 'Abbas al-Mursi may Allah be pleased with him say: "The servant does not attain to Allah until the desire for arrival (to Allah ﷻ) is cut off and gone from him." He means (and Allah ﷻ knows better) that this cutting off arises from courtesy, and not from-becoming-weary and bored. Or, he means that if he witnesses that the moment of his arrival is near, then he becomes empty

of seeing himself worthy and deserving of that. So the desire for arrival is gone from him out of courtesy and seeing himself unworthy, not out of boredom, nor out of idleness and ease (as if he thinks he is finished), nor out of preoccupation with other than Allah ﷻ. (at that critical moment).

So if you desire illumination (*tanwir*), then you must cease any *tadbir*, and travel to Allah ﷻ as they have traveled, and you will attain to what they have attained. Walk upon their road, follow their way, and "Throw down your staff" (Q27:10) for "This is the sacred valley" (Q20:12).

*"O caller of this caravan, it has left quickly,
while we remain seated here; so what are you doing?
Are you pleased that you should remain behind after them,
a victim overcome by wishes, suffering almost to death by passion?
And this, the tongue of the universe, says plainly and clearly,
that all of the existent beings (in it) separate and cut one off.
And that none sees the face of the Goal
save the one who throws off all 'other'
and whom passionate appetites do not deceive.
Whoever sees the things and the Real before them, then he,
the created, is made absent in and by the One Who creates.
In His valley are sublime lights for he who leaves and goes to Him,
and the realization of divine secrets for he who returns.
Arise and see the worlds and the light enveloping them,
for the dawn of your coming near (to Him)
has arrived and risen.
Be His slave and give up the reigns to His Decree, and
beware of tadbir for it contains no benefit (for you).
Will you decide to make tadbir
while other than you makes the decisions?
Do you then contend with the judgments of Allah?
The effacement of desire and all personal will
is the highest goal;
do you not hear?
In such a way the ancestors traveled and so they arrived,
so upon their footsteps let every follower voyage.
And for himself let everyone who seeks (the Goal) cry,
while no flashes of guiding light
have flashed from his Beloved.
And for himself let everyone who cries, cry,
shall a moment pass him by while he is lost in play?"*

Section One

Satisfaction with the *Tadbir* of Allah ﷻ

Know, may Allah ﷻ grant you success, that Allah ﷻ has servants who have left *tadbir* with Allah through His educating and refining them with His courtesy, and through His knowledge that He taught them. So the divinely granted lights have abolished the resolutions of their *tadbir*, and their gnosis and secrets have caused the mountains of their personal volition to crumble. By that they came to occupy the degree of contentment (*rida*), and experienced the blissful delight in that station. Then they sought the aid of Allah ﷻ, crying out to Him, because they feared that the sweetness of contentment might preoccupy them, or cause them to incline towards it and repose in it. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him related the following story:

"In the beginning of my career (as a Sufi), I would decide for myself which of the devotions and pious deeds I should perform. Sometimes I would say to myself, 'Go to the wilderness and the wastelands for retreat,' and at other times I would say, 'Go back to the cities and towns, to accompany the righteous and learned scholars.' Then a certain friend of the friends of Allah ﷺ (awliya) was mentioned to me as living in a cave of a certain mountain, so I headed there and arrived at nightfall. I did not want to enter without courtesy, so I stayed at the entrance. I then heard him say: "O Allah ﷻ, verily some people have besought You that men should be brought in their presence and be subject to them, and they were satisfied with that from You. O Allah, I pray to You for their removal from me and for their shunning of me that I may have no refuge except in You." When I heard this I said to myself, 'O self, look to what sea this Shaykh takes from!' When morning came, I came in and greeted him, and questioned him about his state. He said, 'I complain to Allah ﷻ about the coolness and sweetness of contentment and submission, as you complain from the heat of *tadbir* and choice.' So I said, 'As for my complaining against the heat of *tadbir* and choosing, I have tasted it and am now in it; but as for your complaining against the coolness of contentment, I do not comprehend that.' So he said, 'I fear that their sweetness might preoccupy me from Allah ﷻ.' Then I said to him, 'I heard you yesterday saying such and such (and he repeated the supplication).' He then smiled, and said to me, 'My son, instead of saying 'Cause the hearts of Your creatures to be submissive to me', say, 'Be for me, O Allah'. Do you imagine that if they (the creatures) are for you, that would make you independent in any way? What cowardice is this?"

A beneficial lesson:

Know that the destruction of the son of Sayyidina Nuh peace be upon him was because of his returning to *tadbir* for himself, and from the lack of contentment with the *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ, and what He chose for Nuh peace be upon him and those with him in the Ark. Sayyidina Nuh peace be upon him said to him, "O my son, come ride with us, and do not be with those who cover up the Truth." The son replied, "I will find refuge in some mountain which will save me from the water." Nuh peace be upon him said: "This day nothing can save from the command of Allah ﷻ, except those on whom He has mercy" (Q11:42-43). Meaning, he sought refuge in the mountain of his intellect, and that physical mountain to which he betook himself was a picture or projection of that meaning. His end was as Allah ﷻ described: "The wave came between them, and he became among those who drowned in the Flood."

He drowned outwardly in the water of the flood, and inwardly in deprivation. So reflect deeply upon this, O servant. If the waves of the Decrees dash over you, do not go back to the mountain of your intellect (which is false), lest you drown in the sea of separation; but go back to the ship of reliance on Allah ﷻ, and trust in Him, for, "Whoever trusts in Allah ﷻ, He is enough for him" (Q65:3), and, "If anyone seeks protection with Allah ﷻ he has been led to a straight path" (Q3:101). If you do that, then the ship of safety will land you on the 'Judiyy' (Q11:44) of security, and you will then descend from the ship with the Peace of Nearness and the Blessing of Arrival upon you, and upon 'nations' with you, (i.e. the worlds of your being). Understand this and do not be heedless, and worship your Lord and do not be of the ignorant.

You have come to understand that the dropping of *tadbir* and choice is the most important obligation for the people of certainty, and is furthermore that which the worshippers seek, and is the noblest ornament of the Gnostic knowers ('arifun). I asked one of the gnostics, while we were at the Ka'aba, and said: "Which of the two ways will you take in your return?" He said, "I have a habit with Allah ﷻ that my personal will and volition do not go ahead of my feet." One of the Shaykhs said: "If the people of Paradise entered Paradise, and the people of Hell entered Hell, and I was left, it would not make a difference to me as to which place my ending would be." This is the state of the servant whose choice and will have been erased, so he has no intended desire with Allah ﷻ except what He desires. One of the righteous ancestors said, "I have awoken with my desires in the places of the Decrees of Allah ﷻ." Abu Hafs al-Haddad may Allah be pleased with him said: "For 40 years, Allah ﷻ

has not placed me in a state which I have hated, and He has not moved me to another which I have not been content with." And others have said: "For 40 years, I desired that I not desire, so that I leave what I desire, and I have not found what I desired." These are hearts that Allah ﷻ has taken upon Himself to care for and protect. Did you not hear His words: "Indeed, you have no authority over My servants" (Q15:42).

Their realization in the station of servitude has denied them any personal choice alongside His Lordship, or that they could be constant in perpetrating sin, or regularly associate with indecency and shameful acts. Allah ﷻ has also said: "He has no authority over those who have faith and who rely upon their Lord"(Q16:99). Therefore, from whence could the whisperings of *tadbir* come, or the existence of turbidity assail, for those hearts over which the Shaytan has no control? In this verse is a clarification of the fact that the Shaytan has no authority over whoever rectifies his faith in Allah ﷻ and trusts in Him.

Shaytan comes to you in one of two ways:

- he might make you doubt the doctrine and belief in it, or
- he might cause you to lean to and depend on the creation.

As for doubt in the doctrine, faith nullifies that. And as for the heart's reliance on the creation, trust in Him purifies it of that.

Section Two

The protection of Allah ﷻ of the believers and His removing them from the darkness of *tadbir*

Know that involuntary thoughts of *tadbir* may come to the believer, but Allah ﷻ does not abandon him to them, nor does He leave him with them. Have you not heard the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Allah is the Protecting Friend (*Wali*) of those who have faith; He brings them out of the darkness into the light" (Q2:257). So Allah ﷻ removes the believers from the darkness of *tadbir* to the illumination of the light of commitment (*tafwid*), and hurls the Truth of His stability upon the falsehood of their agitation and anxiety, so it (the Truth) quakes its pillars, and crumbles its building. As Allah ﷻ said, "No, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it obliterates it, and behold, falsehood perishes!" (Q21:18).

For the involuntary thoughts (*khatir*) of agitation and *tadbir* which come over the believer only pass, and do not remain, and are evanescent with no essential being to them. This is because the light of faith has established itself in the hearts of the believers, and its rays have caused their egos to become extinct. So their hearts have been filled with its illumination and their breasts have been expanded by its brilliance. So the faith which has established itself in their hearts has refused to allow other than it to dwell within them. The arrival and passing over (*warid*) of the suggestion of *tadbir* is only like a slumber over hearts in which the passing through of the suggestion of *tadbir* is possible, after which the hearts awaken and the thought passes away like a dream.

Allah ﷻ said: "Indeed those who guard themselves for Allah (have *taqwa*) — when a passing impulse (*taif*) from the Shaytan touches them — bring (Allah) to remembrance (*tadhakkaru*), and at once they see clearly" (Q7:201).

(Translator's Note: the word *taif* has literal meanings of fantasy, vision, apparition, or any other such imaginary occurrence that hovers around the mind or before one's sight. From here on, I will leave it as *taif*).

This verse has many beneficial lessons:

1. His saying: "Indeed those who guard themselves for Allah (have *taqwa*) — when a passing impulse (*taif*) from Shaytan touches them — bring to remembrance (*tadhakkaru*), and at once they see clearly" shows that they are essentially safe from that *taif*, even if they are exposed to it. These occurrences that happen every now and then expose to full view what is deposited in their hearts from the depositories of faith.

2. He said: 'If the *taif* touches them (*massa*),' and not 'if it grabs hold of them' (*masaka*) or 'takes them' (*akhadha*). The 'touch' is only an outer contact without any mastery or control over what is touched. So this expression means that the *taif* of passionate desire and caprice has no control over their hearts, but barely touches them without taking hold of them, as it does with the disbelieving infidels. That is because Shaytan has already got the better of the disbelievers, and steals from the hearts of the believers, watching them until their intellects sleep from guarding their hearts. When they wake from their slumber, the reinforcements and armies of humility, poverty before Allah, and asking for forgiveness are sent to their hearts, so they take back from the Shaytan what he embezzled from them.

3. His saying: 'When a *taif* from Shaytan touches them.' The allusion here to *taif* shows that the Shaytan is incapable of coming to the hearts that are constantly awake and watchfully alert. For he only sends the *taif* of forgetfulness and caprice upon the hearts at the moment they are asleep and heedless; and no *taif* can come upon one whose heart does not sleep.

4. He said, 'When a *taif* touches them,' and did not say, 'a passing inspiration' (*warid*) from Shaytan, or any other similar thing. For the *taif* has no constancy or essential being to it. It is only an imaginary form (*mithal*), with no existential reality. So Allah ﷻ informed us that this does not harm the people of *taqwa*, for to them what the Shaytan causes to come and hover momentarily over them is like what one sees in a dream; if one awakens, it is gone.

5. He said: 'When a thought from Shaytan touches them, they bring to remembrance (*tadhakkaru*).' He did not say, 'they remember' (*dhakaru*), indicating that the remembrance (*dhikr*) does not do away with forgetfulness while the heart is at the same time heedless. What does away with it is *tadbakkur* (an interactive, concentrated *dhikr* combined with contemplation) and *i'tibar* (to take a warning or lesson from active consideration), even if the person is not remembering with the tongue. For the place of *dhikr* is the tongue, and the place of *tadhakkur* is the heart. Therefore, since the *taif* comes over the heart and not the tongue, what expels it is the *tadhakkur*, which takes the tails place and brings its actions to naught.

6. His saying, 'they bring to remembrance' (*tadhakkaru*), without mentioning what exactly they bring to remembrance, such as Paradise, Hell, the Punishment, or other such things. And this is for a sublime reason! Namely: the *tadhakkur* which erases the *taif* of capricious desire and its effects from the hearts of the people of *taqwa* is according to their level of certainty and god-wariness. This includes the Prophets, Messengers, the Friends, the utterly sincere, the righteous and the commonality of Muslims. The *taqwa* of every one is according to his state and station, and similarly the *tadhakkur* of anyone depends on their station. If Allah ﷻ had mentioned a certain kind of *tadhakkur* in the verse, none would be included in His saying except the people of that kind of *tadhakkur*. For example, if He said: 'Indeed the people of *taqwa*, if a *taif* from Shaytan touches them, bring the punishment to remembrance,' then those who bring the reward to remembrance would be excluded from His saying. So the Real willed that He not mention any specific kind of *tadhakkur* so that all the levels of believers would be included in the verse... So understand!

7. He said: 'behold, they see clearly, (*idha hum mubsirun*)' and did not say, 'they bring to remembrance and consequently see clearly (*fa-absaru*),' or 'they bring to remembrance and then (*thumma*) see clearly,' or 'they bring to remembrance and (*waw*) see clearly.' As for His leaving off the 'and' (*waw*), that is because the 'and' would not mean that the clear sight arises from the bringing to remembrance.

Rather, the intended meaning is that the bringing to remembrance causes the clear sight, so He left 'and' out. This causes the servants to be desirous of it, seeking it.

As for His leaving out 'then' (thumma), that is because it has a similar meaning to 'and,' i.e., there is no indication in it of cause and effect. Also, the 'then' indicates the occurrence of the second phenomena after a period of time. This means Allah ﷻ wanted us to understand (by not including 'then') that the clear sight is not made to come much later than their remembrance.

Furthermore, He did not use 'fa' (thus, hence) because it indicates succession, coming after, etc., but this is not His intended meaning. The wording of His saying, 'They bring to remembrance, and behold, they see clearly' indicates that it is as if they never left that state of clear insight. So He praises them for this and manifests what grants He has provided them. This is as if one says: 'Zayd brought the matter to remembrance, and it was correct (*fa idha hiya sahiha*): In other words, it has always been correct, but it is now seen as correct from his new knowledge about it.

Such are the people of *taqwa*. They never stop seeing clearly, but at the moment of the temporary passage of the *taif* of caprice over them, it covers the constancy of light in them from their clear sight. So when they awake, the cloud of heedlessness leaves, and the sun of clear insight shines in them.

8. In this verse and those like it, there is a liberation and expansion for the god-wary, and a tender mercy for the believers. For if He had said, 'Indeed, those of *taqwa* are not touched by *taif* from the Shaytan,' then no one would be included in that except the people of Divine Protection who do not sin. So Allah ﷻ willed that He expand the circles of His mercy. This is so that He may teach you by His saying that the arrival of the *taif* upon them does not nullify the attribute of *taqwa* for them, on the condition that they be as He described, going back quickly to *tadhakkur* and returning to Allah ﷻ with clear insight.

Other verses similar to this one in their expansion of the hope of the servants include His saying: "Allah loves those who turn to Him and those who purify themselves" (Q2:222), He did not say, "Allah loves those who do not sin," for Allah ﷻ knows that His servants are prone to sin and to forgetting, and other such results which come from the original human formation being a combination of differing, essentially opposing substances. Allah ﷻ said: "Allah wishes to lighten upon you your difficulties, for man was created weak" (Q4:28). Some of the people of knowledge said this weakness means that man is not able to control himself when passionate desires overcome him. "He knows you well when He forms you from the earth, and when you are hidden in your mothers' wombs" (Q53:32). For that reason, He opened the door of repentance for them and directed them to it, calling them to it and promising them His acceptance if they repent, and His approaching them if they turn to Him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "All the children of Adam are errant, and the best of the erring are those who repent." So he taught you that error and fault are a fundamental part of your existence, nay, even the source (*'ain*) of your existence. And Allah ﷻ said: "And those who, having done something shameful, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah — and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly and willfully in the wrong they have done" (Q3:135). He did not say, 'And those who do no shameful deed.' He also said, "and when they are angry, they forgive" (Q42:37), and did not say, 'those who do not become angry.' Understand this point, may Allah ﷻ have mercy upon you, for this is a clear secret, and a manifest affair.

9. In it is an explication of the levels of the invokers among the God-wary. Know that if a *taif* from Shaytan touches the people of *taqwa*, their *taqwa* would not leave them to persist in disobedience to their Master, but would rather return them to their remembrance, and the objects of their remembrance (*tadhakkur*) vary:

- * one remembers the reward,
- * one remembers the punishment,
- * one remembers the standing for the Account,
- * one remembers the great reward that lies in leaving disobedience,
- * one remembers His antecedent goodness to him so he is ashamed to rebel and disobey,
- * one remembers the future favors to him so he is ashamed to con-front them with his ingratitude,
- * one remembers the closeness of Allah ﷻ to him,
- * one remembers the All-Encompassing quality of the Real ﷻ,
- * one remembers that the Real is looking at him,
- * one remembers the covenant Allah ﷻ, took with him,
- * one remembers the evanescence of his own desires and the abiding permanence of what is sought from him,
- * one remembers the danger of rebellion and its baseness, so he leaves it,
- * one remembers the benefits of compliance and its exaltedness, so he travels its way,
- * one remembers that the Real ﷻ establishes him in existence and sustains him, and
- * one remembers the tremendous Immensity of the Real and His authority over everything. And there are other similar objects of remembrance, which have no limit to them. What we have related to you of them above is only as a way of familiarizing you with the states of the people of *taqwa*, and the stations of the people of clear insight... so understand!

10. It might be that what is meant by *taif* in the verse is a suddenly occurring notion (*taif al-hajis*) or an involuntary incoming inspiration (*al-khatir al-warid*) from the presence of the ego-self (*nafs*) by the casting of the Shaytan in it. And it was called *taif* because it revolves around the heart (*yatifu*). Indeed, another reading of this verse says `ta'if,' so one reading is an explanation of the other. And the occurring notion goes around the heart, trying to find a way in any gap or crack in the wall of the station of certainty; and if it finds it, it enters, and if not, it leaves.

Section Three

The caring protection of Allah ﷻ for those who direct their aspirations to Him

The example of the stations of certainty, and the light of certainty, is like the walls that surround a city and its fortresses. The walls are the lights, and its fortresses and castles are the stations of certainty that encircle the inner city of the heart. Therefore, whoever's certainty surrounds his heart like a fence, and who rectifies its stations (*maqamat*) which are the walls of lights like castles, Shaytan has no way to get to him. "You have no authority over My servants" (Q15:42), because they have corrected their servitude to Me, so they do not contend with My Decree nor do they protest against My *tadbir* for them; rather, they place their trust in Me, and surrender fully to Me. For this reason the Real has taken care of them with His shepherding, victory, and protection. And they in turn have directed their aspirations (*himma*) to Him, so He has sufficed them against other than Him.

It was said to some of the gnostics: "How do you struggle with the Shaytan?" They replied, "What Shaytan? We are the Folk who have turned their zeal and aspiration fully to Allah ﷻ, so He has sufficed us against other than Him." And we heard our Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas al-Mursi may Allah be pleased with him say: "Allah ﷻ says, 'Surely Shaytan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy' (Q35:6). One group understood from this that Allah ﷻ ordered them to fight the Shaytan, so they directed their entire aspiration to fighting him, and thus became distracted from the love of the Beloved. Another group understood, 'Shaytan is your enemy and I am your Lover,' so they became preoccupied with the love of Allah ﷻ, and by their becoming so preoccupied with Allah, Shaytan was prevented from having his way over them."

If they do seek protection from Shaytan, it is only because Allah ﷻ told them to, not because they see that other-than-Allah has an influence alongside of Him in the Decree. How could they

witness anyone sharing with Allah in His Decree, while they listen to His saying: "Indeed the command is only for Allah; He has commanded that you adore none but Him" (Q12:40), and:

- "Feeble indeed is the cunning of Shaytan" (Q4:76), and,
- "For you have no power over My servants" (Q15:42), and,
- "He has no authority over those who believe and who rely upon their Lord" (Q16:99), and,
- "Whoever depends on Allah, He is enough for him" (Q65:3), and,
- "Allah is the Protecting Friend of the faithful believers..." (Q2:257), and,
- "It is a duty upon Us to grant victory for the believers" (Q30:47).

These verses and their like are nourishment to the hearts of the believers, and the source of clear victory. So if they seek help from Shaytan it is by His command, and if they overcome him, with the light of faith, it is by His granting victory, and if they are made safe from his planning, it is by His aid and kindness.

Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him related: "I met with a man in my journeying who advised me. He said to me, 'there is no invocation more helpful for performing actions than, 'there is no resource of power or strength except in 'Allah,' and there is no action that is more helpful than fleeing to Allah ﷻ and seeking His protection. "If anyone seeks the protection with Allah, he has truly been lead to a straight path" (Q3:101). Then say: "In the Name of Allah, I have fled to Allah, and I have sought protection with Allah, there is no power nor strength except with Allah, and who forgives sins save Allah?" The utterance, 'in the Name of Allah', is a saying upon the tongue issuing from the heart. The saying, 'flee to Allah', applies to the Spirit and Secret. The saying, 'I seek protection with Allah', applies to the intellect and the self. And the saying, 'there is no power nor strength except through Allah', applies to His sovereignty (*mulk*) and Command (*'amr*). And who forgives the sins save Allah? My Lord, I seek protection with You from the action of Shaytan, he is indeed a clear enemy who leads astray. Then, you will say to the Shaytan, 'This is the knowledge that Allah has of you. My faith is in 'Allah, and I have relied upon Him, and I seek refuge from you with Allah, and if it were not that He commanded me, I would not seek refuge from you, and who are you that I should seek protection from you?'"

So you understand by this that Shaytan is too despicable in their hearts for them to attribute to him any inherent power or ability. The secret of the wisdom behind the existence of Shaytan is that he is a form which rebellion, forgetfulness, and ingratitude are attached to, as a source of error, such as in His saying, "And none made me forget except Shaytan" (Q18:63), and "This is the work of Shaytan" (Q28:15). So the reason behind his existence is so that the filth of these sins may be wiped on him, as some of the gnostics said: "Shaytan is the napkin of this abode, since the filth of disobedience is wiped on him, as are all despicable and impure things. Indeed, if Allah ﷻ did not want to be disobeyed, He would not have created Shaytan."

And the Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "The Shaytan is like the male, and the ego-self like the female, and the production of the sin between them is as the origination of the child from between the father and mother. Not that they created it, but that its creation and production was from them and by way of them." The meaning of his words is, that just as the intelligent one has no doubt that the child is not the creation or existention of its parents, but rather because of its coming to be from them it was attributed to them — just so, the true believer does not doubt that the sin is not a creation of the Shaytan and the ego-self per se, for it came to be from them and not by them, so because of its manifestation from them it was attributed to them. Therefore, the attribution of the sin to the Shaytan and the ego-self is a secondary attribution and ascription, while its attributed connection to Allah is one of creation and primary origination; for just as He creates obedience by His grace, He creates disobedience by His justice. "Say: all things are from Allah. But what is with these people that they fail to understand any speech?" (Q4:78). "Allah is the Creator of all

things" (Q39:62); "Is there a Creator other than Allah?" (Q35:3); "Is He Who creates like he who does not create? Do you not receive admonition?" (Q16:17).

These verses disprove the claims of those who innovatively claim that Allah ﷻ creates obedience but not disobedience, as Allah ﷻ says, "'Allah created you and what you do" (Q37:96). And if they say that Allah ﷻ said, "Indeed, Allah never commands what is shameful" (Q7:28), then the answer is that the Divine Command ('*Amr*') is different from the Divine Decree (*Qada'*).

And if they say, "Whatever good happens to you is from Allah, but whatever evil happens to you, is from your self," (Q4:79), the answer is: in this Allah ﷻ is teaching the servants proper courtesy with Him, by commanding us to attribute what is good to Him, because it is fitting for Him, and to attribute what is not good to us, because it is befitting of us. This is to establish proper conduct.

Sayyiduna al-Khidr peace be upon him said: "I wanted to ruin it" (Q18:79), and: "Your Lord desired that they attain their age of full strength" (Q18:82), not, 'Your Lord desired to ruin it.' So he attributed the fault to himself, and the perfection to his Master. Likewise, Sayyiduna Ibrahim peace be upon him did not say, 'And when He makes me sick, He heals me,' but rather, "When I become sick, He heals me" (Q26:80). He attributed the sickness to himself, and the cure to his Lord, even though in reality Allah ﷻ was the Cause and Creator of both. So in relation to His saying, 'Whatever good comes to you is from Allah,' then that is by His origination and creation. And as for His saying, 'but whatever evil happens to you is from yourself,' that is by secondary, or accidental, attribution (in the philosophical sense). The Prophet ﷺ said: "The good is in Your Hands, and the evil does not reach You." He knew that Allah ﷻ is the Creator of good and evil, and benefit and harm, but he followed proper conduct, in the way we have explained above... so understand!

And if they say: 'Allah ﷻ is too exalted to create disobedience, because it is ugly and despicable, and Allah is too transcendent to create what is despicable,' the answer is: disobedience is an ugly action from the servant only because it is in opposition to the Divine Command; it is not in itself essentially bad, but only because of its connection to a prohibition. Just as good is not connected essentially to that which is commanded, but it is good only because the command has been attached to it...so understand!

Moreover, Allah ﷻ deserves to be transcended above this 'transcendence' of theirs when they say: 'Far be it from Allah to create disobedience!' The truth is, far be it that there be anything in Allah's Kingdom other than what He willed.

May Allah ﷻ guide us to His straight path, and establish us in His religion by His grace.

Chapter Six

The Submission of the 'Face' to Allah ﷻ

Summary

The author discusses the Prophet Ibrahim peace be upon him a model of pure surrender and servitude. The chapter ends with a beautiful poem.

Text

Allah ﷻ has said:

"And who desires other than the way of Ibrahim except those who debase their souls in folly? For We chose him in this world, and he will be in the hereafter in the ranks of the righteous. Behold! His Lord said to him: 'Submit to Me.' He said: 'I submit to the Lord of the Worlds' (Q2:130-131).

"Indeed the religion with Allah is the Surrender (*al-Islam*)" (Q3:19).

"(This is) the way of your forefather Ibrahim; it is He who has named you Muslims" (Q22:78).

"And submit fully to Him" (Q22:34).

"And if they argue with you, then say: I have submitted my `face' (whole being) to Allah, and so have those who followed after me" (Q3:20).

"Whoever desires other than the Submission (*al-Islam*) as a religion, it will not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be from among the losers" (Q3:85).

"Whoever submits his whole self to Allah, and is a doer of good, has indeed grasped the most trustworthy handhold" (Q31:22).

"Make me die a Muslim and unite me with the righteous" (Q12:101).

"And I am the first of those who submit" (Q6:163), and other similar *ayat*.

With such frequency of the mention of Islam (submission), we should know that its affair is mighty and its measure great.

Islam has an outer and an inner. Its outer is compliance with Allah ﷻ, and its inner is the lack of contention with Him. So Islam is the lack of contention as it applies to the bodies, while *istislam* (complete utter submission) is the portion of the hearts. So Islam is like an outer form whose inner spirit is *istislam*. Islam is outward, and *istislam* is the inward of that outward.

The 'Muslim' is the one who surrenders his whole self to Allah, so that outwardly he conforms to His command, and inwardly he submits to His utter compulsion. The true realization of the station of *istislam* is through the lack of contention with Allah ﷻ in His decrees and decisions, and commitment to Him in His abrogation and confirmation. Whoever claims Islam for himself is asked for *istislam* as evidence. "Say: bring forth your proofs if you are indeed truthful" (Q2:111). Do

you not see that when the Lord of Sayyidina Ibrahim peace be upon him said to him: "Submit," he said: "I submit to the Lord of the Worlds."

When he was thrown from the catapult the angels asked for aid from Allah, saying: "O our Lord, this is your intimate friend whose state now is as You know!" So the Real ﷻ said to Jibril peace be upon them: "Go to him, and if he asks your help then help him, and if not then leave Me alone with My friend." When he came to Ibrahim peace be upon him on the horizon of the sky he asked: "Do you have any need?" and Ibrahim peace be upon him answered: "As from you, I have no need, but as from Allah, yes (I do need Him)." So Jibril peace be upon him said, "Then ask Him," but he replied, "His knowledge of my state suffices me from having to ask Him."

He did not seek victory from other than Allah, and his aspiration did not lean to other than Him. Rather, he submitted fully to the decree of Allah. He found sufficiency in His *tadbir* for him without regard to his *tadbir* for himself, and in the caring of the Real for him instead of his caring for himself, and in the Real's knowledge of him from his having to ask Him. All of this came from his knowing that Allah is merciful and tender with him in all his states. Because of this, Allah praised him in His saying, "And Ibrahim, who fulfilled the promise" (Q53:37). And He furthermore saved him from the fire, saying: "We said: O fire, be cool and safe for Ibrahim" (Q21:69). The people of knowledge said: If Allah ﷻ had not added 'and safe' then he would have perished from its coldness, so the fire cooled off and eventually went out. At the same time there was not a fire throughout the world except that it had abated and extinguished or was checked and restricted to limits, thinking that the Divine Order was addressed to it! Beneficial lesson: 'Showing extreme need to Allah instead of to other than Him'.

Consider what Ibrahim peace be upon him said when Jibril peace be upon him asked him, "Do you have a need?" He replied, "From you, no." He did not say, 'I do not have any need.' This is because the station of messenger-hood and intimate friendship requires sincere and straightforward servitude; and among the requirements of servitude are the following: manifesting need of Allah, and standing before Him with the quality of intense poverty, and raising the aspiration (*himma*) from other than Him. All this necessitates that he say, "From you, no," meaning, 'I am in need of Allah, but not of you.' He combined the display of need to Allah with the elevation of *himma* from other than Him ﷻ.

The matter is not as some have stated, 'The Sufi is not really a Sufi until he has no need of Allah ﷻ.' These words are not fitting for those perfected people worth following. However, it is explained that the one who said it meant: the true Sufi has realized that Allah ﷻ has already taken care of his needs even before He created him, so he has no needs toward Allah ﷻ that are not already satisfied in pre-eternity. Lack of want does not negate essential need.

A second interpretation of this statement is that he has no need toward Allah ﷻ, meaning that he is not concerned with what he asks or seeks from Allah. For there is a difference between one who seeks Allah, and one who seeks something from Allah. Or, it might mean that he has committed his affairs to Allah ﷻ, completely submitted to Him, not desiring anything except what He desires ﷻ.

Beneficial lesson:

When Jibril peace be upon him received this answer from Ibrahim peace be upon him, he knew that he would not seek his help, and that his heart witnessed nothing except Allah (as being by Himself). So Jibril peace be upon him said to him, "Then ask Him," meaning, 'If you do not ask me for help because you do not depend upon the intermediaries, then ask your Lord, for He is closer to you than me.' So he said, "His knowledge of my state suffices me from asking Him," meaning, 'I looked and I saw that He is even closer to me than my asking Him, and I saw that my asking is one of

the intermediaries. And since I do not desire to hold on to anything besides Him, and since I know that He knows, He does not need to be reminded by my questioning, and negligence is not possible for Him. So I found sufficiency in the knowledge of Allah from my asking; and I knew that there would be no other possibility than His being tenderly merciful with me in all states.' This is finding sufficiency in Allah, and properly keeping the rights of *Hasbi Allah* (Allah is enough for me).

Our Shaykh Abu-I 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him used to say: "'And Ibrahim, who fulfilled the promise,' (Q53:37), namely, the promise of the requirements of his saying 'Allah is enough for me.' He submitted his food to the guests, his son to the sacrifice, and his body to the fire, so Allah praised him by saying, 'and Ibrahim, who fulfilled the promise.'

Section One

The Clarification of Allah's Intention to the Angels

"Behold! Your Lord said to the angels: I am going to place upon the Earth a Representative (*khalifah*). They said: Will you place in it one who will cause corruption in it and spill blood, while we glorify You by Your praise and declare Your holiness? He said: I indeed know that which you do not know" (Q2:30).

Sayyidina Ibrahim's peace be upon him refusing to seek help from Jibril peace be upon him was Allah's argument against them, as if He were saying: "How do you see My servant now, O you who said, 'Will you place in it one who causes corruption and spills blood...?'" They understood that this was what Allah meant when He said, "I indeed know what you do not know."

It has been reported in the hadith: "The angels of the night and the angels of the day take turns ascending from you and descending to you. So when those angels who stayed with you ascend, their Lord asks them, and He is more aware: 'How did you leave My servants?' They say, 'We came to them while they were praying and left them while they were praying.' Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said, referring to this narration: "The Being of the Real ﷻ says to them, 'O you who say 'Will You place in it one who will cause corruption?', how did you leave My servants?'

The reason Allah sent Jibril peace be upon him was to make clear to the angels the level that Ibrahim al-Khalil peace be upon him occupied with Him, and his great nobility. And how could he ask help from other than Him if he saw no one else but Him? He was called *Khalil* (intimate friend), because his innermost secret was penetrated (*khallala*) with the love of Allah and His greatness and oneness, so there was no room in it for any other. The poet said:

*"You have penetrated (takhallala)
the course of the Spirit within me,
and thus was the Intimate (khalil) of Allah so called."*

Section Two

Know that the Real ﷻ expanded Ibrahim peace be upon him with the light of contentment and gave him the spirit of complete surrender, and moved his heart away from the consideration of mankind. The fire was not cool and peaceful for him until his heart was committed and surrendered to Him. From submission, peace came upon him, and from the rectification of the inner aspect of the station, there appeared what appeared from him of sublimity and glory. O believer, understand from this that if one submits to Allah during the arrival of severe trial, then Allah will change its hardships to ease and enjoyment for him, and its fear to security. So if the Shaytan throws you in the catapult of trial, and the worlds come to you saying, "Do you have any need?", say at that moment, "From you, no, but from Allah, yes." And if they tell you to ask Him, then say, "His knowledge of my state is enough for me." In this way, Allah ﷻ will turn the fire of this world into

coolness and safety, and He will bestow upon you grants and generous gifts. For Allah ﷻ opened up the way of guidance through the prophets and messengers peace be upon them, so those who came after them walked their path, and the true believers persisted in following them. As He ﷻ commanded us to say: "This is my way, I call to Allah with insight - I and those who follow me." (Q12:108).

And He said about Yunus peace be upon him "We answered his plea and saved him from the torment; and in such a way do we save the believers" (Q21:88). Meaning, 'We likewise save those faithful believers who follow their footsteps and yearn after their lights —those who seek from Allah through humility and need, and who wear the cloths of lowliness and brokenness.'

Section Three

The Submission of Ibrahim's peace be upon him self to Allah ﷻ

The story of Ibrahim peace be upon him contains clear evidence for those who consider, and guidance for the people of insight; namely, that he who leaves his *tadbir* for himself, Allah ﷻ takes over with His excellent *tadbir* for him.

Do you not see that when he did not make *tadbir* for himself, and did not concern himself with it, but rather cast it to Allah and surrendered it to Him, and depended upon Him in all of his affairs, the result was that he found true safety and nobility, and the permanent praise of him throughout the ages? So much so that Allah ordered us not to leave his way, and that we safeguard the right of his title when He said: "The way of your forefather Ibrahim, He called you Muslims from before..." (Q22:78).

It is a requirement for all who are like Ibrahim peace be upon him, that they be bereft of their *tadbir* for themselves, and empty of contention with Allah ﷻ, and stripped of any negligence towards Him. "And who seeks after other than the way of Ibrahim except one who debases himself in stupidity" (Q2:130). A condition of his way is to be committed to Allah, submitting utterly during the arrival of Decrees. Know also that what is intended from you is that you not have with Allah ﷻ any personal desire. We have composed a poem on this meaning:

*"What is desired from you as a goal
is the forgetting of your desire,
if you indeed aim at traveling the way to right guidance. And that you leave existence behind
so that you see it not, thus you become
one who holds tightly to the rope of dependence.
Until when will this heedlessness of yours be, and until when will be
this slow approach
to My care and love?
Until when will you await My design,
incomparably originated,
while you wander, perplexed, in every valley?
You leave off coming to Me and leaning to My side.
Indeed,
by your life, you have left what is proper!
My love for you, had you only understood, existed
from ancient times,
and the Day of Alast bears witness to My Uniqueness.
Is there a Lord other than Me, whom you should hope in,
to save you tomorrow from the violent intense suffering?
The quality of impotence has covered the universe altogether,
so that a needy one calls upon a poor, needy one (likehim)!"*

*By Me all the worlds have been established,
and all manifest phenomena have come
from My design and Will.
In My House, in My own Kingdom! Does My Kingdom
face other than Me with the face of need and dependence?
Gaze sharply with the eyes of faith
and look with consideration,
you will see all the worlds announcing their annihilation.
From nothing to nothing is its course, and you,
no doubt, are also moving along to annihilation.
And this is My robe upon you so do not remove it, and
neither direct the face of your hope towards servants.
At My door stand, with all of your wishes, and do not come
to Our Presence with any of your own provisions.
Stick to your attribute and be low and humble,
you will see by Us the affliction submit its control.
And be a servant to Us, for the servant is content
with whatever the Master wills and decrees.
Shall I cover your low attribute with My Attribute,
while you reward that, ungratefully,
with stubborn rebellion?
Do you share with Me in the Kingdom,
that you should go into disputing with Me,
so right guidance perishes?
If you aim towards attaining to My Court,
then beware of your self and be an enemy to it.
Dive into the sea of annihilation, you might see Us;
and be prepared for Us
until the coming of the Promised Day.
Invoke Us, always asking for a favor so that you encounter
a beautiful dealing from a Master Most Generous!
Do not seek guidance today from other than Us,
for there is no one other than Us today to guide you."*

Chapter Seven

The Types of Tadbir

Summary

The author differentiates between praiseworthy and blameworthy tadbir, and how one can safely deal with the world and its wealth without becoming impure.

Text

Know that *tadbir* is of two types: blameworthy, and praiseworthy.

Blameworthy:

Every *tadbir* which revolves around seeking the self's portions and gratifications, and not around establishing the due right of Allah upon it, such as the *tadbir* in the pursuit of any disobedience which the self finds useful or pleasing, or any gratification while one is in a state of heedlessness, or obedience with hypocrisy and ostentation, and all other related blameworthy pursuits. This is considered blameworthy *tadbir*, since it causes punishment or the lowering of the veil.

Whoever recognizes the blessing of the intellect is ashamed before Allah ﷻ that he employ it in *tadbir* to attain to anything that does not bring him to His proximity, or is not a cause for the existence of His love. The intellect is the greatest bounty Allah ﷻ has granted His slaves. For Allah created all beings, and bestowed His grace upon them, first, through giving them existence, and second, through uninterrupted sustenance. These are two graces that no being can do without, and which are necessary for every creature. From here one can understand the saying of Allah ﷻ: "My (essential) mercy embraces all things" (Q7:156).

However, since all the beings participated in receiving existence and sustenance, Allah wanted to differentiate some from others, to show how vast and far-reaching His will is. So He differentiated some of the creatures with growth, such as plants, animals, and man, and through them His power was manifested more clearly than in those creatures not characterized with growth. And when these three shared in growth, He singled out man and animals with animation, which manifested His power in even greater proportion and degree. He then willed to differentiate the human species above the rest, and thus He granted it the intellect, and thus set the human above the animals, and perfected His grace on humankind. By the intellect and its amplitude and illumination, the good of both this life and the next is achieved and completed.

Alas, man has directed this blessing of the intellect towards the *tadbir* of this world, which has no value with Allah, out of ingratitude for the blessing of the intellect. Rather, it is more fitting and more correct to direct its energies and concerns to the rectification of his affair in his end, being grateful to the Beneficent towards him and the One who pours out His lights upon him.

So do not waste your intellect that He granted you in the *tadbir* of this world, about which the Prophet ﷺ said: 'a filthy rotten carcass.' It was narrated that he ﷺ asked ad-Dahhak: "What is your food?" and he said, "meat and milk, O Messenger of Allah." Then he ﷺ asked: "And what does it become after having being eaten?" and he replied, "You know." So the Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah made what comes out of the son of Adam after he eats an example for the world." And

he ﷺ also said: "Had this world occupied with Allah the value of a fly's wing, He would not have wasted it by giving the ungrateful rejecter (*kafir*) a drink of water."

Another example of one who wastes his intellect by directing it wholly to the *tadbir* of this world, whose quality is as we have described above, is like one who was given by the King a valuable and beautiful sword, which he does not let just anyone have, so that he could fight his enemies and enjoy having it. So he purposefully took the sword to a dead carcass, and started striking it until the sword became dull and its beauty changed to ugliness. So if the King should see this state, he would most likely take the sword from him, punish him greatly for the terrible thing he did, and banish him from his company.

Praiseworthy:

It is the *tadbir* of whatever brings you near to Allah ﷻ, such as *tadbir* in acquitting the people of debt, or fulfilling a trust faithfully, or seeking lawful provision, or sincere repentance to the Lord of the worlds, or contemplation (*fikr*) that leads to the restraint and subduing of the ego's passions and the misguiding of Shaytan. All of this, no doubt, is praiseworthy, and for that reason the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "An hour of reflection is better than 70 years of worship."

The *tadbir* of the world is of two kinds: *tadbir* of the world for the world, and *tadbir* of the world for the Hereafter. The first kind is that you make *tadbir* in the means of gathering up the world for yourself out of vainglorious pride and hoarding; and every time you multiply in it you increase in mindless heedlessness and self-deception. The mark of that is that you become preoccupied from being in conformity to the Divine Law, and are taken to rebellion. And the *tadbir* of the world for the Hereafter is like the merchant and the worker and the farmer who make *tadbir* in what they do to eat lawfully from a licit income, and to prefer the people of need with what they possess, and to turn their 'faces' nobly away from being in need of people. The sign of the one who seeks the world for Allah ﷻ is that he does not exorbitantly seek more of it or keep it to hoard it for himself, preferring others over himself with it.

The one who is unattached to and does without (*zahid*) the world has two marks: one in his finding it, and one in his lacking it. When he finds it and has it, he prefers other than himself with it, and when he looses it and lacks it he finds inward rest from it. Giving preference to others over himself is the way of thankfulness for the blessing of finding the world and its wealth, and finding rest upon loosing it is the way of thankfulness for the blessing of lacking the world. And both inward states are the fruits of Divine understanding and gnosis. For just as the Real ﷻ blesses you with the favor of giving you the world, He also blesses you by turning it away and removing it from you, and His blessing in its removal is more perfect. Sufyan ath-Thawri may Allah be pleased with him said: "The blessing of Allah contained in turning the world away from me is more perfect than His blessing contained in giving it to me." And Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "I saw Abu Bakr as-Siddiq may Allah be pleased with him in a dream and he said: 'Do you know what the mark of the love of the world leaving your heart is?' I said: 'I don't know.' He said: 'Giving it away when you have it, and finding rest when you loose it.'" It is clear from this that not all who seek the world are blameworthy, but only the one who seeks it for himself and not for his Lord, and for this world and not for the Hereafter.

Section One

People are of two types

People in general, therefore, fall into two categories: a servant who seeks the world (*dunya*) for its own sake, and a servant who seeks the world for the sake of the Hereafter. Shaykh

Abu-I 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him said: "There is no *dunya* for the gnostic, because his worldly life is for his hereafter, and his hereafter is for his Lord."

This was the basis for the states of the Companions and the righteous people of the early generations, may Allah ﷺ be pleased with them. Every time they attained worldly means, their aim was to come ever closer to Allah ﷻ by it, as a means to Allah's good pleasure, not intending by it the world itself and its allurements and pleasures. The Real ﷻ has described them thus: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are severe with those who deliberately cover the Truth but compassionate amongst themselves; you see them bowing and prostrating, desiring the abundant favor from Allah and His contentment. Their marks are upon their faces from the effect of prostration"(Q48: 29).

And He said also: "In houses which Allah has permitted to be raised and established so that His Name be remembered constantly, and that He be glorified therein early and late. By men whom neither merchandise nor trade distract from the invocation of Allah, and the accomplishment of ritual prayer (*salah*), and the giving of alms (*zakah*). They fear a day in which hearts and eyes will be transformed and altered" (Q24:36-37).

And His words: "Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah. Of them some have completed their vow to the end, and some still wait; but they never changed (their resolute determination) in the least" (Q33:23), and other similar verses.

What do you think of a people who have been chosen by Allah ﷻ for the companionship of His Messenger ﷺ, so that they may take directly from him what descended to him of Divine revelation? Therefore, there is none among the believers up until the Day of Judgment except that the companions are greater in favors and benefits and graces up to what cannot be enumerated or forgotten. That is because they are the ones who carried to us from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ the wisdom and the laws, and they clarified the permissible from the forbidden, and gave understanding to the elect and the common, and opened in victory many lands and countries, and defeated the people of polytheism and rebellion. True indeed is what the Prophet ﷺ said about them: "My companions are like the stars; follow whichever one of them you want and you will be guided." And in the first *ayah* above Allah ﷻ described them with many praiseworthy qualities until His saying: "desiring the bounty of Allah and seeking His good pleasure..." (Q48:29).

So He ﷻ, informed us, and He is the One who looks upon their innermost secrets and knows their hidden and manifest, that they did not go after the world in what they worked for, nor did they seek after anything except the bountiful countenance of Allah ﷻ and His superabundant blessings. "And persevere in the company of those who call on their Lord, morning and evening, desiring (nothing except) His Face" (Q18:28). They did not seek other than Him, and did not intend any but Him in all that they did, as evidenced in His saying: "In them is He glorified in the mornings and evenings (again and again). By men whom neither trade nor merchandise divert from the remembrance of Allah" (Q24:36-37).

He alludes by this to the fact that he has purified their inmost secrets and perfected their lights, and because of that the world does not grab hold of their hearts or scar the face of their secure belief. How could the world take hold of hearts that are filled with His love and shine with the brilliant light of His Proximity, while the Real has said: "You have no control over My sincere slaves" (Q15:42). If the world had control over their hearts, then the Shaytan would also have control over their hearts; but that is not possible, since he cannot come near hearts which shine with the light of doing-without (*zuhd*), and are cleared of the filth of worldly desire. In other words, it is as if He said, 'Not you nor anything else in the universes have any authority or control over their hearts,

because the authority of My immense greatness in their hearts prevents any other from having control over them.'

Notice that He said that trading and merchandise do not distract them from the remembrance of Allah, and did not forbid them from buying or selling or trading. Rather, the verse demonstrates the permissibility of buying and selling and business, if you reflect on it with the reflection of the possessors of understanding. Have you not heard the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Establish regular prayers and practice regular charity"? Had He forbidden wealth and riches, He would have forbidden them the means which bring them about, such as trading and business. Did He not say "and give in alms"? This command for alms (*zakah*) proves that these men whose characteristics were previously described, if they are rich, do not necessarily stop being praiseworthy due to their wealth, on the condition that they uphold and maintain the rights of their Master.

Abdullah ibn 'Utbah may Allah be pleased with him said: "When Uthman ibn 'Affan may Allah be pleased with him died, he had in his possession 151,000 dinars and 1000 dirhams, and land worth 200,000 dinars. The wealth of Zubayr may Allah be pleased with him reached 50,000 dinars, and he left 1000 horses and 1000 servants in inheritance. And 'Amr ibn al-'As may Allah be pleased with him left behind 300,000 dinars. And the wealth of Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Awf may Allah be pleased with him is so famous that no mention is needed." The world was in their hands, not their hearts. They were patient when they lost it and thankful to Allah ﷻ when they found it.

Indeed, Allah tried them with intense poverty in the beginning of their affair until their lights were perfected, and their secrets made pure; after which He gave wealth freely to them. For had He given it to them before that, it would have taken them and conquered them. Therefore, when it was given to them after their stability and firm establishment in certainty, they exercised free disposal and control over it as the trustworthy treasurer would handle his money. They conformed by this to the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And spend out of that which Allah has made you deputies and heirs" (Q57:7).

From this standpoint is understood the prohibition of their going into the *Jihad* in the beginning, by the saying of Allah: "But forgive and overlook (this persecution) until Allah accomplishes His purpose" (Q2:109). Had Allah ﷻ, permitted the *Jihad* in the beginning of the Islamic period while they were still relatively few and new in Islam, then their victory in *Jihad* would have been a victory for their ego-selves without their being aware of that. It is related that if Sayyidina 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him was struck in battle by an enemy, he would stop fighting until his anger from that blow cooled off; then he would go back and resume fighting. This was because he was afraid that if someone struck him and then he struck back soon afterward, he would only be doing that to seek vengeance for his ego's 'honor' and the advancing of his self-interest, for he knew the machinations of the self and its snares. They (the Companions) were great in guarding and protecting their hearts and purifying their actions, and deep in fear that there might be in the intentions of their actions a small inclination towards something other than the Face of Allah the Exalted.

So this world was in the hands of the Companions may Allah be pleased with them, not in their hearts, which indicates their leaving the world inwardly, and their unselfishness in dealing with it. The Real ﷻ said about them: "They prefer others over themselves even if they are themselves in a state of great poverty" (Q59:9). For example, one of them gave a sheep as a gift to another one, so he said, 'So-and-so deserves this more than I do,' so he gave it to so-and-so. This happened until the sheep went back to its first owner after it had gone through about seven of them. It is enough to mention what Sayyidina 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him, did when he gave away half of all his wealth and possessions, and when Sayyidina Abu Bakr may Allah be pleased with him gave away all of his wealth, and when Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Awf may Allah be pleased with him

gave away 700 camels, and when Sayyidina Uthman may Allah be pleased with him equipped a whole army with his own money — and other similar actions of theirs and their exalted states.

The other *ayah*, the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah. Of them some have completed their vow to the end, and some still wait; but they never changed their resolute determination in the least" (Q33:23), implies that they had the secret of truthfulness, which none can look upon except the Real ﷻ, thus showing great praise of and pride in His servants. For the inward states of the servants might be disguised under their outward actions, and could therefore be dubious. Therefore, the verses mentioned above include in their meaning the cleansing of their manifest and secret parts, and the establishment of their praiseworthiness, honor, and nobility.

It has been made clear by the above that the *tadbir* of this world is of two kinds. 1) *tadbir* of the world for the world, which is the state of the people of separation and mindlessness; and 2) *tadbir* of the world for the Hereafter, which is the state of the noble Companions and righteous forefathers of the faith. An indication of that is what Sayyidina 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him said: "I am in a state of prayer even when I ready the army for battle." For the *tadbir* of 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him, was with direct observation and face-to-face encounter, i.e., with Allah. So his was a *tadbir* for Allah, and for that reason his *tadbir* did not make him miss prayer, nor did it decrease its perfection.

You might say, "You have claimed that none of them desired the world (for its own sake), but Allah revealed about them after the battle of 'Uhud: "Some of you desire the world, and some of you desire the Hereafter" (Q3:152), until even some of the Companions said: "We never thought that any one of us desired the world until Allah sent down this verse!"

Understand, may Allah give you success, that it is an obligation upon every believer that he have an excellent opinion concerning the Companions may Allah be pleased with them and that he interpret their words and actions according to the best interpretations and motives. This includes all of their states during the life of the Messenger ﷺ and after his earthly passing. Because when the Real ﷻ purified them with a complete purification, He did not limit that to a certain period to the exclusion of other periods. And similarly with the Messenger of Allah's ﷺ bearing witness to their purity, as when he said, "My companions are like the stars, whichever of them you follow you will be guided." Now as for the above verse, there are two possible explanations:

1. Among you are some who desire the world for the Hereafter, such as those who want the spoils of war, so that they may use what they take from it for the purposes of Allah ﷻ, to spend it and prefer others with it over themselves. And there are others among you whose intent is other than that, such as acquiring the spiritual benefits of *jihad* and nothing else, not turning towards the spoils of the war. Among them are the good, and the better, and the complete.

2. The Master can say to His servant whatever He wants, and we have to maintain courtesy with His servant due to his connection with Him. Therefore, we shouldn't take everything of what the Master says of His servant (or to him) in its most literal sense, and judge him entirely on the basis of that. For the Master can say whatever He wills to the servant, as a way of urging and rousing the servant, and as a renewal of his firm aspiration and desire after the goal, and we are therefore obliged to remain within the limits of Divine courtesy.

Also, if you examine the Mighty Book (i.e., the Qur'an), you will find many similar statements, such as the chapter "He frowned..." (Q80:1). Sayyidatina A'isha may Allah be pleased with her even said: "Had the Prophet of Allah ﷺ hidden anything of the revelation, he would have hidden this chapter."

We have now established that the praiseworthy ceasing of *tadbir* does not consist necessarily of leaving the secondary causes of the world (*asbab ad-dunya*), or neglecting to consider the means towards the well-being of one's worldly life, or aiding one in obedience to the Master and working for the sake of one's hereafter (and well-being therein). Rather, the *tadbir* which is forbidden concerning this world is the *tadbir* in it for its own sake, and the sign of that is: that one disobeys Allah ﷻ because of it, and that one takes it however it may be, whether permitted or not.

Section Two

The Blameworthiness of things and their Praiseworthiness

Know that things become praiseworthy or blameworthy according to what they lead to. So blameworthy *tadbir* is one that distracts you from Allah, and prevents you from establishing the service of Allah, and stops you from your dealings with Allah. And the praiseworthy *tadbir* is the opposite of that, i.e., that which takes you to proximate nearness to Allah, and to His contentment and good pleasure.

And such is the world: it is not totally blameworthy without exception, and neither is it totally praiseworthy without exception; rather its blameworthy characteristic is what keeps you away from your Master, and prevents you from preparing for your hereafter. One of the gnostic knowers said: "Everything that busies you from being with Allah, whether it be family, children, or money, is an inauspicious evil; and the praiseworthy is what aids you in devotion to Him, and raises you to His service."

In summary: whatever has been categorized as being 'praiseworthy' is praiseworthy in itself, and whatever has been categorized as being 'blameworthy' is blameworthy in itself. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "This world is a rotten corpse." And he said: "This world and what is in it are accursed except for the remembrance of Allah and things related to it, someone with sacred knowledge, or someone learning it." And he ﷺ also said: "Allah made what comes out of the son of Adam after he eats an example for this world." These sayings point towards the world's paltry blameworthiness, and function as an incitement for the slaves to flee away from it.

It has also been narrated from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said: "Do not curse this world, what an excellent riding beast for the believer! By it he attains to good, and is saved from evil."

The world that the Prophet ﷺ cursed is the world that keeps one away from Allah ﷻ and busies the people with itself instead of Him. This is shown in his statement above, when he provided the exception of 'except His remembrance, and things related to it...' He made it clear that these are not from the world. As for his saying, "Do not curse the world," he means here the world that takes one to the obedience of Allah. For that reason, he said, "What an excellent riding beast for the faithful!", praising it in its aspect of being like a beast that carries its rider to something beneficial and good, not in its aspect of being an abode of deception, sins, and unneeded burdens.

If you understand this, then you understand that the dropping of self-direction and management (*isqat at-tadbir*) does not involve completely leaving worldly means (*asbab*) so that the person becomes a heavy burden on others, being ignorant of Allah's wisdom in establishing causes and means. It has been narrated that Sayyidina `Isa peace be upon him passed by a worshipper whom he asked: "From where do you get your food?" and the worshipper said: "My brother brings me food to eat." So he replied: "Your brother is more devoted to Allah than you." Meaning that his brother, even though he was busy in his market, was more worshipful than the worshipper, because he was the one who aided him in obedience and gave him the opportunity to devote his time to it.

How is it that earning worldly means becomes wrong, when Allah says: "For Allah has permitted trade, and has forbidden usurious interest" (Q2:275), and: "Witness the business deal if you sell and trade" (Q2:283). And the words of the Messenger ﷺ: "The best of what man eats from is what he himself earns; indeed, Da'ud peace be upon him, the prophet of Allah, used to eat from his own earnings." And his saying: "The best and most noble of earnings is the work of the builder by his own hand, as long as he is sincere in his work." And his ﷺ saying: "The trustworthy, sincere, Muslim trader is with the martyrs on the Day of Rising."

How can one, after all this, place unconditional blame upon the worldly means (*asbab*)? Indeed, its only blameworthiness is what keeps you away from Allah ﷻ and from dealing with Him. So if you leave means, but are nonetheless heedless of Allah ﷻ, in your divestment (*tajrid*), you are still blameworthy. Diseases and troubles do not only come upon the one of means, but also upon the one of divestment. Qur'an: "There is today no protector from the command of Allah except those upon whom He has mercy" (Q11:43).

The entrance of the disease into the divested might be stronger, for when it enters into those of means they do not make any claims to righteousness, and their outward is just like their inward. The people of means admit their shortcomings and recognize the superiority of those who are singly devoted to the obedience of Allah ﷻ. The diseases of the divested might be self-infatuation, pride, ostentation, or beautifying themselves hypocritically in front of the creation with their devotion, out of a hidden desire to obtain what is in their hands. Or their diseases might be dependence and reliance upon the creation, and the sign of that is: blaming people if they don't give to one, and censuring them if they don't serve him. Therefore, one who is sunk in means (*asbab*) while being heedless has a much better state than they.

May Allah ﷻ perfect our intentions and purify our selves from diseases by His bounty and grace.

Chapter Eight

The Divested of Means (mutajarrid) and the One of Means (mutasabbib)

Summary

The author first discusses the difference between having worldly means of livelihood and being divested of them, and then goes on to discuss how the one with means should live and work, and the proper courtesies associated with having a living.. Finally, the author explains how to overcome the suggestions and insinuations of blameworthy tadbir, and the value of contentment.

Text

You might conclude from the words above that the divested one and the one of means occupy the same level, which is not true. Allah ﷻ will never make the one who separates himself from every obstacle for His adoration and fills his time with Him like the one who enters into worldly means, even if he is perfect and proficient in them. If the abiding stations (*maqamat*) of these two are equal in terms of gnosis of Allah ﷻ, then the divested one is better, and what he is in is loftier and more perfect.

For this reason some of the gnostics have stated, "The one of means and the divested of means are like two servants of a King. The King said to one of them: 'work, and eat from the acquisition of your hands.' And to the other He said: 'Stick to My Presence and service and I will take charge of all that you need.'

The position of the second one with the King is nobler, and treatment of him in this way is more indicative of His providential care for him. Furthermore, it is rare that you be safe from rebellion or that your devotions become pure and sincere while you enter into work for worldly means, because of its' necessary association with the opposites and mixing with the people of heedlessness and rebellion. The strongest thing that will keep you in obedience is seeing the obedient, and the strongest thing that will bring you into sin is seeing the sinful. The Messenger ﷺ said: "Man is upon the way (*din*) of his close friend, so look carefully at whom you become friends with." And the poet said:

*"Do not ask about the man but ask about his companion,
for all companions follow those with whom they associate.
If he is a man of evil then shun him quickly, and if a man
of good, then accompany him, and you will be guided."*

The self is naturally inclined to imitation and resemblance, and to adorning itself with the characteristics of those it associates with, thereby becoming like them. Therefore, your companionship with the heedless causes heedlessness in your self; for if forgetfulness is natural for it already, then how much more forgetful will it be if it mixes with the heedless?

Furthermore, you find in yourself (may Allah ﷻ give you success), that your state when you leave your house for work and when you return back to it are not equal. For at the moment when you leave your house, you are filled with lights, your breast is expanded, and you have a strong aspiration towards obedience and abstinence from the world (*dunya*). But when you come back home you are not

like that, and that is for no reason other than the impurities associated with mixing with the people and the heart's energetic involvement in the darkness of worldly means. Furthermore, had it been the case that the effects of rebellion and worldly means leave at the moment you leave them, then the heart would not be so retarded in its journeying to Allah ﷻ after separating from involvement in the worldly means. Rather, it is like fire, for the flame might be out but the blackness of its charring remains.

Therefore, the one involved in means is in need of two things: knowledge, and god-wariness (*taqwa*). For through knowledge he knows the permissible from the forbidden, and *taqwa* will restrain him from acquiring sins. As for what he needs from knowledge, he is in need of knowing the rulings and commands related to his actions, transactions, trade, buying and selling, to his disposing and managing of affairs and his dealings with men and other related issues. This is in addition to what he needs to know of the religious obligations and duties specific to him.

Section One

What the one of means (*mutasabbib*) needs to be concerned about.

Following are what those of worldly means need to adhere to:

1. To strengthen and bind the resolve and determination with Allah before leaving his house (to go to his work), that he pardon those who wrong him, for the markets are naturally places of argument and contractual bargains. For that reason the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Are any of you incapable of being like Abu Damdam? When he would leave his house he would say: 'O Allah, I have given my honor away as charity to the Muslims.'"

2. It befits him that he should perform an ablution and pray before he leave his house, and that he ask Allah ﷻ for safety in his departure, for indeed he does not know what will happen to him. Indeed, the one who sets out towards the market is like the one who sets out to the line of battle. Therefore, the believer must wear the protective armor of dependence upon Allah ﷻ and trust in Him, which will guard him from the arrows of the enemies. "And whoever depends on Allah ﷻ has indeed been guided to the straight path" (Q3:110). "And whoever places his trust on Allah, He will suffice him" (Q65:3).

3. As he leaves his house, he should also entrust his family, his house, and whatever is in it to Allah ﷻ, for He is more suitable and worthy to preserve that for him; and he should remember the saying of Allah ﷻ "For Allah is the best pre-saver, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful" (Q12:64). And he should also remember the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "O Allah, You are the companion in travel, and the deputy (*khalifah*) in the family, wealth and children." Indeed, if he entrusts them to Allah ﷻ, then it is more likely that he will come back to find them as he likes and as they like. (The story is told that) a man traveled and he had a pregnant wife. When he set out, he said: 'O Allah, I entrust to you what is in her womb.' While he was away, his wife died, so when he returned home and asked about her, he was told that she died while she was pregnant. When night came, he saw a light among the graves. So he came to it, and ended up at her grave, and saw the child feeding from her breasts. He heard a voice that told him: You entrusted the child to Us and you have thus found him (alive and well), and had you entrusted to Us both of them, you would have found both of them.'

4. It is recommended that he say as he is leaving: "In the name of Allah, I place my trust in Allah, and there is no resource of power or strength except through Allah." That makes the Shaytan give up on him.

5. To command the good, and forbid the evil, and let him make that a means of gratitude for the blessing of strength and *taqwa*, which the Master granted him. And let him remember the saying of

Allah ﷻ: "Those who, if We establish them in the earth, perform the ritual prayer, and give their wealth in alms, and command the good and forbid the evil, and to Allah belongs the final result of (all) affairs" (Q22:41). Then whoever is able to command the good and forbid the evil, in such a way that no harm comes to himself or his honor or possessions, then such a one is someone who has been 'established in the earth.' So the obligation applies to him. And if the case is such that he cannot command the good or forbid the evil without drawing harm to himself before that, or if the suspicion of the possibility of harm coming to him burdens his mind, then the obligation is lifted from such a one, and in that situation disclaiming this obligation becomes permissible.

6. That his walking be characterized with tranquility and gravity, as Allah ﷻ says: "And the servants of the All-Merciful are those who walk upon the earth humbly, and if the ignorant speak to them, they bid them peace" (Q25:63). And that applies not only to walking, but also it is desired of you that all of your actions be accompanied by tranquility and stability.

7. That he invokes Allah ﷻ in his market or workplace, for it has been narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The invoker of Allah to among the heedless is like the fighter among those who go to war. The invoker of Allah in the market is like the living among the dead." Furthermore, some of the righteous forefathers (of the faith) would ride their mounts and come to the market and invoke Allah ﷻ in it, then leave, and nothing would take them out of their houses except that.

8. That his business and work not preoccupy him from rising to perform the ritual prayers on time in a group. Because if he loses that due to being preoccupied with his work, he asks for the anger of his Lord, and the blessing is lifted away from his acquisition. He should be too shy to be seen by the Real ﷻ as too busy in the portions for his own self to fulfill the rights of his Lord. When some of the righteous forefathers were in their work, and if, for example, one lifted his hammer and the call to prayer was made, he would immediately throw it behind him, so that it would not preoccupy him after he had been called to obedience to his Lord. Let him then remember the saying of Allah when the call is being made: "O our people, answer the caller to Allah" (Q46:31). And His saying ﷻ: "O you who have believed, answer the call of Allah and of the Messenger, if they invite you to that which brings you life..." (Q8:24). And His saying: "Answer your Lord" (Q42:47). And A'isha may Allah be pleased with her said: "The Messenger of Allah would be in his house mending his sandals and helping the servants, and when the call to prayer was made, he would rise to go as if he didn't know us."

9. To abandon swearing by and flattery of his merchandise and goods, for strong warning has come concerning that in the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "The business men are evil-doers except those who act rightly and truthfully."

10. Withholding his tongue from gossip and tale bearing. Let him recall the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And do not gossip about one another; would any of you like to eat the dead flesh of his brother? You would hate to..." (Q49:12). Let him also know that he who listens to gossip is considered one of them who gossip. So if someone is gossiped about in his presence, let him forbid that to the gossipers, and if they do not listen then let him stand and leave. Shyness from the creation should not prevent him from fulfilling the right the True King has over him, for Allah ﷻ is more deserving of shyness from His creation, and Allah ﷻ and His Messenger are more deserving of being pleased than that he should please people. "And it is more fitting that they should please Allah and His Messenger" (Q9:62). It has been narrated from the Messenger ﷺ, who said: "Indeed gossip is worse than 36 adulterers in Islam."

Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "If the *faqir* who is occupied with his means of livelihood does not observe the following four proprieties (*adab*), attach no importance to him, even if he be the most knowledgeable of men. They are: avoiding oppressors -preferring the,

people of the other world — relieving the poor —and constancy in the five prayers with the congregation."

He has spoken the truth (may Allah be pleased with him)! For by avoiding the oppressors the *din* is rendered secure, and the light of secured faith is unveiled, and the avoidance of them is also a cause of safety from the punishment of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ says: "And do not incline towards those who oppress, lest the Fire touch you" (Q11:113).

And his saying: 'preferring the people of the other world' means that the *faqir* of means should be characterized by frequent and repeated visiting of the friends of Allah (*awliya*), taking light from them, so that he may be strengthened against the turbidity of worldly means, and so that their fragrant breezes might blow upon him, and their blessings appear on him. And it might be that their support is extended to him in his means of livelihood, and that he is preserved from disobedience because of their love of him and good opinion concerning him.

And his saying: 'relieving the poor.' That is because gratitude for the Divine favors and blessings is mandatory upon the servant, so if He opened for you in the means (a way to prosperity and affluence), then remember those against whom its doors have been shut. And know that Allah ﷻ, has tested the rich by the existence of the needy, just as He has tested the needy by the existence of the rich. "We have made some of you as a trial for others. Will you have patience? For Allah ﷻ sees all things" (Q25:20).

The existence of the poor is a blessing of Allah for the rich in that they (the rich) have found those who could carry their provision for the Final Abode, and "Allah is beyond need, praiseworthy" (Q35:15). Had He not created the poor, then how could their charity be accepted, and who would they find to take it? For that reason the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever gives in charity from a pure source of wealth - and Allah does not accept anything except the pure — it is as if he had placed it in the palm of the All-Merciful, who nurtures it for him and makes it grow, just as one of you does with his colt or young camel, until a morsel of food given in charity becomes like the mountain of Uhud." For that reason also one of the signs of the coming of the Final Hour is that a man will not find one who will take his charity.

And his saying (may Allah ﷻ be pleased with him): 'assiduity in the five prayers with the congregation.' And that is because when the poor devotee occupied with worldly means misses out on the opportunity to retreat and go in solitude to the worship of Allah (divested of all else), then he enters into the pathway of the elect by (his) continual service, and by sticking to obedience. Therefore, he must not miss out on performing the five daily ritual prayers in congregation. His constancy in this becomes a cause for the renewal of lights, and a necessary cause of insight. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The prayer in a gathering is better and more blessed than the solitary prayer by 25 (or 27) degrees." And had the Islamic Law provisioned that every person pray in their own shop or house, then the mosques would become deserted; about which Allah said: "In houses that Allah has allowed to be established, in which His Name is invoked and glorified, early and late, by men whom neither commerce nor trade distract from the remembrance of Allah and the performance of prayer and the giving of alms..." (Q24:36-37). Also, in constancy in the five prayers in a gathering is to be found the gathering and coming together of hearts and their supporting each other and meeting together, and seeing the believers and gathering together with them. And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said: "The Hand of Allah ﷻ, is with the gathering."

And if the gathering comes together, then the blessings of the hearts are extended upon all those present, and their lights are extended to all those who see them. And their coming together and strengthening each other, the way an army comes together and supports each other, becomes a

reason for their victory, which is one of the two interpretations of the saying of Allah: "Indeed Allah loves those who fight in His Way in ranks, as if they were a solid cemented structure" (Q61:4).

Section Two

Lowering the gaze (*basar*) necessitates the light of insight (*basira*)

Obligatory upon you, O believer, is the lowering of your gaze from impermissible sights from the time you leave your house on your way to work until the time you return; and remember the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Tell the believers that they should lower their gaze and guard their private parts, for that is more conducive to purity for them" (Q24:30). Let him know that his sight is a blessing from Allah ﷻ upon him, so let him not be ungrateful for the blessings of Allah; and not forget that it is trust of Allah ﷻ with him, so let him not break the trust of Allah ﷻ. Let him also remember the saying of Allah ﷻ: "He knows the betrayal of the eyes, and whatever the hearts conceal" (Q40:19). And His saying: "Does he not know that Allah sees?" (Q96:14).

And if you desire to see clearly, then know that He sees. And let him know that if he lowers his gaze, Allah ﷻ will open his insight as a fitting recompense for him. Whoever constricts his insight as a fitting recompense for him. Whoever constricts himself in the outwardly manifest, Allah ﷻ expands him in the inwardly unseen. Some of them (the gnostics) said: "No one has ever lowered his gaze from what Allah ﷻ has forbidden except that He created a light in his heart, the sweetness of which he experiences."

Section Three

The *tadbir* of the people of insight and perception

Know that the people of insight consider *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ to be a form of contention with His Lordship. And that is because if He makes some undesirable affair descend upon you which you want lifted, or if He lifts away some desirable affair which you want Him to set down with you, or if you accuse Him of neglecting something you know that He has taken charge of and established for you (like sustenance), then all that is considered contending with His Lordship, and leaving the reality of pure servanthood. Remember here the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Does not the human being see that We created him from a drop of seed? And yet he openly argues!" (Q36:77).

In this statement is a reproach for man when he forgot the source of his formation, and argued with He Who formed him, and forgot the secret of his origins, and contended with He Who originated him. How can it be appropriate for someone who was made from a blood clot to contend with Allah ﷻ in His decisions, and to go against Him in His abrogations and confirmations? So be wary, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, of *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ.

Know that *tadbir* is among the strongest of veils over the hearts, preventing them from looking upon the unseen. And indeed the *tadbir* for the self (*nafs*) arises from the love it has for itself, so had you been absent from it in annihilation, and been with Allah ﷻ in subsistence, that would have made you absent from *tadbir* for yourself or by yourself. How ugly is a servant who is ignorant of the actions of Allah ﷻ, heedless of the perfection of the vision of Allah ﷻ? Have you not heard the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Say, 'Allah suffices' (Q13:43)? Where is the sufficiency with Allah ﷻ for a slave who has *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ? Had he found the *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ sufficient for him, it would have prevented his having *tadbir* alongside Allah ﷻ.

Section Four

The coming of suggestions of *tadbir* depending on the circumstance

Know that *tadbir*'s suggestions strike strongest and most often at those servants directing themselves to Allah ﷻ, and the wayfarers along the path to Allah, before their firm establishment in certitude of faith (*yaqin*), and before strength and fixity are to be found in them. That is because the

people of heedlessness and evil deeds have answered the summons of Shaytan to the performance of major sins, rebellion, and the following of desires, so there is no need for the Shaytan to call them towards *tadbir*. Had he called them to it they would have answered quickly, so *tadbir* is not the strongest of means of access for the Shaytan to them. He enters in through the means of *tadbir* upon the people of obedience and those directing themselves to Allah ﷻ, due to his incapability of entering in upon them through other means.

Because of this, the person of a regular religious occupation (*wird*) might miss his daily practice because of him, or miss out on true presence with Allah ﷻ during it, because of the anxiety produced by *tadbir* and reflection upon his own self-interests. Or, such a person might have been made weak by the Shaytan, who then cast in him the impurities of *tadbir*, to make his moments of purity turbid. That is because he is envious, and the Envious is at his greatest envy when he sees you in pure moments and beautiful states.

Furthermore, the whisperings of *tadbir* arrive upon each one according to his state of being. Therefore, whoever's *tadbir* is for the acquiring of his daily provision, its cure is that he understand that Allah ﷻ has already taken care of that, as He said: "And there is no creature that walks upon the earth except that the responsibility for its sustenance is on Allah" (Q11:6). We will, after this, devote a whole chapter to the subject of daily sustenance and provision (*rizq*), Allah ﷻ Willing.

And whoever's *tadbir* is for the prevention of the harm of an enemy which he cannot encounter or defeat, then let him realize that the forelock of the one he fears is in the hand of the Real ﷻ, and that he is powerless to do anything except according to what the Real has planned for him. And let him remember the saying of Allah "And whoever depends upon Allah, then He is his sufficiency" (Q65:3). And His saying: "Isn't Allah enough for His slave? And they try to cause fear of other than Him in you..." (Q39:36). And His saying: "Men said to them: 'a great army is gathering against you, so fear them.' But it only increased their faith, and they said: 'Allah is our sufficiency, and He is the best disposer of affairs.' And they returned with grace and bounty from Allah, with no harm ever touching them. For they followed the good pleasure of Allah, and Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded" (Q3:173-174). Let him pay attentive heed with the hearing of his heart to the saying of Allah "And if you fear for him. then cast him into the water, and do not be afraid or grieve" (Q28:7). And know that the Real is the worthiest of those whose aid is asked and who give aid, as He said: "And He protects and is not protected" (Q23:88), and He is the worthiest of those who preserve when their preservation is requested, as He said: "And Allah is the best preserver, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful" (Q12:64).

And if the *tadbir* is for debts whose payment is due, but cannot be paid, and whose collectors have no patience, then know that the One who by His tender mercy has given you His gifts is the same One who by His subtle mercy will make the payment easy on your behalf. Qur'an: "Is the reward for good but good?" (Q55:60). Shame on the slave who rests in confident reliance on what is in his hands, but who does not rest in confidence on what is in the Hands of Allah ﷻ.

And if the *tadbir* is for the sake of a family you have left behind, with no one to care for them after your death, then know that the One Who will take responsibility for and care of them after your death is the same One who took care of them in your presence or absence from them during your lifetime. Listen to what the Messenger said ﷺ: "O Allah, You are the companion in travel, and the deputy in the family, wealth and children." So He Who you hope for before you is the very One Who is hoped for, for those behind you. Listen to the Poet's saying:

*"He towards Whom I have oriented my face completely,
the same One have I appointed as deputy for my family.
Not an hour of their states escapes His knowledge,
and His bounty is more expansive and comprehensive
than my bounty."*

Allah ﷻ is more merciful towards them than you are. So do not become anxious over those in the care of another.

And if your *tadbir* is for a sickness that has descended upon you, whose time you fear may be long, then understand that there is a set lifetime for afflictions and sicknesses. So just as an animal never dies except when its lifetime finishes, in just the same way afflictions do not end until their moment has come. And remember the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And if their appointed time has come, they cannot seek to delay it for an hour, nor can they speed it up" (Q7:34).

The story is told that there was a boy whose father passed away, and the boy remained living afterward. So his worldly means became constricted, and his father had friends who scattered (after his death) in Iraq. He thought, "Which of my father's friends shall I visit?" Then he resolved to go and visit the most famous and distinguished among those people. When the boy came to him, he granted him generous hospitality and exalted his position. He then said: "O my master, and son of my master, what has brought you here?" The boy replied: "The means of this world are constricted for me, so I want you to speak to the ruler (*amir*) of this country on my behalf, that he may place me over a district from among his regions of rule, so that my state can be ameliorated by this." The Shaykh bowed his head in meditation for a moment, then raised his head to him and said: "It is not in my power to make the first part of night change to early morning, so where am I (compared) to you when you are given authority over the Iraqis?" At this, the boy left that Shaykh angry, not understanding what the Shaykh meant.

At the same time, the Khalifa decided to look for someone to teach his son, and he was directed to this youth, and said to him, "O son of so-and-so, come to teach the son of the Khalifa." So the youth took to teaching the Khalifa's son for the period of teaching and then kept his company until 40 years had passed. Then the Khalifa died and his son was made heir, and the son gave this youth authority over the people of Iraq!

And if the *tadbir* is for the sake of a wife or mother that you lost, who used to accompany you and be with you in your states and take care of your needs, then know that the bounty of the One towards you, Who eased your way to having her, has not finished, and His giving has not ceased. He is more than capable of giving you from His free grants one who is greater in beauty and in knowledge of what you lack and need; so do not be of the ignorant.

The types of *tadbir* and their cures cannot be enumerated, and there is no way to completely detail them and explain them. And whenever Allah gives you direct understanding from Him, He will let you know how to act.

Section Five

Know that *tadbir* is from the *nafs* due to the veil in it, and that had the heart been freed from its neighboring proximity, and been kept safely away from its incessant speech, then the suggestions of *tadbir* would not visit it.

I heard our Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas al-Mursi may Allah be pleased with him say: "When Allah ﷻ created the earth upon the water, it became restless and agitated, so He stabilized it with the

mountains, saying: "And by the mountains, which He has firmly fixed" (Q79:32). In a similar way, when He created the *nafs*, it was agitated and restless, so He settled it with the mountains of the intellect."

The tranquil peace (*sakina*) from his Lord descends upon any servant whose intellect is sufficient, and whose light is expanded, so that his *nafs* becomes rested from restless agitation, and trusts in the owner of causes and thus becomes peaceful (*mutma'inna*). Meaning, it becomes still and quiescent towards the orders of Allah, firmly fixed under the flow of His Decrees, supplied with His powerful aid and lights, leaving all *tadbir* or contention, fully surrendered to its Master due to the fact that He sees it. "Is it not enough for you that Allah is a witness to all things?" (Q41:53).

It deserves to be called: "O soul at tranquil peace! Return back to your Lord, pleasing and well-pleased. So enter in among My slaves. Enter My garden" (Q89:27-30). In these verses are described immense attributes and great noble qualities of this soul, among which are:

That the *nafs* is of three types (or degrees): commanding toward the evil (*ammara*), self-reproaching (*lawwama*), and at rest (*mutma'inna*). The Real ﷻ, did not speak directly to any of these selves except to the self-at-rest. For about the first He said (in third person): "Indeed, the *nafs* persistently incites to evil" (Q12:54). And about the second: "I do swear by the self-reproaching soul" (Q75:2). But He directed His speech towards the third, saying: "O soul at peace! Return..."

His choice of the (nick)name for it: in the language of the Arabs, this naming (according to attribute) is considered a form of exaltation in speech, and a source of pride according to the people of intellect.

His praising it with 'tranquil peace', because of its complete submission and total reliance upon Him. Since the tranquil (*mutma'inna*) is the one who is humble upon the earth, if it becomes low by its humility and brokenness, its Master praises it, revealing His pride in it, as the Messenger ﷺ said: "Whoever humbles himself before Allah ﷻ, Allah ﷻ elevates him."

His saying: "Return to your Lord, pleasing and well-pleased." There is indicated therein the fact that no permission is granted for returning to Allah (in the manner of the noble) for the soul that incites to evil or the self-blaming soul. Rather, that privilege is only for the soul at restful peace. And because of what it has of peace, it is said to it, "Return to your Lord, pleasing and well-pleased." "We have permitted you entrance into Our Presence, and eternity in Our paradise." This is an arousal for the believers to acquire this station of peace for themselves. And no one attains to it except through complete surrender to Allah ﷻ and the absence of *tadbir* with Him.

His saying: "Return to your Lord." He did not say, 'to the Lord,' or 'to Allah,' indicating that this return is to the subtle mercy of His Lordship, not a return towards the dominating force of His Divinity. This becomes a source of intimacy for it, and mutual tenderness, honor, and love.

His saying: "pleased." In other words, pleased with the Decrees of Allah ﷻ in the world, and with His generosity and favors in the hereafter. This is a way of informing the servant that he cannot obtain the return to Allah ﷻ except through peaceful tranquility with Allah ﷻ and contentment with Him. Otherwise, no. Also, it indicates that he cannot attain to the good pleasure of Allah ﷻ with him in the hereafter until he is pleased with Allah here in this world. And if you say: "How can it be that this verse requires that contentment from Allah ﷻ is a result of the servant's contentment (with Him), whereas the other verse shows that contentment of the slave with Allah ﷻ is a result of Allah's contentment with the slave?" Then know that the two verses can be combined together. Therefore, the saying of Allah: "Allah is pleased with them and they with Him" (Q5:119) indicates, by its ordering, that the good pleasure of the slave is a result of the good pleasure

of Allah ﷻ, which is something that the Reality demands as such. If He were not content with them in the beginning, they would not be content with Him in the end. And the second verse shows that whoever is pleased with Allah ﷻ here in this world will be pleasing to Allah ﷻ in the world to come. This is clear with no ambiguity to it.

His saying, "well-pleasing." This is a great praise for the tranquil soul. Rather, it is the most sublime praise and description, for have you not heard the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And the good pleasure (*ridwan*) from Allah is greater" (Q9:72), after His description of the heavenly pleasures? In other words, the pleasure and contentment Allah ﷻ has for them is greater than the bliss that they experience therein.

His saying: "Enter in among My slaves." In this verse there is a tremendous glad tidings for the tranquil soul, in that it was called and summoned to enter in among His servants, and which servants are these? These are the servants of election and victory, not servants by (virtue of being under) the Divine dominion and control. They are the servants about whom Allah has said: "Verily you have no authority over My servants" (Q15:42). And: "Except those slaves of Yours who are sincere." Not the servants about whom Allah ﷻ said: "Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to the All-Merciful as a slave" (Q19:93). The happiness that the self at peace experienced when He said, "Enter among My slaves" was greater than when He said, "Enter My garden." This is because the first is connected to Him, whereas the second is connected to His garden.

His saying: "And enter My paradise," alluding by that to the fact that these attributes and characteristics of the soul at peace are what prepared it and allowed it to be summoned to enter in the company of His slaves, and to enter His Garden: the garden of obedience in this world, and the known garden in the world to come. And Allah knows best.

Section Six

Tranquility and good pleasure are found in the abandonment of *tadbir*

The verse above included two characteristics, each of which point to the destruction of *tadbir*. For He ﷻ described this soul with these characteristics that we mentioned, among which are: tranquility and good pleasure.

These two cannot be except by the dropping of *tadbir*, for the self cannot become tranquil until it leaves *tadbir* with Allah out of its trust in His excellent (and superior) *tadbir* for it. This is because, if it is well pleased with Allah ﷻ, it submits fully to him, and surrenders to His order, and yields to His command, so it becomes tranquil under His Lordship, and settles with delight in dependence upon His Divinity. So there is no unrest or agitation, because the light of the intellect that He gave it establishes it so that it doesn't move. That is because it is subdued under His command, consigned to Him in His abrogation and confirmation.

Chapter Nine

The Secret Purpose in the Creation of Tadbir

Summary

This very short chapter explains the wisdom behind the creation of tadbir in the servants.

Text

Know that the secret purpose behind the creation of *tadbir* and human choice is to manifest the overwhelming dominance of the All-Dominating. For He ﷻ willed to make Himself known to the worshipful slaves through the attribute of His dominating force (*qahr*), so He created in them *tadbir* and choice, and gave them open permission so that they were capable of that (i.e., *tadbir*). For when they were in the state of face-to-face encounter and direct beholding of the Divine Reality, they were not capable of *tadbir* and choice, just as the highest assembly of archangels is incapable of that.

So when He created the servants, and they began to choose for themselves and by themselves, He directed His dominating force towards their *tadbir* and choice, so their (i.e., their *tadbir*'s) pillars quaked, and their buildings were demolished. So when He made Himself known to the slaves with the dominating force of His design (*murad*), they came to know that He is the dominating powerful One over His servants.

Therefore, He did not create free choice in you so that you would have free choice by yourself, but rather so that His Will and Choice would void your will and choice, and so that you might understand that you have, in reality, no independent choice or will of your own. Similarly, He did not make within you *tadbir* so that it would remain with you continually, but rather He made that within you so that you would plot and plan and He would plot and plan, and there would end up being only what He planned for, not what you planned for. For that reason it was said to one of them: "How did you come to know Allah ﷻ?" He said: "By the nullification and abolishing of my resolutions."

Chapter Ten

Tadbir in the Daily Provision (rizq)

Summary

At this point, the author shifts focus slightly and concentrates on daily provision and sustenance (rizq) and tadbir in it. He also discusses the wisdom behind the existence of human need, and illustrates this with examples from the life of the Prophet Musa peace be upon him.

Text

Earlier, we promised to devote a section of this book to the subject of *tadbir* in relation to daily provision and sustenance, because *tadbir* enters into the hearts the most through this door.

Know that the safety of the hearts from *tadbir* in *rizq* is an immense blessing, and none are safe from it except those who are given success by Allah ﷻ. They are those who have been truthful to Allah ﷻ in their excellent trust in Him, so that their hearts have become tranquil with Him, and they have realized reliance upon Him. One of the Shaykhs even said: "Master the affair of *rizq* and you don't have to concern yourselves with the other stations of the Path." And others said: "The greatest anxieties are the anxieties of the fulfillment of needs."

It can be observed from what the Shaykh said above that Allah ﷻ created this human in need of sustenance to maintain his bodily constitution and provide him with nourishment. For while the natural inward heat would (otherwise) decompose the component parts of his body, that food (which he eats) is processed by the stomach. It then extracts the nutrients from the food, and those parts of his body return to their previous state and are replenished after what his natural inward heat decomposed from him. And had the Real ﷻ willed, He would have enriched the human from being in any need of material sustenance and food consumption. However, the Real ﷻ desired to manifest the essential and desperate need of the animal towards nourishment and food, and the Real's freedom from being in need of what the animal is in need of. For that reason He said: "And say, 'Shall I take other than Allah as a protecting friend, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Who feeds and is not fed?'" (Q6:14). So He lauded Himself with two attributes. First, that He feeds (all) others, because all servants take from His beneficence, and eat from His sustenance and bounty. Second, that he is not fed because He is pure and sanctified beyond being in need of nourishment. Rather, He is the Everlasting, and the Everlasting is the one who is neither fed nor nourished.

Allah ﷻ, has distinguished the animal, instead of other than it among what exists, with having essential need towards nourishment. That is because He ﷻ gave to the animals from His attributes what He did not give to others, such that if He were to leave them without need, they would have become presumptuous and made pretentious claims. So the Real ﷻ willed — and He is the Wise and Informed — to make him in need of food, drink, clothes, and other similar things, so that the frequent repetition of these needs becomes a cause of the extinction of presumptuous claims from him or in him.

Section One

The Wisdom Behind the Existence of Intense Need

Benefit:

Know that the Real ﷻ, willed to make these species, namely, the animals, including the human and other kinds, to be in need either so that they may know Him or so that He may be known through it (i.e., the need). Do you not see that need is a doorway to Allah and a means of arrival to Him? Have you not heard the saying of Allah ﷻ: "O people, you are the poor towards Allah, and Allah is the independent beyond need, the praiseworthy" (Q35:15). So He made poverty (*faqr*) towards Allah ﷻ as a means that brings one to Him and to being perpetually with Him. You might understand from this what the Prophet ﷺ said: "Who knows himself, knows his Lord." In other words, whoever knows his self with its need, poverty, abasement, and humiliation, will know his Lord in His Might, His Authority, His Being, and His Beneficence and other similar attributes of perfection. Especially the human species, for the Real ﷻ repeated the causes of need and made numerous the kinds of poverty in him, because he is in need of the soundness of his livelihood and his end. Understand from this what Allah said: "We have indeed created man in hardship and toil" (Q90:4), in other words, in the affair of his worldly life and hereafter. Because of his nobility in the eyes of Allah ﷻ, He made the causes of need many in him. Do you not see that some types of animals are without need of clothing with their fur, wool, and hair; or from having to take a house to live in, with their shells and nests?

Another benefit:

That Allah ﷻ wished to test the human, so He therefore made him in need of various things, to see whether he would use his own intellect and *tadbir* to procure his needs and requirements, or return to the portioning and decreeing of Allah ﷻ of them for him.

Another benefit:

That Allah ﷻ desired to be loved by this servant. So when He placed in him the causes of intense need and then lifted them up from him, the servant experienced from that a sweetness in his self and rest in his heart, which caused the love of his Lord to be revived. The Messenger ﷺ said: "Love Allah for the blessings from which He feeds you." So every time the blessings and gifts were renewed, his love revived accordingly.

Another benefit:

That Allah ﷻ desired to be thanked, so He therefore made the servants in need, then took charge of lifting it up from them, so that they might thank Him in gratitude, and recognize His beneficence and goodness. Allah ﷻ said: "Eat from the provision of your Lord and thank Him gratefully. A goodly land and a forgiving Lord!" (Q34:15).

Another benefit:

That Allah ﷻ willed to open for the servants the door of intimate communion (*munajat*). So every time they were in need of daily provision and blessing, they would orient themselves to Him, by lifting their aspirations to Him, and become ennobled with intimate communion and gifted with His grants. And had intense need not brought them to direct communion, the intellects of the common among the slaves would not understand (the reason for) it. And had it not been for need, then none would seek its door to be opened except the intellects of the people of (Divine) Love. So the coming of intense need becomes a means to intimate communion, which is an immense honor, and a great rank of dignity.

Have you not heard what the Real ﷻ reported about Musa peace be upon him with His words: "So he watered their flocks for them, then he turned to the shade, and said, 'O my Lord, truly I am in desperate need of the good that you have sent down to me'" (Q28:24). Sayyidina Ali may Allah be pleased with him said: "By Allah, He did not ask for anything except some bread to eat, and indeed the green of the herbs could be seen through his stomach due to his leanness."

So consider, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, how he asked that from his Lord because of his knowledge that none besides Him owns anything. In a similar way the believer must be like that, asking from Allah ﷻ what is little and great. One of them said: "Indeed I ask Allah ﷻ in my ritual prayers for the salt of my yeast to make bread." And let not the meagerness or smallness of what you ask for keep you from asking from Allah ﷻ what you need. For if you do not ask Him for a small thing, you will not find another Lord to give you that. A request, even if it is for something small, becomes a great door for intimate conversation (*munajat*). Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "Let not your aspiration in your supplication be the joy of the fulfillment of your wants, for then you would be one of the veiled. Rather, let your aspiration be the communion with your Master."

And in this verse (about Sayyidina Musa peace be upon him above) are to be found many benefits.

First benefit:

That the believer should ask anything from his Lord, be it small or great, and we have mentioned this before.

Second benefit:

That he (Musa peace be upon him) called upon Allah ﷻ using the Name of Lordship, since that is the fitting name to use in this situation. Because the 'Lord' (*Rabb*) is the one who fostered and raised (*rabba*) you with His beneficence, and nourished you with His bounty. So when he calls his Master with the Name of Lordship, it is an expression of fond kindness, a Name whose yields are never cut off, and whose benefits are never constrained.

Third benefit:

His saying: "Truly I am in desperate need of the good that you have sent down to me." He did not say, 'I am in need of good.' One of the beneficial lessons contained in this is: if he said, 'I am in need of Your good,' or 'I am in need of good,' then his words would not imply the reality that He had already sent down his sustenance, and did not neglect his situation. So he said, "Truly I am in desperate need of the good that you have sent down to me" to indicate that he trusts Allah ﷻ, and knows Allah and does not forget Him. It is as if he said, 'My Lord! I know that You do not neglect my affair, nor the affairs of anything You created, and You have indeed sent down my provision. So bring to me what You have sent down for me, in the manner that You wish (upon what You wish), surrounded with Your beneficence, and connected to Your bounties.' In that there are two benefits: the benefit of asking, and the benefit of acknowledging that the Real ﷻ has sent down his *rizq*, but has enshrouded its time in obscurity, and the manner in which it is to be obtained, and the intermediate means through which it is to be acquired. This is all so that the servant may become restless and agitated out of desperation, and with desperation comes the answer. Allah ﷻ said: "Or, Who answers the desperate when he calls out to Him" (Q27:62). Had the time, the cause, and the intermediate means been specified, then the slaves would not experience the desperation that exists when these are unknown. So Glorified be Allah ﷻ the Wise, the Powerful Knower of all!

Fourth benefit:

The verse indicates that asking and requesting from Allah ﷻ does not oppose the station of pure servitude, because Musa peace be upon him occupies a level of perfection in the station of servitude. But with that he nonetheless requested from Allah ﷻ, which shows that asking does not abrogate the station of servitude.

And if you ask: if the station of servitude does not contradict asking, then why didn't Ibrahim al-Khalil peace be upon him ask when he was thrown from the catapult and Jibril peace be upon him came to him and he said: "His knowledge of my state is sufficient for me not to have to ask Him." So he found sufficiency in the knowledge of Allah ﷻ from having to manifest his need by asking.

The answer: the Prophets peace be upon them act in each situation according to what they understand from Allah ﷻ is the appropriate thing for them to do. So Ibrahim peace be upon him understood that what was desired from him in that instance was to not manifest any request, and to find sufficiency in the divine knowledge, so he acted according to what he understood from his Lord. And that was because the Real ﷻ desired to manifest his secret and His providential care for him to the highest assembly of Arch-angels, who had previously spoken to Him when "He said: 'I am going to place upon the earth a vicegerent.' They said: Will You place upon it one who will work corruption in it and spill blood, while we glorify You and declare Your holiness?' He said: 'I know that which you know not.' (Q2:30)." So the Real ﷻ desired to manifest the secret of His saying 'I know that which you know not' when Ibrahim peace be upon him was thrown by the catapult. It is as if He said: 'O you who said: Will you place in it one who will work corruption,' how did you find my friend (Ibrahim)? You have seen what the people of corruption have wrought in the earth, like Nimrod and his likes among the corrupt. But you have not looked upon what is in it of the people of righteousness and guidance, such as Ibrahim peace be upon him and those who followed him from the people of Love.'

As for Musa peace be upon him, he knew that what was desired from him at that instance was manifesting intense need, and initiating the request, so he performed what the moment required of him, "And for everyone there is a direction which he faces" (Q2:148). So all are with clear insight and guidance, and success from Allah ﷻ and providential care.

Fifth benefit:

Consider Musa's peace be upon him request from his Lord for *rizq*, and how he did not forthrightly ask Him, but rather acknowledged his need before Allah, and bore witness to His independence beyond need. Because if he recognized his self with its poverty and need, he would recognize Allah ﷻ with His independence and wealth. And this is from among the carpets of intimate communion (*munajat*), which are many. For one time He sits you upon the carpet of intense need, so you call out to Him: 'O Rich beyond need!' And another time He sits you upon the carpet of abasement so you call out to Him: 'O Mighty!' And another time He sits you upon the carpet of impotence, so you call out to Him: 'O Powerful!' And similarly with the other Names of Allah ﷻ.

So Musa peace be upon him acknowledged his poverty and need before Allah ﷻ, and this was an indirect reference to asking, even if he didn't ask directly. And one form of indirect asking is for the servant to mention his attributes of poverty and need to Allah ﷻ. And another form is to mention the attributes of the Master such as His Being and Oneness, as has come in the hadith: "The best supplication I, and the Prophets before me, made, is: 'There is no god but Allah, One without another.'"

So he ﷺ made the lauding of Allah ﷻ a form of supplication, because in lauding the rich master's attributes of perfection is an exposure to His graces and favors. The poet said:

*'Most Generous! Morning does not find Him changed
in His noble behavior, nor does the evening!
If a man glorifies Him, then that glorification
suffices as a plea of supplication to Him.'*

And Allah ﷻ said, speaking about Yunus peace be upon him "So he cried out in the darkness, 'There is no god but You, Glory be to You, I have indeed been among the unjust oppressors' (Q21:87). Then Allah ﷻ said about Himself: "So We answered him and saved him from the distress, and thus do We deliver those who are secure in faith" (Q21:88). Yunus peace be upon him did not ask directly, but when He lauded his Lord ﷻ and acknowledged before Him his need to Him, the Real considered that a request.

Sixth benefit:

One of its more important requisites is that Musa performed a good deed for the two daughters of Shu'ayb peace be upon him but did not seek from them any recompense, nor did he ask for a reward from them. Rather when he watered their flocks for them he drew near to his Lord and asked from Him, not from them, but from his Master Who never ceases to give however much He is asked. And the Sufi is one who is himself just but does not seek or demand justice for himself from others. We wrote some poetry on this meaning:

*'Do not busy yourself with reproaching the people,
or your time will pass away, and time is short.
And what do you blame them for,
while you imagine yourself truthful?
Things happen only by the flowing
of the Decrees upon them.
They do not fulfill duly the rights of Divinity,
do you then seek after their fidelity
while you are yourself contemptible?
Bear witness to their rights over you and fulfill them justly,
but do not seek justice for yourself over them; rather be patient.
If you are (patient), then call to witness the Eye of The One Who is
knowledgeable and aware of what is hidden.'*

So Musa peace be upon him himself was just, but he did not seek justice for himself. Because of that, he had the more perfect recompense with Allah ﷻ, and Allah ﷻ expedited that for him in this life in addition to what He stored for him in the Next Life. For He made him an in-law to one of His prophets peace be upon them, and married him to one of his daughters, and gave him intimacy with him until the time for his messenger-hood came.

So do not make your dealings except with Allah ﷻ, O servant, and you will be from the successful, and He will honor you with what He honored the righteous slaves.

Seventh benefit:

Consider the saying of Allah ﷻ: "So he watered their flocks and then turned to the shade."

In that is a proof that it is permitted for the believer to prefer shade over sunlight, and cool water over hot, and the easier of two ways over the more difficult. And all of that does not take him out of the station of non-attachment (*zuhd*). Do you not see that the Real ﷻ reported about Musa peace be upon him that he turned to the shade, i.e., he aimed for it and came to it?

You may say that it has been narrated from some that a man was sitting in the shade, and then the sun shone over the container he was drinking from, but he did not move it. He was asked about it and said: "When I placed it on the ground there was no sunlight on it, and I am ashamed to follow my self's desires by moving it to the shade." Then know, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that this is the (temporary) state of a servant who seeks truthfulness from his self and prevents it from indulging in its desires lest it preoccupy him from being heedful of his Master. And had his station been perfected he would have lifted the water away from the sunlight, intending by that the fulfillment of the rights of his self, which Allah ﷻ ordered to be fulfilled. Not out of trying to acquire his self's portions and desires, but to accomplish the Divine right in his self. And Allah ﷻ has said: "Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you" (Q2:185). And: "'Allah desires to lighten your burdens for you, for man was created feeble" (Q4:28). Similarly, the scholars of Law have stated that if someone vows to travel to Makkah (may Allah ennoble it) on foot, he is allowed to wear shoes, and is not obliged to go barefoot. Because the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) does not have as its specific aim the discomfort and inconvenience of human-kind, and the laws did not come with any prohibition of comforts and enjoyments for people, and how could they, if they were created for them and for their sake?

Rabi' ibn Ziyad al-Harithi said to Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him: "Help me with my brother 'Asim." He said: "What is wrong with him?" Rabi said: "He wears the garb of ascetics, and he wants to be a recluse." He said: "Then I must go to him." He found him wrapped in two cloaks, with unkempt hair and beard, so he frowned in his face and said: "Woe to you! Are you not ashamed for leaving your family? Do you not have any mercy for your children (who are now alone)? Do you think Allah ﷻ permitted the good things for you but hates for you to enjoy them? Rather, your renunciation is of little value in the Eyes of Allah ﷻ. Did you not hear that Allah ﷻ said in His Book: 'It is He Who has placed the Earth for the people. Therein are fruit and date palms, producing spathes enclosing dates, and also corn, with its leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet smelling plants. Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? He created man from sounding clay like pottery. And He created jinn from fire free of smoke. Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests. Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together, between them a barrier which they do not transgress. Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? Out of them come pearls and coral' (Q55:10 - 22). Do you not see that Allah ﷻ made all of this permissible for the slaves only so that they might use them and enjoy them, and praise Allah ﷻ for them so He may reward them? And your partaking of the blessings of Allah ﷻ is better than merely acknowledging them by mouth." 'Asim responded: "Then what do you say about the coarseness of your clothes and food?" Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him said: "Woe to you! Allah has commanded the leaders of Truth to compare themselves to and live according to the poorest of the people."

So it becomes clear from what Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him said that the Real ﷻ did not require from the servants to not partake of enjoyments, but rather required them to give thanks when they enjoy them. Allah ﷻ said: "Eat from the provision of your Lord and thank Him" (Q34:15). And He said: "O you who have attained to faith, eat of the good We have provided you, and be grateful to Allah" (Q2:172). And He said: "O Messengers, eat of the good things and do righteous deeds" (Q23:51). He did not say: 'Do not eat,' but rather: 'Eat, and work.'

You might say: "The 'good things' (*tayyibat*) mentioned in these verses mean what is lawfully permissible (*halal*), because in the perspective of the Law, the permissible is good." Then know that the intended meaning behind 'good things' could be the law-fully permissible, since it is good because no sin nor blame nor veil is attached to it or related to it. Or, the intended meaning behind the 'good things' could be tasty foods. Thus the secret in its being made permissible and the order to eat of it is so that the desire for gratitude of the one who partakes of it can be revived, so that he performs service and safeguards the right of the inviolable and forbidden.

Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "My Shaykh said, 'My son, cool the water. If you drink other than cold water you will say 'praise be to Allah' (*alhamdulillah*) out of a sense of obligation but without feeling. But if you drink cool water and say 'praise be to 'Allah' each and every one of your organs will respond to the Benevolence of Allah with praise.'

As for the one you came to and saw that the sunlight had extended over his container of water, so it was said to him, "Will you not lift it up?" and he said, "When I placed it, there was no sunlight on it, and I am ashamed to go along with the portion of my self." Know that he is a man under the influence of a state and is not to be followed.

Chapter Eleven

The Intended Desire of Allah ﷻ in Creating Jinn and Man

Summary

The author explains the purpose behind the creation of mankind, and how Allah ﷻ has taken the responsibility of providing for His slaves.

Text

We spoke earlier on the secret behind the needs of animals, especially the human, towards nourishment that sustains them. Now, we will speak of Allah ﷻ taking responsibility for this sustenance and His undertaking the task of bringing it to them.

Know that the Real ﷻ, just as He made the animals to be in need of provision to aid them and nourishment to maintain their being, created these two species (which are the jinn and humankind) so that He may order them to worship Him and demand from them their obedience and compliance to His commands. Allah ﷻ said: "I did not create jinn and man except to worship Me. I do not desire sustenance from them nor do I desire for them to feed Me. Indeed, Allah is the All-Provider (ar-Razzaq), He of unwavering strength" (Q51:56-58).

So Allah ﷻ made clear that He created these two species of creation to worship Him, in other words, to order them to do it. Just as you say to your servant: 'I only bought you, O servant, to serve me,' i.e., that I may order you to serve so that you rise to it. The servant might be rebellious and unwilling to serve, and you did not purchase him for that, but rather so that he might take care of your necessities and fulfill your needs. The Mu'tazila take the verse in its outward literal sense, and say: 'The Real created them for obedience, and infidelity and disobedience comes from themselves.' We have already nullified this way of thinking.

In this clarification of the secret behind creation and existention, there is a notification for the slaves, namely, so that they may not be ignorant of the purpose of Allah ﷻ in them, lest they go astray from the path of guidance and neglect to attend to what is required of them. It has been narrated that four angels every day speak to each other, and one of them says: 'Would that this creation were not created!' And the next one says: 'Would that they knew what they were created for!' And the next says: 'Would that they, if they knew why they were created, acted accordingly!' And the fourth one says, "Would that they, if they did not act according to what they knew, repented from what they did!"

So the Real ﷻ made it clear that He did not create the slaves for themselves, but rather created them so that they might worship Him and declare His Oneness. For you do not buy a servant to serve himself, rather you buy him to serve you. So this verse is an argument against those who are preoccupied with their own gratifications over the right of their Lord, and with their desires over obedience to their Master.

It is related that Ibrahim ibn Adham may Allah be pleased with him heard a voice calling to him from his saddlebow when he was hunting: "O Ibrahim, were you created for this? Or were you

commanded to do this?" Then he heard again: "O Ibrahim, you were not created for this, and you were not commanded to do this." And this was the cause of his repentance.

So the one of understanding is the one who has understood the secret of existence and acts accordingly. This is the true *fiqh* (understanding) which, if given to someone, that one has been granted an immense grant. Imam Malik may Allah be pleased with him said about it: "*Fiqh* is not according to numerous narrations, but rather *fiqh* is a light that Allah ﷻ deposits in the heart." And I heard our Shaykh Abu-I 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say: "The faqih is the one for whom the veil has been ripped open (*'infaqa'a*) from the two eyes of his heart."

So whoever understands the secret of existence, namely, that He did not create him except to obey Him and serve Him, then this understanding becomes a cause for his doing without (*zuhd*) in the world, drawing near to the next world, neglecting the portions and gratifications of his self, being occupied with the rights of his Master, reflecting upon the End and preparing for it. One of them said: "Had I been told that I would die tomorrow, I would not find increase in my actions to prepare for death." It has also been narrated that a boy's mother said to him: "Why do you not eat the bread?" So he responded: "Between leavening the dough and eating the bread crumbs is time to recite 50 verses of the Qur'an."

Such are people whose intellects have become distracted from this world, who examine the frights of the commencement of Judgment and the horrors of the Day of Rising and the meeting with the Omnipotent over the heavens and the earth. This makes them absent from paying any attention to the pleasures of this world and leaning towards its amusements. One of the gnostics related: "I entered the house of one of the Shaykhs in Morocco, and I stood to fetch water for the ablution, and the Shaykh stood up to do it himself but I said no. But he forbade me to do it and only accepted that he fill up the container while I hold the rope on the other end. There was a great olive tree next to his well that covered the house, so I said, 'O my master, why do you not tie one end of the rope to this tree?' He said, 'Is there a tree here? I have been in this house for 60 years, not knowing that this house had a tree.'"

So open your ears, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, to this story and its likes, and you will come to know that Allah ﷻ has servants who are preoccupied with Him over all things, and for whom nothing distracts from Him. His tremendousness has overwhelmed their intellects, and His awesomeness has stunned them into bewilderment, so His love has established itself in their secret parts. May Allah ﷻ make us of them, and not take us out of their company.

Another similar story: A man in a masjid in the highlands, who was among the saints, requested someone to serve him by taking a palm branch from one of two palm trees in the masjid. He asked him, "O my master, from which should I take, the yellow, or the red?" He answered: "My son, I have been in this masjid for 40 years, and I don't know the yellow from the red."

And it has been narrated that a man's children would cross through his house and he would ask: 'Whose children are these? Whose children are these?' It would be said to him: 'They are your children!' And he would not know them, due to his preoccupation with Allah ﷻ. And one Shaykh would say about his children when he saw them, 'These are orphans,' even though their father was alive.

And further elaboration on this point would take us beyond the purpose of this book.

Chapter Twelve

The Guarantee of Sustenance by Allah ﷻ for His Servants

(The first of five chapters on the subject of rizq)

Summary

Now begins a series of five chapters, each centering around a key verse of the Qur'an, focusing on the subject of daily provision (rizq). In this specific chapter, the author explains the uselessness of having anxiety over one's sustenance, since Allah ﷻ has already guaranteed it.

Text

When Allah ﷻ said: "I did not create the jinn and man save to worship Me" (Q51:56), He knew that they have natures that, in accordance with their pre-dispositions, would disturb their sincere efforts and concentration in servitude. So He guaranteed the *rizq* for them, so that they might give their entire attention to His service and not be overly distracted from worshipping Him by seeking it out. So He continued: "I do not desire from them any *rizq*," i.e., 'I do not want from them that they should sustain themselves, for I have sufficed them from having to do that with My sufficiency and My guarantee. And I do not desire them to feed Me, because I am the Strong, enduring forever (*samad*), Who is not fed.' For that reason, He continued, saying: "Verily Allah is the Provider-of-all, He of unwavering strength." Meaning: 'I do not want them to provide for themselves, because I am the Provider for them. Nor do I want them to feed Me, because I am the ultimate possessor of strength and power, and He Who has power in His essence is beyond need of having to be fed and nourished.'

So this verse includes the following: guaranteeing the slaves their provisions, according to His saying ﷻ: "Verily Allah is the Provider of all." And He obliged the believers to declare His Aloneness in relation to *rizq*, and not to attribute the prerogative of that to His creation, nor to their secondary causes or acquisitions. It has been narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ woke up one morning immediately after a night rain and said: "Do you know what your Lord said?" They said: "No, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Allah ﷻ said: 'Today a servant of Mine has become a believer, and a servant has become a disbeliever. As for the one who said, 'We have been given rain by the favor and mercy of Allah ﷻ, he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the planets. And as for the one who said, 'We have received rain by the effects of such and such a mansion of the moon or such and such a planet,' he is a disbeliever in Me, and a believer in the planets.'"

In this hadith is a great beneficial lesson for the believers, and a grand insight for the people of certainty, and an instruction in proper courtesy with the Lord of the Worlds. And this hadith, O believer, could be a reason to stop you from going to the astrologer and similar acts, and to prevent you from claiming the existence of planetary influence and effects. And know that Allah ﷻ has for you a destiny that He must enact, and a Decree that He must manifest. So what is the benefit of spying on the knowledge of the Knower of the Unseen? And He ﷻ has forbidden us to spy on His servants; for He said: "Do not spy on one another" (Q49:12), so how could we spy on His unknown? The poet said it excellently:

*"Out of true knowledge do I say to the astrologer
that I am a disbeliever rejecting what the stars have decreed.*

*Knowing full well that there never is nor ever was any 'decree'
that obliged the Guardian to act in a certain way."*

Beneficial lesson:

Know that the word '*Razzaq*' coming in the active verb form (*fa 'al*) indicates intensiveness. Therefore, *ar-Razzaq* (the All-Provider) is more intensive than *Raziq* (the one who provides), because the verb form *fa 'al* is more intensive than the verb form *fa'il*. This intensiveness might be due to the various individuals that are provided for, or it could be due to the great amount of provisions (*rizq*), or it could be both.

Another beneficial lesson: (dealing with the science of rhetoric):

Know that praising the attribute is more effective, intense and far-reaching than praising the action. So your saying that so-and-so is a good-doer (*muhsin*) is more intense than your saying that so-and-so is doing good (*yuhsin*), or has done good (*ahsan*).

And that is because the attribute refers to something fixed and established, whereas actions are subject to renewal and cessation. For that reason, His saying ﷻ: "Verily, Allah is the Provider-of-all (*Razzaq*)" is more intense than His saying, 'Verily, Allah provides.'

And had He ﷻ said: 'Verily, Allah provides,' that would indicate nothing except the fact that provision is with Allah ﷻ; it would not indicate that all provision is with Allah exclusively. So when He says, "Indeed, Allah is the (sole) Provider," it indicates that *rizq* in its entirety is confined to Him and to no one or any thing else. So when He said: "Allah is the All-Provider," it is as if He said, 'There is no provider except Allah ﷻ.'

Chapter Thirteen

The Coupling of Creation (*khalq*) and Sustenance (*rizq*)

(The second chapter on the subject of rizq)

Summary

The second chapter on the subject of rizq. In this short chapter, the author shows how creation and provision are paired in the Qur'an, and concludes that if one is certain that Allah ﷻ is the Sole Creator, one should be certain that He is the Sole Provider.

Text

"Allah is the One Who created you, then provided for your sustenance, then He will cause you to die, and again He will give you life..." (Q30:40). This noble verse contains two beneficial lessons:

First:

That creation and provision are coupled and linked together. So as you have agreed that Allah ﷻ is the sole Creator without claiming for yourselves any part in creating, then in the same way agree to the reality that He is the sole Provider, without claiming for yourselves any share in that. Just as He is the sole Creator and Originator (of non-existents) into being, He is also the Sole Provider and Sustainer. So He linked the two together as an argument against the slaves and to prohibit them from witnessing any provision coming from other than Him, or seeing beneficence coming from His creation. And just as He created without intermediaries or secondary causes, He is also the Provider whose provision does not depend on an intermediary or on the existence of a secondary cause.

Second:

That Allah ﷻ meant by His saying, "Allah created you, then provided for you," that the *rizq* is already taken care of, and its affair concluded. So its decreeing is not renewed every moment that *rizq* is given, nor does it undergo succession throughout each moment in time. Rather, what is renewed is its manifestation, not the fixity (of its decreeing).

The concept of *rizq* is divided into two parts: that which has already been decreed in pre-eternity, and that which has manifested after the slave's first moments of existence. And the verse can carry both meanings. If the intended meaning is what has been previously decreed of provision, then the aim of the verse is to make clear the order of the events. And if the intended meaning is the manifested *rizq*, then it is for notification and arousal to contemplation and reflection.

And the secret of the above-mentioned verse is confirmation of Divinity solely for Allah ﷻ Most High. As if He says: 'O you who worship other than Allah, Allah is He Who created you, then provided for you, then He will cause you to die, then bring you to life. So do you find any of these descriptions with other than Him? Or is it possible that they belong to any one of His creation?'

Therefore, the divinity of He Who alone possesses these descriptions must be recognized, and He must be declared unique in His Lordship. For that purpose He said afterward: "Are there any of your partners (whom you associate with Him) who can do a single one of these things? Glory to Him, and High is He above the partners they attribute to Him!" (Q30:40).

Chapter Fourteen

The Obligation to Command the Family to Salat

(The third chapter on the subject of rizq)

Summary

The third chapter on the subject of rizq. The author demonstrates how the arrival of Divine sustenance comes after and as a consequence of commanding the family to prayer and patient persistence in it.

Text

"Enjoin the *salat* on your family and be constant in it. We do not ask you to provide sustenance; We provide it for you. And the outcome is for the person of taqwa" (Q20:132). In this verse there are beneficial lessons:

First:

You must know that although the Prophet ﷺ is the one addressed in this verse, its command and promise apply to his community also. So to every slave it is said: "Enjoin the ritual prayer (*salat*) on your family and be constant therein. We do not ask you to provide sustenance, We provide it for you. And the outcome is for the God-wary." When you understand this, know that Allah ﷻ has commanded you, O slave, to enjoin *salat* upon your family. For just as you are required to maintain the ties of kinship through worldly means and preferring relatives over others, you are also required to maintain ties by guiding them to obedience to Allah ﷻ, and causing them to abstain from rebellion. And just as your family is most entitled to your worldly beneficence, they similarly are more deserving of your other-worldly beneficence, because they are your flock. And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for your flock." And Allah ﷻ said in another verse: "And warn your near of kin" (Q26:214), just as He said here: "And enjoin the *salat* upon your family."

Second:

Consider how Allah ﷻ commanded him, ﷺ, in the verse to enjoin the *salat* upon his family before enjoining upon himself constancy in it. This is so that you may know that the verse first came to command the believer to enjoin the family to *salat*, and that the remaining commands and promises of the verse came in a secondary position after this first command, even if the commands contained in the rest of the verse were also intended in themselves. So when the servant came to know that he is commanded to *salat* with a knowledge in which is no doubt, Allah ﷻ wanted to call the servants' attentions to what they would otherwise become neglectful of. He commanded His Messenger with that command so that they might hear it and follow accordingly, and that they might race to it and become diligent in it.

Note: Know that it is obligatory upon you to command your family to the *salat*, including wives, mothers, daughters, and so on. And you may strike them for leaving it, and you have no excuse with Allah ﷻ to say: 'I commanded them and they did not listen.' For had they known how much their leaving of *salat* pains you, just as it pains you when they ruin some food, or neglect to fulfill an important need of yours, they would have established the *salat*. Instead, they became accustomed to your commanding them to fulfill your own gratifications and not the rights of Allah ﷻ upon them, and for that reason they neglected it.

And whoever keeps his *salat* and has family who do not pray, and he does not command them to that, then he will be gathered on the Day of Rising with those who neglect their *salat*. And if you say, 'I commanded them but they did not act, and I admonished them but they did not accept my admonishment, and I punished them by striking them but they still did not perform (the *salat*), so how should I act?'

The answer is: that you must separate from those it is possible to separate from, by selling or divorce, and you must turn away from those it is not possible to separate completely from, and abandon them for Allah ﷻ. For abandonment and desertion for the sake of Allah ﷻ brings about the connection with Him.

Section One

The Pairing of patience (*sabr*) and prayer (*salat*)

The third beneficial lesson:

The saying of Allah ﷻ: "And be constant in it" indicates that in the *salat* is an obligation upon the selves that is cumbersome and toilsome upon them, because it comes in times of pleasure and ease for the slaves, and during their work. It requires them to leave all of that behind, to stand before the Hands of Allah, empty of what is other than Allah ﷻ.

Do you not see that the *salat* of the morning comes during the time they sleep, the time when sleep is most pleasurable? So Allah ﷻ demands of them to leave their gratifications for His rights upon them, and their desires, for His desire. For that reason the call to the morning *salat* has in it specifically: "The *salat* is better than sleep"(two times).

And as for the noon *salat*: it comes in the time of their siestas, and when they return from the toil of their work. And as for the afternoon *salat*, it comes at a time when they are engrossed in their businesses and occupations, and go forth to their worldly means. And as for the sunset *salat*, it comes at a time when they eat their food and what strengthens and revives their constitution. And as for the night *salat*, it comes after a time when the hardships and toil of their occupations in the daytime become much. So because of that Allah ﷻ said: "And be constant in it."

And He said: "Guard strictly your *salat*, especially the middle *salat*" (Q2:238). And: "For such prayers are enjoined upon the believers at stated times" (Q4:103). And: "Establish regular *salat*" (Q2:43). And He said: "And seek the help of Allah in patient perseverance and *salat*. It is indeed hard, except for those who are humble" (Q2:45).

So He paired patience with *salat*, which shows that he is in need of patience in the *salat*. He is in need of patience in respect to keeping its times, and patience in fulfilling its obligatory and voluntary parts, and patience to prevent the heart from its heedlessness. Because of that He said afterward: "It is indeed difficult except for those who are humble." So He mentioned in this second part only *salat* and not patience. For otherwise He would have said 'It is difficult (in the masculine plural instead of the feminine),' and this proves what we have mentioned above.

Or maybe because patience and *salat* are both related and necessary, so that one of them is the source of the other (necessarily implying the other), as He said in another verse: "And Allah and His Messenger are more deserving that they should be pleased" (Q9:62). And He said: "And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah..." (Q9:34). And: "But when they see some business or amusement, they disperse headlong to it..." (Q62:11). So understand!

Section Two

The secrets of *salat* and the illumination of its lights

The *salat* has an immense rank, and its affair with Allah ﷻ is mighty, and because of that Allah said: "Verily *salat* restrains from shameful and evil deeds" (Q29:45). And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, when asked which of the actions of man is noblest, said: "*salat* in its proper time." And he ﷺ said: "The one in *salat* speaks intimately with his Lord." And he said: "The closest the slave is to his Lord is in the prostration."

And we noticed that *salat* combines in itself acts of worship which (in combination) cannot be found in other divinely prescribed acts, such as: purity, silence, facing the direction of prayer, opening with magnification (*takbir*), recitation of Qur'an, standing, bowing, prostrating, glorification in bowing and prostrating, supplication in the prostration, and other similar acts. So it is a combined sum of various expressions of devotion, for invocation by itself is a form of devotion, and the recitation of Qur'an is by itself a form of devotion, and similarly glorification, supplication, bowing, prostration, and standing. All of these are by themselves forms and expressions of devotion. And had we not feared lengthiness, we would have spoken extensively on its secrets and illuminating lights. This gloss is sufficient here, and praise belongs to Allah ﷻ.

Section Three

Rise to Our service and We will take care of you with Our apportioned lot

The fourth beneficial lesson:

His saying ﷻ: "We do not ask you to provide sustenance, We provide it for you," meaning, 'We don't ask you to provide for yourself or your family. And how can We ask that of you, and oblige you to provide for yourself, while you are not able to do that? And how is it praiseworthy of Us that We command you to service, but not take care of you with Our apportioning?'

It is as if He ﷻ knew that the slaves might be perturbed in their worship by seeking provision, and that that disturbance would veil them from being wholly engaged in obedience. So He spoke to His Messenger ﷺ that they might listen, and said: "Enjoin the ritual prayer (*salat*) on your family and be constant in it; We do not ask you to provide sustenance, We provide it for you." In other words, rise to perform the service to Us and We will take charge of you by Our apportionment.

This includes two aspects: 1) something which Allah ﷻ has guaranteed for you, so do not go after it to establish its guarantee for yourself, 2) and something which Allah ﷻ has demanded of you, so do not neglect it.

So whoever is preoccupied with what is already guaranteed for him instead of what is demanded of him, his ignorance is great, and his heedlessness is vast, and rarely would he heed the one who tries to advise him and wake him up. Rather, it is more appropriate for the servant to be preoccupied with what is demanded of him instead of what is guaranteed for him.

If He ﷻ has provided sustenance for the people of rejection, then how could He not provide for the people of witnessing (who witness the Reality)? And if His sustenance goes forth to the people of disbelief, then how can His sustenance not go forth to the people of faith?

So you have come to know, O servant, that this world, namely, that part of it which is necessary for your maintenance, is guaranteed for you. And your afterlife is required of you, i.e. working for it. Allah ﷻ said: "And take a provision with you for the journey, but the best of provisions is consciousness of Allah ﷻ (*taqwa*)" (Q2:197).

How can intellect or insight be established for you while your concern with what is already guaranteed for you has cut you off from concern for what is demanded of you? One of them said:

"Allah has guaranteed for us the world, and required from us the Hereafter. I wish that He had guaranteed for us the Hereafter and required of us this world."

And the Word of Allah ﷻ, "We will provide for you", came in this verb form to indicate that the sustenance of Allah ﷻ is perpetual and abiding. For your saying, 'I will give you', is not like your saying, 'I have given you.' Because your saying, 'I will give you', indicates giving after giving, and your saying, 'I have given you', does not indicate anything except that in the past you gave something, without that implying repetition and continual giving. So the saying of Allah ﷻ, "We will provide you", means, 'With provision after provision, We will not suspend Our gifts to you, and We will not cut off Our blessings to you. And when We ennobled the slaves with existence, similarly We took charge of them with perpetual sustenance and support.'

Then He ﷻ said: "And the end will be for the God-fearing." It is as if He is saying, 'We know that if you fully devote yourselves to Our service, and concentrate your energies in obedience to Us, turning away from the worldly means, leaving entering into them and working with them, then your sustenance in it would not be the sustenance of the luxurious, and your life not the life of the affluent. But persevere in that, for the favorable outcome is for the consciousness of Allah ﷻ.' As Allah ﷻ said in the verse before this one: "Nor strain your eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendor of the life of this world, through which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring" (Q20:131).

So perhaps you ask why He singled out *taqwa* (God-wariness) as having the favorable outcome, and the people of *taqwa* have, in addition to the favorable outcome, the good life in this world, as in the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily We will enliven him with a new life that is good and pure" (Q16:97).

Know that Allah ﷻ speaks to the slaves according to their intellectual capacities. So it is as if He said, 'O slaves, if you see that the people of heedlessness and rebellion have the beginning in their hands, then the end is with the people of God-wariness and faith, and the outcome is for (those of) *taqwa*: So He spoke to the servants in accordance with what their intellects comprehend, and their understandings grasp. Just as the statement "Allah is the Greater" (*Allahu Akbar*) came, even though nothing besides Him shares with Him in greatness. However, when the souls witnessed greatness in the secondary effects (athar) and creations, as Allah ﷻ said: "The creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than the creation of mankind" (Q40:57), it is as if it were said to them: 'If unavoidably you witness any greatness in something, know that Allah the Exalted is greater than it, and greater than everything great.'

The same reason is behind the saying '*salat* is better than sleep.' For if it is said: 'in sleep there is no benefit or good,' the souls would respond that they have perceived its pleasure and enjoyment. Then it is said to them: 'What We have called you toward is better than what is better in your eyes. *Salat* is better than sleep. For what you lean towards in sleep is an evanescent vanity, while that which We call you towards is an eternal action whose rewards do not vanish. 'And that which is with Allah is better and more everlasting.

Section Four

The gnostics and the seeking of *rizq*:

Know that this verse taught the people of understanding from Allah ﷻ how they should seek His *rizq*. So if the means of their livelihood stalls, they increase their service and obedience, because this verse points them in that direction.

Do you not see that He ﷻ said: "And enjoin upon your family the ritual prayer and be constant in it. We do not ask you for sustenance; We sustain you." So the promise of sustenance came after two things: 1) commanding the family to *salat*, and 2) constancy and perseverance in that. Then after this He said: "We will provide for you."

So those of Divine understanding have understood from this that if their worldly livelihood stalls, they knock on the door of sustenance by their dealings with the Sustainer. Not like the people of heedlessness and spiritual blindness, who, when their worldly livelihood stalls, increase in toiling for it, and rushing towards it, with heedless hearts and intellects distracted from Allah ﷻ!

And how could those of Divine understanding not be like that, while they have heard the saying of Allah: "Enter houses by their doors" (Q2:189). So they have come to know that the door of *rizq* is the obedience to the All-Provider, and how could His provision be sought from Him by disobedience to Him? Or how could His favors be sought through disobeying Him? And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "What is with Allah ﷻ is not attained by His Wrath." In other words, His provision is not sought after except through obedience to Him.

And He said in clarification of this: "And whoever is consciously wary of Allah, He will make for him a way out. And He will provide for him in ways he could not imagine" (Q65:2-3). And He ﷻ said: "If they had only remained upright on the Way, We would certainly have bestowed on them rain in abundance" (Q72:16). And other similar verses, which indicate that God-wariness (*taqwa*) is the key to the two provisions: the *rizq* of this world, and the *rizq* of the Next World.

As Allah ﷻ has said: "If only the People of the Book had believed and had *taqwa*, We would indeed have covered over their iniquities and admitted them to gardens of bliss. And if only they had stood fast by the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have partaken (of Our favors) from above them and from under their feet..." (Q5:65-66). So He ﷻ made it clear that had they established the Torah and the Gospel, in other words, implemented them in their lives, they would have received the blessings of Allah ﷻ above them and below them. In other words, 'We would have increased their provision and given them of Our grants perpetually. Rather, when they did not act according to the way We love, We did not act with them according to the way they love.'

Chapter Fifteen

How Allah ﷻ Takes Responsibility for Providing Sustenance

(The fourth chapter on the subject of rizq)

Summary

The fourth chapter on the subject of rizq. This short chapter goes further into the concept of the Divine guarantee of provision. The author argues here that if Allah ﷻ, provides for all of creation, as can be plainly seen, and if the human is the noblest of the creation, then how could He neglect the human?

Text

"And there is not a creature on the earth except that the responsibility for its sustenance is upon Allah, and He knows (the time and place of) its definite abode and its temporary deposit. All is recorded in a clear Record" (Q11:6).

This verse proclaims the guarantee of Divine sustenance, and cuts off the coming of suggestions and suspicions to the hearts of the believers. If these doubts concerning sustenance come over their hearts, then the armies of secure faith in Allah and trust in Him come with reinforcements and conquer those doubts. "Nay, We hurl the Truth against the falsehood, and it obliterates it, and behold, falsehood perishes!" (Q21:18).

So His saying ﷻ: "And there is not a creature on the earth except that the responsibility for its sustenance is upon Allah" is a guarantee He has undertaken for the sake of His servants, as a way of making His love known to them. And He is not obliged to do that, but rather He obliged Himself to do that out of bounty and good favor. Then He made the guarantee general and all-inclusive, so it is as if He said: 'O slave, My guarantee and provision is not only for you, but for all creatures on earth, for I am indeed their guarantor and provider, bringing their nourishment to them. Therefore, know by this the all-inclusiveness of My guarantee and the richness of My Lord-ship, and that things do not leave My embrace. And trust in Me as a Guarantor, and take Me as a trustworthy disposer of affairs. And if you see My *tadbir* for the various species of animals, and My care for them, and My taking charge of their affairs by My excellent guarantee, and that you are also the most noble of their kind, then understand that that is all the more reason to trust in My guarantee for you, and that you look towards My abundant blessings.'

Do you not see how He ﷻ said: "We have honored the children of 'Adam" (Q17:70) over the other kinds of animals? 'For We have invited them to Our service, and promised them entrance to Our Garden, and called them to Our Presence.'

Beneficial Lesson:

Man's nobility over other than him

What will further clarify for you the nobility of the human over other than him among the creatures is the fact that the creatures are created for his sake, and he is created for the Presence of Allah ﷻ. I heard our Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say: "Allah said: 'O son of 'Adam, I created all things for your sake, and I created you for Me, so do not become distracted with what is created for you from Him Whom you are created for.' And Allah ﷻ said: 'And He placed the

earth for mankind' (Q55:10). And He said: 'He has subjected to you, from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth' (Q45:13).

And I heard the Shaykh may Allah be pleased with him say: "The worlds are all slaves which He has subjected to you, and you are the slave of the Divine Presence."

And He ﷻ said: "Allah is He Who created the seven heavens and of the earth a similar number. Through the midst of them descends His Command, that you may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things in knowledge" (Q65:12).

Now it has become clear to you that the heavens and the earth were created so that you may come to understand, O human. So if you come to know that the worlds are created for your sake, either as a benefit, or as a way of learning through observation and consideration of them, (which is also a benefit), then it is necessary for you to know that if Allah ﷻ provides for that which is created for you, then how could He not be your Provider and Sustainer? Have you not heard how Allah ﷻ said: "And fruits and fodder, for use and convenience to you and your cattle" (Q80:31-32)?

And the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And He knows (the time and place of) its definite abode and its temporary deposit" is a further confirmation that He is responsible for it. In other words, its place is not hidden from Him, and its state is not unclear to Him. Rather, He knows its place and so He brings to it that which He pre-apportioned for it.

Chapter Sixteen

The State and Nature of Rizq

(The fifth chapter on the subject of rizq)

Summary

This chapter is the last in the series dealing with the subject of rizq. It specifically discusses the Divine 'swearing' upon the guarantee of daily provision, and provides argument after argument for why it is unnecessary and a sign of the lack of faith to be in doubt about one's provision.

Text

"And in the heaven is your *rizq* and what you are promised, and by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, this is indeed as true as your ability to articulate" (Q51:22-23).

And this very verse is the one that has washed away the doubts from the hearts of the believers, and shined in their hearts the lights of certainty, so it has brought to their hearts the supplies of Divine grants due to what it included of beneficial lessons. That is because it includes the mention of *rizq*, its place, the swearing upon it, and a similitude for it with that which has no confusion attached to it. So let us follow these beneficial lessons, lesson by lesson.

First:

Know that when He ﷻ knew of the many anxieties which the selves experienced concerning the affair of *rizq*, He mentioned it repeatedly because of its repeated suggestions upon the hearts, just as you repeat demonstrative proofs if you know that doubts and uncertainties are firmly established in the one you argue with. Just as He also repeated the proofs for the Final Return (on the Last Day) in numerous verses, because of the doubts of the disbelievers. for they denied that man would return after his bodily constitution had vanished and he had become dirt or been eaten by beasts and vermin. So He argued with them in His Mighty Book with many arguments, such as His saying: "And he struck for Us a similitude and has forgotten the fact of his creation, saying: 'Who will give life to bones when they are crumbled to dust?' Say: 'The One who will bring them to life is the same One who gave them life in the first place' (Q36:78-79). And His saying: "And this is most easy for Him" (Q30:27). And His saying: "He who gives life to it can surely give life to the dead" (Q41:39).

Similarly, when the Real ﷻ knew the intense restlessness and agitation of the selves in the affair of *rizq*, He corroborated the demonstrative argument for it in many verses, among which are what we mentioned before, and what we did not mention. So when the Real (Most Exalted) knew of that from the selves of the servants, He said in one situation: "Indeed Allah is the All-Provider" (Q51:58). And in another place: "Allah is the One Who created you, then provided for your sustenance" (Q30:40). And He said in another place: "We will surely provide for you" (Q20:132). And He said in another place: "Or who is there that can provide you with sustenance if He were to withhold His provision?" (Q67:21). And He said: 'And in the heaven is your *rizq*, and what you are promised,' that He might clarify the place of *rizq*, so that the hearts would confidently abandon themselves to Him.

Guaranteeing something without specifying its place is not like guaranteeing it in addition to making its place clear. So it is as if He ﷻ said: 'We do not have to clarify for you the place of your *rizq*. You have with Us a *rizq* which We will bring to you when its time comes, but We are not required to

clarify it.' Rather, out of His subtle kindness and mercy and bounty and generosity He detailed the place of *rizq* so that it might be more far-reaching in inspiring the trust of the selves in Him, and more effective in the removal of doubt. And there is another benefit in that also:

That the clarification of its place (in the heaven) implies the lifting of the aspirations (*himma*) of the creation from the creatures, and that they not ask except from the True King. Because if there occurs any covetousness in your heart towards any creature, or any secondary means ('*asbab*'), then He ﷻ says to you: "And in the heaven is your *rizq* and what you are promised."

In other words, 'O you who look towards the weak and impotent creature in the earth for your *rizq*, your *rizq* is not with him, but rather your *rizq* is with Me, and I am the Powerful King.' For that reason, when an Arab heard this verse, he sacrificed his camel, and fled off toward Allah saying: "Glory be to Allah! My *rizq* is in the heaven, and I search for it in the earth?!"

So consider, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, how he understood from Allah ﷻ directly, that what He desired in this verse is to drive the *himma* of His slaves towards Him, so that they desire what is with Him, as He said in another verse: "And there is not a thing but its inexhaustible treasures are with Us, but We only send it down in ascertainable measures" (Q15:21). So that the aspirations become perturbed and flee to His Door, and the hearts incline toward His Side. So be, may Allah have mercy on you, celestial and do not be lowly and terrestrial. For that reason one of them said:

*'When the stingy denials of the cheap and ignoble
cause you thirst,
then contentment suffices you as a satiation and a quenching.*

*Be a true man such that your body is in the soil (of the earth),
while your resolute aspiration and zeal (himma)
roams in the stars.*

*Truly, the wasting away of (the water of your) earthly life
is of lesser importance
than loss. of the (water of your) essential honor."*

I heard our Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say: "By Allah, I have not seen honor except in lifting one's *himma* above the creatures, and remember, O brother, may Allah have mercy on you, His statement ﷻ 'And the honor is for Allah, His Messenger and the believers.'" (Q63:8)

Some of the might with which Allah ﷻ has ennobled the believer is the lifting of *himma* to his Master, and trust in Him without other than Him. And be ashamed before Allah ﷻ that, after He clothed you with the raiment of faith and beautified you with the beauty of gnostic knowledge, forgetfulness and heedlessness should overpower you until you incline towards the worlds, or seek beneficence from other than Him. And for that reason one of them said:

*'What! After my penetration
into the sciences of the Realities,
and after my expansion in the gifts of my Creator,
in the moment of my noble entering
into His spiritual dominion (malakat),
shall I see my hand outstretched
to other than my Provider?!"*

If the self, heedless of its Master, obliges you to direct your need towards the creatures, then lift your need toward Him to that creature lifts its need. For the ego-self will readily take your faith (in the Divine) lightly to attain her caprices, despite your own coming to disgrace, so that she may reach her own objects of desire. Some have stated on this meaning:

*"I have burdened the ego-self with humbling it
so it may come to true honor,
and how easily the ego-self accepts degradation
just for the sake of its own idea of honor.
It says: ask the good Yahya ibn 'Akthami,
so I tell it: ask the Lord of Yahya ibn 'Akthami."*

It is very disgraceful for the believer that he should present his needs to other than Allah, with his knowledge of His Oneness and His Uniqueness in His Lordship, while he hears the words of Allah: "Is not 'Allah sufficient for His slave?" (Q39:36). That is shameful from anyone, but even more shameful from the believer.

He should remember the saying of Allah ﷻ: "O you who believe, fulfill the covenants" (Q5:1). Among the covenants that you have made with Him is that you not lift your needs to any but Him, and that you not depend on any but Him, for this is the corollary of your acceptance of His supreme Lordship on the Day of the Decrees, the Day of "Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes indeed!" (Q7:172). So how can you recognize Him and declare His Oneness there, but become ignorant of Him here, when His beneficence has recurred again and again to you, and His gifts of bounty have engulfed you in their abundance?

*"In the heart, for You, there is a lofty station,
neither Sa'da nor Lubna reside therein.
(*names of women in pre-Islamic poetry)
In the world of the dharr (particles of light)
I acknowledged You, so would it be becoming of me,
by the honor of my white beard, to deny You?"*

The lifting of *himma* away from the creatures is the scale of the poor (*fuqara*), and the true measure of the Men. And just as essences are weighed and compared, states of being and attributes are also weighed. "And establish weight with justice" (Qur'an 55:9). So the truthful is manifested with his truthfulness, and the pretender with his adulteration. "Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which you are now until He separates what is evil from what is good" (Qur'an 3:179).

Allah ﷻ, has, by His wisdom and the existence of His gift, tested the poor who are not truthful, by manifesting what they hid of their covetousness, and the desires they kept in secret. So they degraded and lowered themselves to the children of this world, spreading their arms to them, conforming to them, in harmony with them in the goals they aim for, driven to their doors. So you see some of them beautifying themselves as the bride beautifies herself, enthralled by the betterment of their outward, heedless of the rectification of their inward.

Indeed, the Real ﷻ, has described them with a mark that has unveiled their defects and manifested their reported reputation. If they had been true to Allah ﷻ, then their ascription would be that it would be said of them: 'Slave of the Immense.' But they left that ascription due to the lack of their truthfulness, so that now it is. said of them: 'Shaykh of the Emir.' (*Translator's note: due to their frequenting the majlis of the Emir and their close relationship with him instead of with Allah ﷻ*).

These are they who lie about Allah ﷻ and impede and hinder the slaves from the companionship of the true saints of Allah ﷻ. Because what the generality see in them, they believe in every respect to be of Allah ﷻ, whether they are truthful or untruthful. So these are the veils of the people of realization, and the clouds of the suns of the people of Divinely granted success. They strike their drums, and spread their banners, and wear their armor. So if the attack occurs, they retreat and flee away, retracting their tongues. They are uninhibited in their making pretentious claims, while their hearts are void of God-wariness (*taqwa*). Have they not heard the saying of Allah: "...that He may question the truthful concerning their truthfulness" (Q33:8)? Do you think that if He questioned the truthful He would leave the pretentious without any questioning? Have they not heard His saying ﷻ, "And say: act, for Allah will observe your action, and His Messenger and the believers, and you will return to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of what you used to do" (Q9:105). They are outwardly like the truthful, but their actions are the actions of those who turn away from the Truth, as it has been said:

*"As for the tents, indeed they are like their tents,
but I see that the women of the neighborhood
are not their women.
No, it cannot be!
By the One Whose house the Quraysh has circumambulated, facing
the Pillar (of the House) from its valley!
My eyes have now never seen the tents of another tribe
Without their crying, O my beloved, from its disappearance!"*

So you have come to understand, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that the lifting of *himma* for the creation is the ornament of the People of the (Sufi) Way, and the mark of the People of Realization. And upon this meaning we have some poetry:

*"You have risen early, blaming a time of injury and harm,
so you turned away ignoring it that it might turn away
(from you).
Do not increase your blaming and reproaching of this age,
for it (time) is not sought after for fidelity
or expected to be unsullied.
It does not harm me that I am, in it, obscure
and undistinguished,
for the full moon,
whether open to or hidden from view, remains a full moon.
Allah knows well that I am a man whose resolute aspiration
(himma) rejects the low and base things
out of abstinence and avoidance.
Why should I not keep my face away from the creation,
and not appear to them
with the sublimity and glory of noble kings?
Shall I appear to them as one poor and needy towards them,
while they are all incapable of action or influence?
Or how should I ask for His sustenance from His creation?
By my life! If I should do this it would be rude discourtesy!
The complaint of the weak one to a weak one like him
is an inability which carries its owner
to the limit of all stupidity.
So seek provision from Allah,
whose generosity and beneficence*

*cover all of creation with open gifts and subtle graces.
And seek protection with Him, you will find Him as you hope;
You will never see any at His doors
left shut out and unanswered."*

Second:

His ﷻ saying "And in the heaven is your *rizq*" could mean the 'fixed determination of your provision,' i.e., its establishment in the Guarded Tablet. If that is indeed the meaning, then it therefore becomes a source of tranquility for the slaves. It is as if He is notifying them that: 'Your *rizq* — in other words, that from which comes your *rizq* — We have inscribed with Us and fixed it in Our record, and decreed it with Our signs before your existence, and specified it before your appearance. So for what are you so anxious and restless? And what is it with you that you do not repose in Me out of reliance upon Me, nor trust My promise?'

The intended meaning of "in the sky (heaven) is your sustenance" might also be what your *rizq* comes from, namely, water, in accordance with the words of Allah ﷻ: "And We made from water every living thing; will they not then believe?" (Q21:30). Also, Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him said: "It is rainwater." So His saying, "And in the sky is your provision" would therefore mean that from which comes the source of your provision; and also rainwater in itself is sustenance.

Third:

It might be that the intention of the Real ﷻ in this verse is to make the slaves incapable of presumptuously claiming any influence or power over secondary causes and means (*asbab*). For if Allah ﷻ withheld the water from the earth, then the means of everyone of means would discontinue, whether he be a farmer, or cultivator, or trader, or tailor, or scribe, or what-ever else. So it is as if He said: 'Your means are not that which sustains you with provision, but rather I am the One who sustains you with provision, and in My Hand is the facilitation of your means of livelihood. I am the One who causes to descend upon you that by which your means exist and your earnings become complete.'

Fourth:

There is an immense beneficial lesson in the pairing of the *rizq* with that which is promised. When the believers came to know that what the Real ﷻ promised them must come to be, and that they have no power to expedite it or delay it, nor is there any possibility of their attracting it, then it is as if He said to them:

'Just as there is no doubt with you that We have what you are promised, then in the same way, let there be no doubt with you that with Us is your provision (*rizq*). And just as you are unable to speed up what We promised for you before its time, you are similarly incapable of expediting any provision that Our Lordship has set a date for, and Our Divinity has specified a time for.'

Fifth:

In His ﷻ saying "And in the heaven is your *rizq* and what you are promised, and by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, this is indeed as true as your ability to articulate," there is a great conclusive argument against the slaves. Namely, that the One loyal to His promise who never breaks His word should swear for the servants by what He guaranteed for them. For He knew what the selves were predisposed to of doubt and restless anxiety, and the existence of confusion in them. For that reason, when the angels heard this verse they exclaimed: "The children of 'Adam have perished, for they have angered their Glorious Lord to the point that He swore." And some said when they heard this verse: "Glory be to Allah! What brought the Noble One to swearing?"

And if you know that someone trusts you, then you do not need to swear for him, but if you know that he doubts your word, then you swear for him.

Therefore, this verse made a group of people joyful, and humiliated another group to shame. As for those it caused joy: they are in the first degree, for by it their faith increases, and their certainty is made firm. So by these they become victorious over the whisperings of Shaytan and the doubts of the self. And as for those it shamed - they came to know that the Real ﷻ knew of the lack of their trust in Him, and of the existence of doubt and confusion in them. So He stationed them in the station of the people of uncertainty, and thus swore to them. This embarrassed them out of their shyness in front of Him, and this is some of what indicates their Divine understanding from Him.

It could be that one thing caused one people to be happy and another to be sad, according to the differences in the degrees of understanding between them, and the incomings of Divine inspirations. Have you not heard that when He revealed His saying: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you al-Islam as your religion" (Q5:3), the Prophet's Companions were elated, while Sayyidina Abu Bakr may Allah be pleased with him was saddened by it? That was because he understood by that the passing away of the Messenger ﷺ so he wept. And he took as a lesson from that that if something reaches completion, it is feared that it will soon return to its former state of deficiency, as it is said:

*"If something is perfected,
its imperfect deficiencies come nearer;
And if something is completed,
it begins to abate and disappear.
Thus if you are in a state of bliss, then keep it and guard it,
for indeed
Disobedient rebellion causes bliss to come to an end."*

And know that deficiency would not begin to occur while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was still physically alive. The other Companions may Allah be pleased with them were made joyful by the apparent glad tidings in the saying of Allah, but they did not penetrate to the meaning that Abu Bakr may Allah be pleased with him penetrated to. That was the explanation of the statement of the Prophet ﷺ concerning him: "Abu Bakr did not outstrip you by fasting or prayer, but rather by a meaning established in his breast." And he who is the outstripper in himself is the one who necessarily has the prerogative of understanding what others than him do not comprehend.

Similar to this is the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Verily Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth, in exchange for the Garden. They fight in the cause of Allah, and kill and are killed" (Q9:111). I heard Abu Muhammad al-Marjani may Allah be pleased with him say: "A group of people heard this noble verse, and they rejoiced at this contract. So their faces were whitened out of joy in it, for the Real declared them fit that He should buy from them, thus glorifying their worth, and pleasing them with the sale, and made them happy with a great recompense and abundant reward. Another group heard this verse, and their faces were paled yellow, out of shame before Allah ﷻ for He had to buy from them what He already owned. Had He not known that they had hidden within them presumptuous claims of ownership, He would not have said, 'Verily Allah ﷻ has bought from the believers their selves.' So those whose faces were whitened received two gardens with silver vessels. And those whose faces were paled yellow received two gardens with golden vessels."

So had the believers been free of the remaining effects of contention, there would not occur any sale with them. For Allah ﷻ said: "Verily Allah has bought from the believers," and not from the prophets and messengers.'

For that reason Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "Souls fall into three categories. A soul that is not bought due to its despicableness, and a soul that is bought due to its

nobility, and a soul that is not bought due to the establishment of its freedom. The first category is the souls of the nonbelievers, whose souls are not bought by Allah ﷻ because of their despicableness. The second category is the souls of the believers, whose souls are bought by Allah ﷻ because of their nobility. The third category is the souls of the Prophets and Messengers peace be upon them, whose souls are not bought because they are free."

Sixth:

He ﷻ swore by the complete Lordship over the entire heavens and the earth, and He did not swear by any other of the Names. That is because the complete Lordship over the entire heavens and earth should not be doubted. And among its characteristics is guaranteeing the security of this immense universe in which you are, and if you compare yourself with it you would be like nothing in it. So that is more effective towards inspiring trust in Him than if He said 'and He is the All-Hearing,' or 'the All-Knowing,' or 'the All-Merciful,' or any other of His Names. So understand!

Seventh:

His saying ﷻ: "And by the Lord of the heaven and earth, it is the reality (*haqq*)."

Reality is the opposite of falsehood, and falsehood is nonexistent with no permanence or establishment attached to it. And Divine provision is real, just as the All-Provider is real. So any doubt in Divine provision constitutes doubt in the Provider.

It is related that someone used to dig up graves, and then he repented. So he said to a gnostic knower: "I dug up a thousand graves, and I found that all of their occupants had their faces turned away from the *qibla* (orientation of ritual prayer)." So the knower of that time said: "What turned their faces away from the *qibla* was their suspicion of Divine provision."

Eighth:

His saying, "as true as your ability to articulate," is a confirmation of the establishment of Divine provision and an affirmation of its reality. And that no believer should be uncertain about it, nor should one who has attained to certainty doubt it. Also, its affirmation in the eye-witnessing of the insights of the hearts is as the affirmation of rational speech in the eye-witnessing of outward eyesight. So He ﷻ transposed the meaning to the form, and He symbolized the unseen with the seen, and thus cut off the doubts of the slaves in the matter of Divine provision. In other words, just as you articulate rationally, and have no uncertainty about that, due to what the eyesight affirms, then similarly you should not be uncertain in the affair of *rizq*, for the light of faith has affirmed that.

So look (may Allah ﷻ, have mercy on you) at the deep concern of the Real ﷻ with the affair of *rizq* and His repetition of it, and His clarification of its place, and His comparing it with sensible things which no one can entertain any uncertainty of after seeing them, and His swearing upon it by the complete Lordship that encompasses the entire heaven and earth.

Similarly, it (*rizq*) was repeated in the words of the Lawgiver ﷺ, when he said: "Verily the Holy Spirit (Jibril a.s) inspired in my conscience that a soul will not die until its provision from Allah is completed, so be wary of Allah ﷻ and polite in seeking from Him." And he ﷺ said: "Were you to depend upon Allah ﷻ as He should be trusted, He would have sustained you with provision as He provides for the birds, who go out in the morning with stomachs empty and return with their bellies full." And he said: "'Allah ﷻ has especially taken charge to guarantee the provision of a seeker of knowledge." And other similar statements of his on that subject.

Trust in Allah ﷻ is not contradictory to the existence of secondary means and causes:

Know that concerning *rizq*, dependence upon Allah ﷻ does not contradict the existence of worldly means of livelihood, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ indicated when he said: "So be wary of Allah ﷻ and be polite in seeking from Him."

He made seeking a means of livelihood licit, and had it been in opposition to the station of dependence, he would not have declared it lawful. For he did not say, 'Do not seek (a means),' but rather, 'Be polite and courteous in seeking.' So it is as if he said: 'If you are going to seek a means of livelihood, then be polite in seeking, i.e., have courtesy and correct manners with Allah ﷻ in seeking, and be consigned to Him.'

So he ﷺ, has declared the existence of seeking licit, and seeking is one of the forms of secondary means ('*asbab*'). We have already related his saying: "The most lawful of what a man eats is the acquisition of his own hand," and other statements of his that prove the lawfulness of taking a means of livelihood, no, even urging us to it, and recommending it.

Chapter Seventeen

The Wisdom in Taking a Means of Livelihood

Summary

This chapter deals with the wisdom behind and the benefits of taking a means of livelihood. It also discusses the proper courtesies in seeking one's provision from Allah ﷻ.

Text

There are many benefits in taking a means of livelihood ('*asbab*'), such as the following:

First:

The Real ﷻ knew of the weakness of the hearts of the slaves, and their falling short in witnessing the Divine pre-apportionment, and their incapability of attaining to the reality of sincere trust in Allah. So He made the means lawful for them as a support for their hearts, and a consolation for their selves, and that was from His favor upon them.

Second:

In means there is preservation for the faces (people's honor) from having to degrade themselves to begging, and a protection for the resplendence of secured faith lest it vanish by seeking from the creation. So whatever Allah gives you of means, there is no obligation (to return the favor) towards any creature in it. No one does you a favor if they buy something from you or hire you for some work, for they have only striven for their own prosperity and gratification, and aimed for their own self-benefit. So in having a means of livelihood one is taking from them without any indebtedness.

Third:

When slaves work for their means they are distracted from disobedience to Him, and from engaging their time in rebellion against Him. Do you not see how, when their work stops during their holidays and vacations, the people of heedlessness are recognized by their disobedience to Allah ﷻ, and how they are absorbed in rebellion against Allah ﷻ? So their preoccupation in means is a mercy of Allah ﷻ upon them.

Fourth:

In performing one's work in means there is a mercy for the people of divestment (*tajrid*), and a favor of Allah ﷻ upon those who are wholly devoted to His obedience. For the people of means do not take upon themselves these pursuits (of divestment and such). Otherwise, how could the one in spiritual retreat realize his retreat? Or how could the one engaged in austerities attain the goals of his austerity? So the Real ﷻ made means as a service to those who devote themselves to Him.

Fifth:

The Real ﷻ, desired that the believers should come together in familiarity, in accordance with His saying: "Verily the believers are brothers (one to another)" (Q49:10). So the means became a necessary cause of mutual love and acquaintance between them.

And no one denies means except an ignorant person or a slave heedless of Allah ﷻ. Nor has it reached us that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, when he called the people to Allah ﷻ, ordered them to leave their means of livelihood, but rather he confirmed them in what pleased Allah ﷻ in their means, and summoned them to guidance. The Qur'an and Sunna are replete with confirmations of the validity of means. And how excellent is the saying of the poet:

*'Do you not see that Allah said to Mary (mother of Jesus),
'Betake yourself to the palm tree and shake it
and dates will fall for you.'
Had He willed, the tree would have given its fruit
without her shaking it,
but all things have a cause (sabab) to them,"*

This is alluding to the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And shake the trunk of the palm tree towards yourself, it will let fall fresh dates upon you" (Q19:25). The Prophet ﷺ protected himself with two suits of chain mail in the battle of 'Uhud. And he would eat cucumber with fresh dates, saying "And this prevents the harm of this," and these examples are many.

And in his saying "They go in the morning empty-bellied, and return in the evening with stomachs full," there is also a confirmation of the validity and lawfulness of means. For their going and returning is a means that they are established in. And it is similar to the going and returning of the humans to their means. The final word in that is: means must exist (*wujud*) for you, and you must be absent from them in your witnessing (*shuhud*). So confirm it in the same way His wisdom confirmed it, but do not lean on it for support, because of your knowledge of His Oneness.

And if you say: "Then what is 'being polite in seeking' in his ﷺ saying, 'So be wary of Allah ﷻ, and polite in seeking':

Section One

Different aspects of being polite in seeking

Know that being polite in seeking has various aspects, and we will mention here for your sake some of those aspects towards which Allah ﷻ, has, by His grace and mercy, opened our understanding.

So know, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that the seeker of provision is of two types: a servant who is absorbed in seeking it, and oriented towards it with all his *himma*, which necessarily directs his face away from Allah ﷻ. For if the *himma* directs itself towards something, it turns away from all that is other than it. Shaykh Abu Madyan may Allah be pleased with him said: "The heart has only one direction that it faces, so if you orient it towards a certain object, it turns away from whatever is other than that object." And the Real ﷻ has said: "Allah did not make two hearts in the breast of man" (Q33:4). In other words, He did not give the heart the ability to face two directions in one moment. And that is due to the incapability of humankind to face two directions at the same time. So no human faces two directions without there being a defect in one of the two directions. And the undertaking of directing the *himma* towards all directions and sustaining them all in the same moment without any deficiency occurring in any of that is the quality of the Divinity. For that purpose He ﷻ said: "And He is the One Who is God in the heaven and God in the earth" (Q43:84). By that He signified that He is directing Himself towards the people of the celestial realms and the terrestrial realms. His direction towards the people of the celestial realms does not prevent Him from His directing Himself toward the people of the terrestrial realms, and His direction towards the people of the terrestrial realms does not prevent Him from His directing Himself toward the people of the celestial realms, and not one thing from another thing. For

that reason He repeated the mention of Divinity in the noble verse, and had He not repeated it then it would not denote the same meaning as the above wording. Furthermore, the quality of the Real would necessitate such wording. So it has been made clear to you by the above that: whoever seeks provision while being dedicated to it and distracted by it from Allah ﷻ, is not polite in seeking. And whoever seeks provision without that state of preoccupation, is being polite. (And that is the second type).

A second aspect:

Being polite in seeking is that one seek from Allah ﷻ and not specify an amount, or cause, or moment, so that the Real provides for him whatever He wills, in the manner He wills, at the moment He wills. And this is part of the excellence of courtesy and correct behavior in seeking. And whoever asks and specifies a certain amount, or cause or moment, then such a one has decided for his Lord, and heedlessness (*ghaflah*) has surrounded his heart.

It is related that someone used to say, "I wish that I had left means and was given every day two loaves of bread," desiring by that to be relieved from the toil of means. So he said: "I was imprisoned, and in prison I would receive two loaves of bread every day, and that happened for a long time until I became annoyed, and reflected upon my situation. It was said to me: "You asked from Us every day two loaves of bread, but you did not ask for well-being, so We gave you what you asked for." So I sought forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, and repented to Him from that, and behold, there was knocking on the prison door! So my sentence was finished and I left."

O believer, learn from this to have correct behavior, and do not seek that He take you out of one thing and bring you into something else, if what you are already in is in accordance with the Divine knowledge. For that is incorrect behavior with Allah ﷻ. And be patient so that you not seek to leave by yourself, so that you are granted what you sought but prevented from having ease in it. For it could be that one who leaves a means and enters into other than it, so that he might find prosperity and ease, is made to toil and brought to the existence of hardship as a punishment for his personal self-choice.

We wrote down in another book of ours (i.e., *The Hikam*): "Your desire for divestment, even though Allah has placed you in means to gain a living, is a hidden passion. And your desire to gain a living by means, even though Allah has placed you in divestment, is a fall from lofty aspiration (*himma*)."

So understand, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that one of the affairs of this enemy (i.e., Shaytan) is that he comes to you in what you are in of what Allah ﷻ has placed you in, and makes it hateful in your eyes, so that you seek other than what Allah has established you in. And thus your heart is disturbed, and your moment becomes turbid.

He (i.e., Shaytan) comes to someone of means and says to him: "If you left your means (load) and divested (yourself of them), then the lights would shine for you, and your heart and secret would become pure. And so-and-so did this..." And this specific servant who he comes to is not meant for divestment, nor does he have the strength for it. Rather, means is more suitable and beneficial for him, so that if he leaves it his faith shakes, and his certainty leaves him, and he directs himself to seeking and begging from the creatures, and to undue concern and anxiety over the matter of *rizq*. And because of all this he is thrown into the sea of separation, and this is the aim of the enemy with him. For he comes to you with the facade of a sincere counselor, for if he came to you otherwise you would not accept any advice from him, just as he came to Adam and Hawa' peace be upon them in such a form. 'Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest you should become angels, or such beings as live forever.' And he swore to them both that he was their sincere adviser" (Q7:20-21). We have commented on this before in this book.

Similarly, he comes to those of divestment and says to them, "How long will you leave means? Are you not aware that leaving means forces the heart to look at what is in the hands of the people, and it opens the door of avaricious greed? And that because of it (your divestment), it is not possible to give succor to others or to prefer others in your wealth, or to fulfill their rights? And instead of being in expectation of whatever He gives to you from the hands of the creatures, had you gone into means then others than you would anticipate whatever would come to them from you," and so on. And the light of this specific servant has expanded, and he has found ease in severing himself from the creation, and he would continue to be in this state (of clarity) until he enters means on the advice of Shaytan. Then its turbidity would strike him, and its darkness would cover him, and in the end the one who stays in means would have the better state than he. Because that one did not travel on a path and then leave it for something else, nor did he aim for a goal and then turn away from it. So understand this and seek protection with Allah ﷻ from him, "For whoever seeks the protection of Allah ﷻ has indeed been guided on the straight Way" (Q3:101).

Indeed, the aim of the Shaytan in all this is to prevent the slaves from being content with Allah ﷻ in what they are in, and to take them out of what Allah ﷻ chose for them into their choice for themselves. And Allah ﷻ has taken charge of helping and aiding you in that which He has caused you to enter into. And He has left you to yourself in that which you have entered into by yourself.

"And say, 'My Lord, make me to enter through the entrance of truth, and make me to leave through the exit of truth, and grant me from Your very presence an authority to aid (me)' (Q17:80). So the entrance of truth is: that you enter in by Him and not by yourself, and the exit of truth is the same, so understand!

What the Real demands from you is that you stay where He has placed you and established you, until the Real Himself ﷻ is the One who assumes charge of taking you out from that, just as He assumed charge of placing you in it. And the matter isn't that you leave means, but rather the matter is that means leave you. One of them said: "I left means many times but eventually came back to it, and then means left me and I never went back to it."

I once entered the presence of my Shaykh Abu-I 'Abbas al-Mursi may Allah be pleased with him, and I had within myself a firm resolution for divestment. I said to myself, "Indeed the arrival to Allah Most High in this affair is far from being occupied in the outward sciences, or in mixing with the people." So he said to me before I could ask him: "A man accompanied me who was occupied with the outward sciences and was proficient in them, and he tasted something of this Way and he came to me and said, 'O my master! Shall I leave what I am involved in and devote myself fully to your company?'" So I answered him: "It is not like that. Rather stay in what you are in, and what Allah ﷻ apportioned for you upon our hands will come to you." Then the Shaykh looked at me and said: "Such is the affair of the veracious truthful ones. They do not leave something until the Real Himself is the One who takes charge of their leaving that thing." So I left his presence and Allah ﷻ had washed away from my heart all those thoughts I previously had, and I found ease in complete surrender to Allah ﷻ. But as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "They are a folk such that none who sit with them become wretched."

A third aspect:

That being polite in seeking involves seeking from Allah with the aim of communing with him intimately and confidentially, and not the very thing you ask for. Rather, the asking becomes a means towards intimate communion (*munajat*). Shaykh Abu-I Hasan (ash-Shadhdhuli) may Allah be pleased with him said, for this reason: "Let not your aspiration in your supplication be the joy of the fulfillment of your wants, for then you will be veiled from your Lord. Rather, let your aspiration be the communion with your Master." It is narrated that Musa peace be upon him would roam among the Children of

Israel and say, "Who will carry a message for me to my Lord?" And that was to lengthen his intimate discourse (*munajat*) with Allah ﷻ.

A fourth aspect:

That being polite in seeking is that you ask and seek, while at the same time you witness that you are sought by what is previously decreed and apportioned for you, and that you are intended for it. Your asking is not what leads and joins you to it. So you ask while you are drowned in the ocean of impotence, and immersed in the existence of extreme need.

Also, being polite in seeking could be that you not ask out of self-gratification, but rather to manifest servitude, as is narrated concerning Samnun the lover. He used to say,

*"There is no lot for me in any other than You,
so in any way You will and please, test me."*

Shortly thereafter he was tried with the retention of urine, and he was patient at first. He remained in this state for a while and he still kept patient. Then one of his friends came to him and said, "O my master, I heard you yesterday asking Allah ﷻ, for healing and well-being," when in fact he did not ask for that. Then a second friend came, then a third, then a fourth. Then he came to understand that the intended desire of the Real for him was to manifest his extreme need. So he asked Allah ﷻ for healing, and then went around saying, "Call your uncle 'the liar'."

A fifth aspect:

Being polite in seeking could also mean that you ask from Allah ﷻ what is sufficient for your needs, and not that you ask Him for an extravagant amount. In other words, that you not vigorously aspire after what is more than enough for you, nor stretch your hand out to Him with craving. Indeed, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught us this when he said: "O Allah, make the food of the family of Muhammad enough for their needs."

He who seeks after what is in excess of necessity is blameworthy, whereas one who asks for what is sufficient is not blamed in that. It has been narrated that the Prophet ﷺ stated: "You will not be held blameworthy for (asking for) what is sufficient for your needs." And it is enough for you, what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Tha'laba ibn Hatib, when he said: "O Messenger of Allah, supplicate Allah ﷻ so that He provide me with wealth." So the Messenger of Allah ﷺ responded to him: "O Tha'alaba little provision that you are able to give thanks for is better than much provision which you cannot bear the responsibility of gratitude for." Tha'alaba repeated his request and he ﷺ returned to what he said before: "A little that you are able to give thanks for is better than much that you cannot bear." So he continued to repeat his request until the Messenger ﷺ supplicated for him what he chose for himself. So the consequence of his choosing for himself, and his opposition to what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose for him, was that his wealth increased until he became unable to attend some of the congregational prayers with the Prophet ﷺ except for the Friday congregational prayer. Then his cattle and livestock also increased, to the point that he was not even able to attend the Friday prayer because of his preoccupation with maintaining his wealth. Then the *zakat*-collector assigned by the Prophet ﷺ came to collect his *zakat*, so he said: "I only see this as a tax." He was prevented from paying the *zakat* because of his avarice. And his story is well known, and Allah ﷻ revealed about him: "Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed upon them of His bounty, they would give largely in charity, and be truly amongst the righteous. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became stingy with it, and turned back from their covenant, averse from its fulfillment. So He has placed as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, to last till the

Day whereon they shall meet Him, because they broke their covenant with Allah, and because they lied" (Q9:75-77).

A sixth aspect:

Being polite in asking could mean that the slave not only ask for the portions and gratifications of his worldly life. He ﷺ said: "For there are men who say, 'Our Lord! Give us Your bounties in this world,' but they will have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are men who say, 'Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and save us from the torment of the Fire!'" (Q2:200-201).

A seventh aspect:

Being polite in asking could also mean that you ask and you are not doubtful of the Divine pre-apportionment, nor are you negligent in maintaining the due reverence and respect.

An eighth aspect:

Being polite in asking could mean that you ask and that you not seek to quicken the answer, and not being polite in asking involves trying to hasten the response. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ prohibited this when he said: "Your prayers will be answered as long as you do not hasten the answer impatiently, as if you say: 'I prayed, but my prayers were not answered.'"

Musa and Harun supplicated against Pharaoh, in the saying of Allah quoting them: "Our Lord, deface the features of their wealth, and send hardness to their hearts, so they will not believe until they see the grievous penalty" (Q10:88). So He answered them: "Your prayer is accepted. So stand upright (upon the Path), and follow not the way of those who know not" (Q10:89). Between the saying of Allah ﷻ, "your prayer is accepted," and the destruction of Pharaoh, there were 40 years. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said of this: "'So stand upright upon the correct path,' i.e., by not trying to hasten impatiently what you requested. 'And do not follow the way of those who know not,' i.e., those who try to hasten the answer."

A ninth aspect:

Being polite in seeking could also mean that he asks, and he is thankful to Allah ﷻ if he is granted his request, or he witnesses the excellence of his Lord's choice if he is denied his request. For one who seeks from Allah ﷻ might not be grateful if he is given what he seeks, and he might not see his Lord's excellent choice for him if he is denied what he seeks. Rather, such a one asks Allah ﷻ and is convinced that his welfare and well being are in his being granted his request. So from where does this ignorant slave have the authority to decide and make judgments upon the knowledge of Allah ﷻ, and know what is in the unseen of Allah ﷻ? It is enough ignorance for the slave that he chooses for his Master. Rather, if you ask Him, then ask Him while you are fully consigned to Him, not deciding (*tadbir*) with Him or choosing for Him. "And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses, no choice do they have in the matter" (Q28:68).

This applies to that which He kept concealed from view, and the clarification of this is: that, for which requests and petitions are made, is in three categories:

- 1) That which is absolutely good and beneficial. So ask this from Allah ﷻ without exception. These include things such as faith, and all kinds of devotional acts of obedience.
- 2) That which is absolutely evil and harmful. So ask Allah ﷻ for security from them without exception. These include things such as unbelief and acts of rebellion.

3) That which is unclear, such as wealth, dignity, exaltedness, and other things. So ask these from Allah ﷻ saying: "If you know that such is good and beneficial for me." I heard this from the Shaykh.

A tenth aspect:

Being polite in asking could mean that in their request, they are dependent upon His pre-apportionment and Decree, and not reliant upon their requesting.

And being polite in asking could also mean that they ask and see themselves as unworthy of being granted their requests. These are more worthy of deserving the grants of the Lord of the Worlds. Shaykh Abu-l Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "I never asked for anything except I advanced my offenses before me." He means by this that he did not seek from Allah ﷻ in a manner of meriting His grant, but rather that his asking for His bounty be only by virtue of His bounty.

So these are ten aspects of being polite and courteous in seeking and asking from Allah ﷻ and the intention is not to exhaust the possibilities of meaning, for the affair is vaster than this. But rather, according to what the Unseen presented to me, and what the Master ﷻ blessed me with.

And it is the speech of the possessor of comprehensive lights ﷺ. For no taker takes from him except according to the amount of his light. And no one takes from the precious jewels of his ocean except according to the degree of his ability to submerge. And everyone understands according to the station that he is established in Qur'an: "Watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat" (Q13:4). And what they do not take from him is greater than what they do. Listen to his words ﷺ: "I was given all the words, and speech was summed up in conciseness for me." Had the scholars of Allah ﷻ interpreted the secrets of one word of his speech for all eternity, they would not encompass it in knowledge, nor would they understand it in full. One of them said: "I have been engaged for 70 years in trying to fully comprehend this statement of his, and I still am not finished with it. It is his statement ﷺ: 'Among the excellent qualities of a man's Islam is his leaving what does not concern him.'"

He spoke the truth, may Allah ﷻ be pleased with him. And had he remained throughout the entire life span of the world and throughout eternity, he would not exhaust this hadith of his ﷺ and the extraordinary knowledge and secret understandings deposited in it.

Chapter Eighteen

Reliance on Allah ﷻ and the Taking of Means

Summary

This important chapter discusses the nature of relying upon the Divine as well as saving up provision for the future (iddikhar). The author explains that it is better, according to the dictates of certainty and reliance upon Allah ﷻ, not to hoard and save. He also discusses how to withhold the provision properly, namely, that one should withhold for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and not out of a selfish lack of trust.

Text

Consider his words ﷺ: "Had you depended upon Allah ﷻ as He should be trusted, He would have sustained you with provision as He provides for the birds, who go out in the morning with stomachs empty and return with their bellies full." You will notice that it indicates the command to rely upon Allah ﷻ, and not the denial of means. Rather, it points to its confirmation, according to his saying ﷺ: "They go out in the morning with stomachs empty and return with their bellies full." So he has affirmed its going and coming, which is its means, and has negated its hoarding and storing ('iddikhar). So it is as if he ﷺ is saying: 'Had you relied upon Allah ﷻ as He should be relied upon, you would not have stored up and hoarded, and your reliance upon Allah ﷻ would have caused you to be without need of storing up. And you would be provided with sustenance as the birds are provided for, who are given their provision daily, and who do not store up and hoard for the next day, out of the trust they have that Allah ﷻ will not neglect them. So you, O believers, are more deserving of that.' He ﷺ implied that storing up ('iddikhar) is due to the weakness of certainty. So you might ask: "Is all storing up of the same category, or is its state varied?"

Section One

The judgment concerning storing ('iddikhar) and the clarification of its different categories

Know that storing is divided into three categories:

- 1) the storing of the unjust oppressors (dhalim),
- 2) the storing of those in the middle (muqtasid), and
- 3) the storing of the foremost (sabiqun).

(Translator's note: compare this division with Qur'an 35:32.)

The first category:

They are those who hoard out of stinginess and a never-ending desire to have more, and who withhold their wealth out of flaunting ostentation and vainglorious pride. For heedlessness has taken firm root in their hearts, and evil has gained authority over their selves. Their appetitive greed for this world has no end, and their aspiration does not aspire to anything besides it. Their true poverty is established, even if they seem to be rich and without need. Their true abasement is clearly manifest, even if they might appear, to have might and glory. They are never satiated to satisfaction with the world, nor is there an end to their seeking it. The worldly means have played with them like a toy, and their numerous lords have dispersed them. "These are like the cattle -rather more astray. These are the heedless (ghaflah)" (Q7:179). There remains no room in their hearts for the comprehension of wisdom or for paying attentive heed to sincere advice. Seldom will their works be raised up to Allah ﷻ or their

states be purified, because the fear of poverty has dwelt in their hearts. And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He in whose heart the fear of poverty has come to dwell rarely has his deeds raised up and accepted."

It is incumbent on the believer who is saved from what they have entered into, and secure from what they are engaged in, and purified from what they are contaminated with, that he praise Allah ﷻ for the blessings He specified for him and for the graces with which He favored him. Say (to yourself) if you see them: "Praise be to Allah ﷻ Who protected me from the tribulation He has tried them with, and conferred upon me special favors above a great part of His creation."

Just as when you see one who is afflicted in his body, you praise Allah ﷻ Who protected you from that and you witness the favor of your Master upon you. Similarly, it is incumbent upon you and even more appropriate that you thank Allah ﷻ if He kept you from worldly means and plunging into them, and tried others than you with that, and that you not demean them. Rather, substitute your contempt of them and your supplication against them by your supplication for them. And imitate what the gnostic Ma'ruf al-Karkhi may Allah be pleased with him did. For what he did was the essence of courtesy and kindness (*ma' ruf*).

He and his companions crossed over the Tigris River, and they saw in a boat a group of people engaging in amusement, diversion, immorality, and singing. So his companions asked him to supplicate Allah against them. So he raised his hands and said: "O Allah ﷻ as you have made them joyful in this world, make them joyful in the Next World." They said: "O our teacher, we asked you to supplicate against them!" He replied: "If He makes them joyful in the next life He will relent towards them, and none of that will harm you." At the same moment, the boat came ashore, and the men descended through one way, and the women through another way. So these people purified themselves, and they left repentant to Allah, and some of them became worshippers and ascetics, by the blessing of the supplication of Ma'ruf may Allah be pleased with him.

So if you see the people of evil and wrongdoing, then know that they are under the domination of the Divine foreknowledge and the invincible power of the Divine will. And if you do not accomplish this, it is feared for you that you will be tried with the like of their tribulation, and that you will become cut off as they are cut off.

And listen to what the Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "Honor the believers with deference, even if they are rebellious sinners. And command them to the good, and forbid them from the evil, and disassociate yourself from their company out of mercy towards them, and not out of exalting yourself over them." And he said: "Had the light of the rebellious believer been revealed, it would have filled the area between heaven and earth. So what do you think about the light of the obedient believer?"

The saying of the Lord of the Worlds is sufficient for you in the exaltation of the believers, even if they are heedless of Allah ﷻ "Then We gave the Book as inheritance to those of Our slaves whom We have chosen. Among them is the one unjustly oppressive to himself, and among them is the one in the middle, and among them is the one outstripping all others in good by the permission of 'Allah....'(Q35:32). Consider how He affirmed their election even with the existence of their injustice, and He did not allow their oppression (of their selves) to make them unworthy of His choosing them or of their inheriting the Book. And He selected them through faith (<*iman*), even though they are oppressors due to the existence of their rebellion. So glorified be the Vast in Mercy, and the Immense in Bounty!

And know that it is inevitable that there be servants in His dominion who are the recipients of forbearance, and the place of the manifestation of Divine forgiveness and mercy, and the intercession

of the prophets and saints. Understand what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "By He in Whose Hand is my soul, if you had not sinned, Allah would do away with you and bring forth a people who would sin and then ask the forgiveness of Allah, so He would forgive them." And his saying: "My inter-cession is for the people of enormities among my community."

It is related that a man came to Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him and said: "My master! Yesterday there were in our neighborhood such-and-such enormities and abominations," and it appeared from this man that he was shocked that this could be. So the Shaykh replied: "O my! It appears as though you wish that there be no rebellion against Allah in His kingdom. He who wishes that there be no rebellion against Allah in His kingdom has desired that His forgiveness not be manifest, and that the Messenger's intercession not occur."

And how many a sinner is there whose sins and rebellious misdeeds became large in number, then necessitating mercy from his Lord? So be merciful towards him, and cognizant of the value of his faith, even if he is disobedient.

Second category:

(They are those in the middle). They do not hoard out of stinginess or a desire to have more, nor withhold their wealth out of flaunting ostentation and vainglorious pride. Rather, they knew from themselves the existence of restless agitation in poverty, and they knew that if they did not store their wealth, then their faith would become unsettled, and their certainty would shake. So they saved because of their inability to attain to the state of those who depend on Allah ﷻ and to the station of certainty.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The strong believer is better in the sight of Allah than the weak believer, and in all are found good." So the strong believer is he in whose heart has shone the light of certainty, by virtue of which he has come to realize that Allah will bring to him his provision, whether or not he stores away his wealth. And that if he does not keep his wealth in reserve, then the Real will reserve his wealth for him. And that those who do store their wealth are dependent in their need upon what they store up, whereas the people of sure reliance upon Allah are dependent in their need upon Allah, and none else.

Therefore, the strong believer is he who does not lean upon means, no matter if he is in them or not. And the weak believer is the one who enters into worldly means with dependence upon their support, and leaves worldly means while looking with anticipation toward them.

Third category:

(They are the foremost). And they are those who have outstripped others in traveling to Allah ﷻ, so that their hearts may be relieved from other than Him. Obstacles do not impede them, and attachments do not divert them from Allah ﷻ. So they became the foremost in traveling to Allah ﷻ because there was nothing to prevent them. Indeed, that which prevents the slaves from being foremost in going to Allah ﷻ is the magnetic attraction of attachments to other than Allah ﷻ. So whenever their hearts aspire to travel to Allah, ﷻ these attachments attract them back to what they were attached to, so they turn back towards it. The Divine Presence is forbidden to those who have this quality. One of the gnostics said: "Do you imagine that you will enter the Divine Presence while some thing behind you attracts you?"

Understand the saying of Allah Most High: "The day when there will be no benefit in wealth or progeny, except for he who comes to Allah with a sound heart" (Q26:88-89). The sound heart is the one that has no attachment to anything besides Allah ﷻ.

And His saying: "You come to Us alone (*farid*) as We created you in the beginning..." (Q6:94) could be construed to mean that: 'Your coming to Allah ﷻ will not occur except if you are 'alone' (*fard*) from what is other than Him.'

And His saying ﷻ: "Did he not find you an orphan (*yatim*), and give refuge?" (Q93:6) could mean: He will not give you refuge with Him unless your being an 'orphan' (*yatim*) from whatever is other than Him becomes sound and realized.

And his ﷺ saying, "'Allah is Single and He loves the single (*witr*).'" In other words, he loves the (single) heart which has not become 'paired' with the blemishes of the secondary effects (i.e., creation). So these hearts are for Allah ﷻ, and by Allah ﷻ. They left with Allah ﷻ the authority of disposal of their affairs for them, so Allah does not leave them to themselves, nor abandon them to their own *tadbir*. For they are the people of the Presence, fully opened to the Reality with the source of the Divine grants of favor. The attractive charms of the creation do not separate them from Allah, and the beautiful splendors do not distract them from Him. We have on this meaning some poetry:

*"O resplendence of beauty of which there has been
none like it ever presented to all the universes!
I have in you a meaning whose secret
has never been revealed
except my glance diverted and I was given full rein."*

And one of them said: "Had I been obliged to see other than Him I would not have been able to, because there is none alongside of Him that I should see with Him." This is the state of those whom the Divine care has taken over, and Divine providence has protected.

So what *tadbir* is there for such people? Or how could it be possible for these to be among those who store their wealth, while they are in the direct Presence of the Lord of the Worlds? Or if they even do store their wealth, that they be dependent upon what they store up? Or how could it be possible for them that they lean in reliance upon other than Him, while they witness the Divine Uniqueness?

Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said, "Contemplative witnessing of the Divine overcame me to the point of becoming unbearable, so I asked that He veil that from me. So it was said, 'If you asked Him as Musa peace be upon him his interlocutor asked Him, or 'Isa peace be upon him His spirit asked Him, or Muhammad ﷺ His chosen beloved asked Him, He would still not do that. Rather, ask Him to strengthen you.' So I asked Him for strength and He strengthened me."

How can he whose state is thus be in need of storing or hoarding his wealth? Or how could he lean in reliance upon others? It is sufficient for the believer that he reserve his wealth on the condition of sure faith in Allah ﷻ, and trust in Him, and dependence upon Him. And as for the people of true understanding from Allah ﷻ, they have relied upon Him in truth, so that He has become the One Who will store up provision for them. And they sought His preservation, so He became their preserver. They were sincerely for Him and established by Him, so He was for them in His aid, and took care of their worries, and averted from them that which troubled and afflicted them.

They were occupied with what He commanded them rather than with what He guaranteed for them, out of their knowledge that He would not leave them to themselves, nor would He prevent them from enjoying His favor. So they entered by virtue of this into blissful ease, and were elevated into the Garden of surrender and the sweet taste of consignment to Him. So Allah ﷻ, because of that, raised their rank, and perfected their lights. And they deserve that the burden of the accounting of the Final Judgment be lifted off from them by His grace, as the Messenger of Allah said ﷺ: "Seventy thousand

of my community will enter the Garden without any accounting." They asked, "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "They are those who never uttered spells or had themselves tattooed or sought omens in birds. Rather, they trusted in their Lord."

How can he who owns nothing be held to account? Or how could he who sees no action belonging to him be questioned about his actions? Rather, the pretenders are held to account, and the heedless are questioned, those who perceive themselves as owning dominion, or as being independent active agents alongside Allah ﷻ. And as for he who does not store his provision, out of trust in Allah ﷻ and reliance upon Him, Allah ﷻ will bring to him his *rizq* in ease and comfort, and will place richness and independence in his heart.

It is related that one of the gnostics became bankrupt, so he said to his wife, "Take out everything we have in the house and give it in charity." So she did that except for the grinder, which she left in the house. For she said to herself, "We might need it, and if we give it away, we might not find any other like it." After she did that, there was a knock at the door, and a visitor came with a present of wheat for the Shaykh, and the house was filled with wheat. When the Shaykh returned and looked, he said to his wife, "Did you take out everything that was in the house?" She said, "Yes." He said: "That is not so." She replied, "I did not leave anything except the grinder, out of fear that we might need it." So he said: "Had you taken out the grinder, then many knocks on the door would have come (with gifts). Instead you kept it with you, so there came to you what you would have to toil over."

Section Two

The withholding of the prophets peace be upon them and the righteous may Allah be pleased with them.

So if the foremost (*sabiqun*) store their provision and wealth (*iddikhar*), it is not for their own sake, but rather it is a storing of (Divine) trust, because they are trustworthy treasurers, and slaves of great stature and eminence. If they withhold the world, they do so in truth (*haqq*), and if they spend it, they do so in truth. And the one who withholds it in truth is not below the one who spends it in truth. They do not perceive themselves as owning anything alongside of Allah ﷻ. Rather, they see what is in their hands as being deposits of trust from Allah ﷻ, and they dispose of it on behalf of Allah ﷻ.

They have heard the saying of Allah, "Spend out of that which Allah has made you to be heirs" (Q57:7). So they have come to know that they do not own anything with Allah ﷻ. Indeed, it is only a secondary attribution attached to you, and an attribution of favor that Allah ﷻ granted you, that He may see how you act, for He is the Knowing, the All-Aware. Will you stop at its outward aspect, or will you penetrate to its inward secrets?

Because of that, *zakat* (obligatory payment due from one's wealth) was not mandatory upon the prophets (upon them be peace), because they did not own anything with Allah so that *zakat* should be obligatory upon them. Rather, the payment of *zakat* is obligatory from what you own. They saw that which was in their hands as a deposited trust from Allah ﷻ, for them, spending it in the moment of its spending, and keeping it not in its final place. Furthermore, *zakat* is purification for that wealth of the one upon whom paying it is obligatory, according to the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Take from their wealth alms by which you will purify and cleanse them" (Q9:103). And the prophets peace be upon them are free of any impurity, due to the existence of the Divine protection in them. Because of that, Imam Abu Hanifa may Allah be pleased with him declared that *zakat* was not mandatory on pre-adolescent children, because of the nonexistence of the defilement of rebellion, which does not occur except after the coming of full responsibility at the moment of maturity.

Understand from this his statement, ﷺ: "We are the prophets, we do not give in inheritance what we left behind as charity." By understanding this, what we mentioned will become clear, and what

we confirmed will be evident. And if the people of gnosis of Allah ﷻ, who witness His Unique Oneness, see that they do not own anything with Allah or share in His dominion, then what do you think of the prophets and messengers peace be upon them? As for the people of unity (*tawhid*) and gnostic knowledge, they have only drunk from their seas, and taken from their lights.

It is related that Imam ash-Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad may Allah be pleased with them were seated when Shayban ar-Ra'i approached. So Ahmad said to ash-Shafi'i, "I want to ask this person something at this time." So Shafi'i said: "Do not do it," but Ahmad replied, "It is necessary." So Ahmad said: "O Shayban, what do you say of someone who forgot four prostrations in four cycles (raka'at) of ritual prayer?" So he responded, "O Ahmad, this is a heart heedless of Allah. He must be disciplined so that he not return to the like of this." Then Imam Ahmad swooned and became unconscious, then recovered, and asked him, "What do you say of someone who has 40 sheep? What is the amount of *zakat* due on them?" Shayban said: "According to our methodology (madhhab), or yours?" Ahmad said: "And are they two?" Shayban said: "Yes. According to your methodology of Law, for every forty head of sheep, one sheep is due as *zakat*. According to our methodology, the slave owns nothing with his Master."

It has been reported in the hadith collections that the Prophet ﷺ stored ('*iddikhar*) the amount of food needed for a year. This could be either for the reason we stated earlier, namely that it was a withholding on the basis of Divine trust, to choose for it a moment that would be proper for spending it. Or, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stored provision for the sake of his family, or to make clear the permissibility of that for his community. And if we are not compelled by some dire necessity to store up our provision, then it is more appropriate for us to rely upon Allah ﷻ and not store up. As for what will illustrate to you that the purpose of that was to make clear its permissibility, it is the fact that the majority of the states of the Messenger ﷺ demonstrate the lack of storing up. Rather, he sometimes did store up provision as a concession for his people, and out of mercy for them and compassion for their weakness. For if he had not done that, then no believer after him would be allowed to do so. So he did that to clarify the ruling, for he said: "Verily, I do not neglect anything, or if I neglect something, it is for the purpose of establishing a way (*sunnah*)." So he explained to you that forgetfulness is not of his nature, nor is he qualified by it. Rather, he only enters into it to clarify certain rulings and whatever is related to them for his community. So understand the hadith!

Section Three

The Responsibility of Allah ﷻ for the *rizq* of the seeker of knowledge

Beneficial lesson: His ﷺ saying "Allah ﷻ has taken special responsibility for the provision of the seeker of knowledge."

Know that the intended meaning of the word 'knowledge' that is repeatedly mentioned in the Mighty Book or in the sunnah is beneficial knowledge that is accompanied by reverential awe and encompassed by fear of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ said, "Those truly fear Allah, among His servants, who have knowledge" (Q35:28), making clear that reverential fear is an essential requisite of knowledge. Therefore, understand from this that the true scholars are the people of fear. Similarly, the saying of Allah ﷻ: "The ones who have been granted knowledge said..." (Q28:80), and "Those firmly established in knowledge" (Q3:7), and, "Say: my Lord, increase me in (depth of) knowledge" (Q20:114).

Understand also the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "Verily the angels lower their wings to the seeker of knowledge," and his saying: "The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets," and his saying here, "Allah ﷻ has taken special responsibility for the provision of the seeker of knowledge." The intended meaning of 'knowledge' in all of these statements is the beneficial knowledge that overpowers and subdues caprice. This particular definition is necessary, since the words of Allah ﷻ,

and His Messenger ﷺ are too sublime and significant to be interpreted in any other way. And we have clarified this matter in another book.

Beneficial knowledge is that through which aid is sought in obedience to Allah ﷻ and that which compels you to fear Allah and stop at the limits He has set, and it is the gnostic knowledge of Allah ﷻ. Beneficial knowledge includes the knowledge of Allah ﷻ, and the knowledge of His commandments, on the condition that the knowledge was gained through Allah ﷻ.

As for his ﷺ saying: "Allah ﷻ has taken special responsibility for the provision of the seeker of knowledge," it means that He has taken responsibility and guaranteed for him that He will bring to him his necessary provision with ease, dignity, and security from the veils (that cover the heart from the Truth). And we have interpreted it thus because the meaning of 'responsibility' here is a special responsibility. For the Real ﷻ is responsible for the *rizq* of all the slaves, whether they seek this knowledge or not. However, the fact that he mentioned it specifically indicates that this responsibility is a special responsibility specific to the seeker of knowledge, as we have mentioned above.

Chapter Nineteen

The Explanation of the Litany of Shaykh Abul-'Abbas

Summary

This chapter is an explanation of certain passages from the litany (hizb) of Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbas al-Mursi (the author's Shaykh).

Text

About this meaning, the Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him said in his Litany of Light: "Bestow on us knowledge direct from the Presence, righteous works, and wholesome sustenance through which there is no veiling from You in this present life, and no questioning, reckoning or punishment in the life to come, on the basis of the science of Oneness (*tawhid*) and the Law (*shar'*), free from the defects of passion, appetitive desire, and natural disposition."

So he asked from Allah ﷻ wholesome sustenance, acquired with ease and Divine facilitation, which is the same type that Allah ﷻ has specifically guaranteed for the seeker of knowledge. Then he explained what he meant by 'provision facilitated with ease', as that which has no veil attached to it in this life, nor accounting in the Next life. For there is neither wholesomeness nor ease in that upon which has fallen the veils (of otherness). For the veils bring about the ruin of the inner secret by preventing it from being present with Allah ﷻ, and impeding it from the Divine openings. It is not how the generality understand it, namely, that facilitated provision granted with ease is that which is acquired without bodily work or toil. For 'ease' with the people of heedlessness refers back to the bodies, and with the people of Divine understanding refers back to the hearts.

The falling of the veils of otherness upon the heart in the context of provision can either be by heedlessness and witnessing the secondary causes instead of Allah ﷻ or by consuming it with an intention other than strengthening yourself for obedience to Allah Most High. The first involves veils in acquiring provision, while the second type involves veils in consuming it.

And as for the saying of the Shaykh, 'And no questioning, reckoning or punishment in the life to come,' questioning concerns the rights that the Divine blessings demand, in accordance with the saying of Allah ﷻ: "Then you will indeed be questioned on that Day concerning the blessings" (Q102:8). It has been reported that the Prophet ﷺ ate with his companions one day, and then said, "By 'Allah, you will indeed be questioned concerning the blessings of this day." And the Shaykh may Allah be pleased with him used to say, "Questioning is of two categories: a questioning of honor, and a questioning of reprimand." Therefore, the questioning of the people of Divine success and providence is a questioning of honor. And the questioning of the people of heedlessness and those who turn away from Allah ﷻ is a questioning of reprimand.

Understand, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that the Real ﷻ, even though He is more knowledgeable and aware of their affairs and hidden secrets than they, nonetheless asks the people of truthfulness, that He may manifest their degree of truthfulness to the slaves, and spread their virtues in the Final Abode. Just as the master says to his servant, "What did you do about this-and-this?" And he is well aware that the servant did an excellent job, but he only desires to make those present know of his great concern for him, and his undertaking the support and care of his state.

So understand! And as for the saying of the Shaykh, "And no 'reckoning,' reckoning is the result of questioning. So if they are safe from the questioning, then they are safe from the reckoning, and if they are safe from the questioning and the reckoning, then they are safe from the punishment. So the Shaykh mentioned it here, even though it goes without saying, to explain what this type of provision necessarily includes of grants and favors, which, even if only one of them were applicable, would still be much worth asking for.

And the saying of the Shaykh, "On the basis of the science of Oneness (*tawhid*)," in other words, 'That I witness You (as the active agent) in what You provided me, and I see You in what You feed me, so that I not see that as coming from other than You, nor attribute it to any of Your creatures.' Similarly, the folk of Allah Most High do not eat except at the table of Allah ﷻ, no matter who feeds them, due to their knowledge that other than Allah ﷻ does not own anything with Him. By virtue of that experiential knowledge, the witnessing of creatures as active independent agents falls from their hearts. Therefore, they do not direct their love to other than Allah ﷻ, for they see that He was the One Who fed them and granted them of His bounties and favored them with His generosity. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "We do not love anyone except Allah Most High." In other words, our love is not directed to any creature. So someone said: "O master, your grandfather (i.e., Muhammad ﷺ) has contradicted you in that, for he said, 'hearts have been naturally disposed to love those who are beneficent towards them.'" So he replied, "Yes, and we are a group who do not see any beneficent one except Allah Most High, and for that reason our hearts have been naturally disposed to His love."

And whoever sees that Allah ﷻ is the One Who feeds, then the increase in love is renewed according to the renewal of the partaking of His favors, in accordance with the statement of Muhammad ﷺ: "Love Allah for the favors He blesses you with," and we have already explained this.

And whoever sees that Allah ﷻ is the One Who feeds him, that witnessing prevents him from directing himself with abasement to the creatures, or leaning his heart with love towards other than the True King. Have you not heard the saying of Ibrahim the Friend peace be upon him "And He is the One Who feeds me and gives me to drink" (Q26:79). So he witnessed Allah as being alone in that, and he came to know Him (Most High) in His sole uniqueness in it.

And the saying of the Shaykh, "On the basis of the science of Oneness (*tawhid*) and the Law (*shar*)," for whoever is free of proper restraint from the viewpoint of the absoluteness of *tawhid*, and sees that the dominion belongs to Allah ﷻ with no one sharing with Him in it, and does not yield and constrict himself to the outward aspects of the Law, has been thrown into the sea of apostasy with no way of escape, and his state has become the source of his harm and destruction. Rather, the matter involves supporting one's foundation upon the Reality, while at the same time yielding to the Law. Such is the verifier in truth. He is not unrestricted with the Reality, nor does he stop at the apparent or literal sense of the Law, but rather "establishes himself between the two" (Q25:67).

Halting at the outward external aspects of the Law is associationism (*shirk*), and being unrestricted in the Reality without yielding before the limits of the Law is nullification. The station of those of Divine guidance is between the two, "Between excretions and blood is pure milk, sweet to those who drink" (Q16:66).

Section

One The states of the creation in terms of *rizq*

Know that different matters arise in the context of provision, and a variety of obstructive states present themselves to its seeker. And the Shaykh may Allah be pleased with him mentioned many of

them when he said (in his Litany): "Subjugate for me this sustenance. Protect me from avidity and from toil in seeking it, from preoccupation of the heart and anxious attachment to it, from humiliation before men on account of it, from thinking and planning (*tadbir*) in the acquisition of it, and from niggardliness and greed after acquiring it." The many states that are related to the affair of *rizq* cannot be fully enumerated, so let us confine ourselves to what the Shaykh may Allah be pleased with him mentioned.

Know that the slave has three states in relation to provision: 1) a state before he is given provision, and that is the state of striving to acquire it, 2) a state after that, namely, the state of acquisition, and 3) a state after the completion of its acquisition.

As for the states that present themselves to its seeker before its acquisition, they include: avidity and toil in seeking it, preoccupation of the heart and anxious attachment to it, humiliation before men on account of it, and thinking and planning in the acquisition of it.

As for avidity, it is the desire in the self for obtaining it and dedicating oneself to the pursuit of it. And its source is the lack of trust, and the weakness of certainty, and both of these come from the absence of light, and the absence of light arises from the existence of the veils of otherness. For had the heart been founded upon the lights of direct witnessing of the Truth, and been covered with the grants of Allah ﷻ, then suggestions of avidity would not occur to him. And had the light of certainty shined upon the heart, then the destined pre-allotment of provision would be unveiled before him, so that he would be unable to become avid. The slave would come to know that he has with Allah ﷻ a pre-allotted portion of *rizq*, which of necessity must arrive to him.

As for toil in seeking it, it might be the outward toil of the bodies, and thus seeking Allah's protection from it would be because, if this toil overcame the body of the seeker of *rizq*, that would hinder him from the fulfillment of Divine obligations. Provision given with ease aids one in devoting oneself to the obedience of Allah ﷻ and rising to His service. However, if the toil is the toil of hearts, instead of the toil of bodies, then it becomes even more necessary to seek protection from it. That is because undue striving in seeking *rizq* and thinking of it tires the heart and weighs down upon it. There is no ease for it except in dependence upon Allah, because dependence upon Allah ﷻ involves dropping the heart's burdens and their weight, so that Allah ﷻ carries them on one's behalf, in accordance with the saying of Allah ﷻ: "And whoever depends upon Allah, He will be sufficient for him" (Q65:3).

Then the Shaykh said, "preoccupation of the heart and anxious attachment to it." The preoccupation of the heart in the affair of *rizq* is a great separator, so much so that the Shaykh Abu-l Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "That which most veils the creation from Allah is two: anxiety over *rizq* and fear of the creatures." And anxiety over *rizq* is the stronger of the two veils, because many are free of fear of the creatures, but are not empty of anxiety over *rizq*, except a few. Especially since the sign of extreme need is visible in your being, and you are in need towards that which establishes your constitution and supports your strength.

And his saying, "and anxious attachment to it," namely, the attachment of *himma* to the matter of *rizq*, directing itself fully to it and even drowning in it, until there is no room in it for other than it. This state necessitates being cut off from the Reality, and eclipses the lights of arrival, and announces to its possessor the destruction of his heart and its being empty of the light of certainty and its lacking any strength and stability.

And his saying, "from humiliation before men on account of it," know that abasement is a necessary consequence for whoever's certainty is weak, and whose portion of the Intellect (*'aql*) is small. That is because of his covetousness towards the creatures, and the absence of his trust in the

True Sovereign. For he did not witness the destined pre-allotment of Allah ﷻ, nor did he attain to any good through the truthfulness of His promise. So he abased himself to the creatures in flattering them, and earnestly implored from them (his needs) out of attachment to them, and this is the consequence of heedlessness of Allah ﷻ. And the torment of the Hereafter is greater.

And if his faith and trust in Allah ﷻ were sound? Then he would become mighty by that, and the might is for Allah ﷻ, His Messenger ﷺ, and the believers. So the might of the believer is through his Lord. He does not seek might through other than Him, due to his knowledge that might in its totality belongs to Allah ﷻ, and that He is the Mighty and none besides Him is mighty. And He is the Exalter and there is none alongside Him that can exalt others. His trust in Allah ﷻ brought him to might, and his reliance upon Him granted him victory. As a consequence, he does not become abased to creatures, because of the truthfulness of his trust in the Divine allotment, and he does not become grieved because of his dependence upon Him in His bestowal of grants, hearing the words of Allah ﷻ: "So do not lose heart, or fall into grief, for you are in mastery if you are true in faith" (Q3:139).

Therefore, the might of the believer lies in his abandoning any covetousness towards the creatures, and in the existence of trust in the True Sovereign. His faith prevents him from presenting his needs to any other than his Lord, or directing his heart to anyone besides Him. For that reason, some said:

*"It is forbidden for anyone who asserts the Oneness of Allah,
his Lord, that he should seek assistance
from someone else.
O my companion, stand with me for a moment with the Real,
I die by it in ecstasy (wajd)
and by it I am brought to ecstatic life!
And tell the kings of the earth to struggle with all their power,
for this kingdom is a kingdom
that is neither bought nor gifted."*

And Allah ﷻ has granted an immense favor to, and perfected His solicitude for, whomever He saves from bondage to covetousness and exalts through the existence of scrupulousness.

Know that Allah ﷻ clothed you, O believer, with various raiments, such as the raiments of faith, knowledge, obedience, and the *sunnah*. So do not defile them with covetousness towards the creatures, and with dependence upon other than the Lord of the Worlds. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "I saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream, and he said, 'Cleanse your raiment of defilement and you will attain the help of Allah with every breath.' I asked, 'What is my raiment, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ?' He replied, 'Allah has clothed you with the raiment of gnosis, of love, of *tawhid*, of faith, and of submission. If anyone knows Allah, everything becomes of little importance for him. If anyone loves Allah, everything becomes contemptible for him. If anyone asserts the Unity of Allah, he associates nothing with Him. If anyone has faith in Allah, he is safe from everything. If anyone is submitted to Allah, rarely does he disobey Him. If he does disobey Him, he begs of Him to be excused. If he begs of Him to be excused, his excuse is accepted.' With these words, I understood the meaning of His saying, 'and purify your garments! (Q74:4)."

And know, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that the lifting of *himma* above the creations and not exposing oneself to them (in a state of need) is more beautiful for the seekers upon the Path of the Hereafter than the ornaments of the bride, and more necessary for them than water for the life of the selves. And whoever is clothed with the raiment of the King, and protects and guards it, deserves that it be kept with him and not be taken from him. As for the defiler of the raiment granted to him, then it is more deserving that it not be left with him.

So do not defile your faith, O brother, through covetousness towards the creation, and do not place your reliance except on the Lord of the Worlds. And if you seek might in Allah ﷻ, then your might abides, just as the One you sought it through abides, and if you seek might in other than Him, then there is no abiding for your might, for the one you sought it through has no abiding. Some of the nobles recited to me:

*`By your sustaining Lord
let all your glory be sustained and firmly established.
For if you seek glory in he who dies,
then indeed your glory is dead."*

It is also narrated that a man walked into a group of gnostics and he was crying, so they asked, "What is the matter?" The man said, "My master has died." So a gnostic said to him, "And why did you choose as your master someone who dies?"

It is said to you: "If you seek might in other than Allah ﷻ you lose it (or Him), and if you lean for support on other than Him, you are deprived of it (or Him)." Qur'an: "Look at your god, of whom you have become a devoted worshipper. We will certainly melt it in a blazing fire and scatter its remains in the sea. But the God of you all is Allah, there is no god but He. He has comprehended all things in His knowledge" (Q20:97-98).

And be, O slave, like Sayyidina Ibrahim peace be upon him, for your fore-father Ibrahim said, "Indeed I do not love that which sets" (Q6:76), and everything other than Allah ﷻ sets, either in relation to its being or its possibility. And Allah ﷻ has also said, "The way of your forefather Ibrahim" (Q22:78). In other words, 'follow the way of Ibrahim peace be upon him', so it is an obligation upon the believer to follow the way of Ibrahim peace be upon him. And the way of Ibrahim peace be upon him includes the lifting of *himma* above the creatures. For on the day he was thrown in the catapult, Jibril peace be upon him came before him and asked, 'Do you have a need?' whereupon Ibrahim responded, 'Of you, no, but of Allah ﷻ, yes.' So Jibril said, 'Then ask Him for your need,' and Ibrahim replied, 'His knowledge of my state is enough for me from having to ask Him.'

Consider how Sayyidina Ibrahim peace be upon him lifted his *himma* above and beyond the creation, and how he directed it to the True Sovereign. For he did not seek aid from Jibril peace be upon him, nor did he even turn to asking Allah Most High. Rather, He witnessed the Real closer to him than Jibril (as.) and his asking Him. For that reason, He gave him security from Nimrod and his forces, and blessed him with His favors and graces, and singled him out with His special approach.

And among the teachings of the way of Ibrahim peace be upon him is: enmity towards everything that distracts one from Allah, and the directing of one's *himma* in love to Allah Most High, in accordance with his saying, "They are indeed enemies to me, except the Lord of the Worlds" (Q26:77).

And if you want to be directed to true independence, then know that it lies in forsaking the people out of despair. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "I have given up all hope of being of any benefit to myself, so how should I not give up hope of my being of benefit to others? I have hoped in Allah ﷻ for others, so how should I not hope in Him for myself?" And this is the true alchemy and the elixir, of which whoever obtains it, obtains a richness and independence with no neediness attached to it, and might with which there is no abasement, and spending of wealth with no end to it. And it is the elixir of the people of Divine understanding.

Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "A certain man kept my company and became burdensome to me, so I asked him, 'My son, what is your need, and why have you sought my company?' He said, 'My master, I was told that you know alchemy, so I sought your company that I may learn it from you.' So I said, 'You spoke the truth, and he who informed you spoke the truth. But you will not be able to receive the teaching.' He replied, 'No, I am able to receive it.' So I told him, 'I looked with consideration upon the creatures and I found them to be of two types, enemies and friends. So I looked at my enemies and I came to know that they are incapable of even pricking me with a thorn if 'Allah did not decree that for me, so I severed my consideration of them. Then I became attached to my friends and loved ones, and saw that they too are unable to benefit me with anything if Allah does not will it for me. So I cut off my hope from them, and I became completely attached to Allah. Then it was said to me: 'You will never arrive at the reality of this affair until you do not doubt in Us, and cut off all hope that other than Us will give you other than what We have previously decreed for you.'

And he said another time, when he was asked about alchemy, "Remove the covetousness toward creatures from your heart, and stop desiring that your Lord give you other than what He has previously ordained for you."

That which indicates the mark of true servanthood is not the great number of his works, or his perpetual performance of his daily exercise of invocation. Rather, that which indicates his illumination is his finding sufficiency in his Lord, and his heart's seclusion and confinement to Him, and his freedom from the bondage of covetousness, and his adornment with the ornament of scrupulousness. With these, actions are perfected and states purified. Allah Most High said: "We have made what is upon the earth as an ornament, to try which of them is the most perfect in deeds" (Q18:7).

Therefore, the perfection of deeds is through the direct understanding from Allah ﷻ. And this Divine understanding comprises what we have mentioned before, such as richness through Him, finding sufficiency with Him, firm reliance upon Him, the lifting of needs to Him, and maintaining presence before Him. And all of that is the fruit of understanding gained through Allah ﷻ. Examine the existence of scrupulousness within you more than you examine the existence of other than it in you, and cleanse yourself from covetousness towards the creatures. And know that had the covetous person purified himself in seven seas, he would not be cleansed of his covetousness towards creatures except through forsaking them out of despair of them, and the lifting of *himma* above them.

It is narrated that Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him came to the city of Basra, and entered its mosque, and found the speakers giving their speeches and stories. So he expelled them one by one until he came to Hasan al-Basri may Allah be pleased with him, and said to him: "O youth, I am going to ask you about something, and if you answer correctly I will leave you in your position, but if you don't, I will expel you as I did your companions." And he saw in him signs of guidance. So al-Hasan told him to ask his question. Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him asked, "What is the pivot of the religion?" He answered, "Scrupulousness (*wara'*). "And what is the corruption of the religion?" "Covetousness." So Imam 'Ali said, "Sit (and speak), for such as you are worthy to speak to the people."

I heard our Shaykh Abu-I 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say: "In the beginning of my affair, I was in the frontiers of Alexandria. I came to someone who knew me, and bought from him something I needed with half a dirham. Then I said to myself, 'He might not take it from me.' Then I heard a voice saying, 'Safety in the religion is through abandoning covetousness towards the creatures.' And I heard him say, 'The covetous is never satiated, do you not see that all of its letters (Ta — Mim — 'Ayn) are hollow?'"

It is incumbent upon you, O seeker, to raise your *himma* above the creation, and not to abase yourself before them for the sake of provision, for its allotment has preceded your existence, and its

establishment preceded your manifestation in the world. And listen to what some of the Masters said: "O man! The bread He decreed would be leavened must be leavened. So be you warned! Eat it with might, and do not eat it with abasement."

Know that whoever has gnosis of Allah ﷻ trusts His promise and guarantee. And that the understanding of the slave is not complete until what is in the Two Hands of Allah is more trustworthy in his eyes than what is with him in his hands, and until he trusts the Guarantee of Allah ﷻ more than the guarantee of the creatures. And if you are not like that, that is ignorance enough.

It is narrated that someone noticed that a man would always be consistent in praying in the mosque, and would not leave it, so he was surprised at his assiduity, and thought to himself, "From what source does he eat and provide for himself?" So he asked him one day, "How do you eat?" and the man replied, "I have a Jewish friend who promised me every day two loaves of bread, and he brings me them every day." So that knower ('arif) said to him, "O indigent one! You trusted in the promise of a Jew, but you did not trust in the promise of Allah Most High, the Truthful One Who does not break his promise? And Allah has said, 'There is no moving creature on earth but the responsibility for its sustenance is upon Allah. He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit. All is in a clear record' (Q11:6)." So that man became ashamed and left.

It is also related that a certain person would continue to pray behind an Imam (congregational leader) for many days, and the Imam was surprised at his assiduity in remaining in the mosque, and his abandonment of means (*asbab*). So he asked him one day, "From where do you provide for yourself?" And the man answered, "Wait here while I renew my prayer, for I do not pray behind someone who doubts in Allah."

And the stories upon this meaning are many. Imam 'Ali may Allah be pleased with him was asked, "If a man was placed in a house and the door to that house was plastered over with mud (meaning that he is trapped inside), then where would his sustenance come from?" He answered, "It would come from where his destined time comes from." Consider this argument and his answer, and how clearly they explain the truth of the matter!

And the Shaykh's saying, "and from thinking and planning (*tadbir*) in its acquisition." Thinking here involves thinking in yourself that there is no way but that you must have some nourishment to maintain your constitution. And *tadbir* here means that you say, "It is through this or that means; no, rather it is through this or that," and these thoughts increase, and waver frequently within your heart, until you become unaware of what you prayed, if you were praying, or what you recited, if you were reciting. So that act of obedience that you were performing becomes turbid, and you are denied its lights, and prevented from attaining its secrets. So if such a thought comes over you, then destroy its foundations with the ax of trust, and demolish its building with certainty (*yaqin*).

And understand, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, that Allah ﷻ has already assumed responsibility for your management before you even were. And if you desire the well-being and benefit of your self, then do not plan for it, for your *tadbir* for it is harmful to it, in that it takes you and places you under your own care and management, and prevents the support of the Divine subtle mercy from reaching you. As for the believer, the Real does not abandon him to the existence of *tadbir* or to contention with the Divine Decrees. So if these thoughts come over you, or occur to you, then there is no establishment for them in you, for the light of faith precludes such a thing from taking place. Qur'an: "And it is a due right upon Us to give victory to the believers" (Q30:47), and, "No, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it obliterates it, and behold! Falsehood perishes!" (Q21:18)

And the saying of the Shaykh, "from stinginess and greed after acquiring it." These two are states that occur after acquisition, and both come from weakness of certitude and the lack of trust.

When such is the case, then there occurs avarice, stinginess, and greed. And Allah has censured both stinginess and greed in His Mighty Book, for He said: "And those saved from the avarice of their own selves are the ones that achieve prosperity" (Q59:9). Its explanation is that the stingy person has no prosperity, i.e., light, for prosperity is light.

And Allah ﷻ said in describing the hypocrites: "Covetous of goods. Such men have no faith, and so Allah has made their deeds of no effect" (Q33:19). And He said: "Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give in charity, and be amongst the righteous. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became stingy and turned back from their promise, averse from its fulfillment" (Q9:75-76). And He said: "But whoever withholds only withholds from his own self." (Q47:38).

Stinginess and niggardliness are applied to three categories: 1) that you are too stingy to spend what is in your hand in the obligations Allah has placed upon you, 2) that you are stingy with what is in your hands though no obligation is tied to it, and 3) that you are too stingy with your self to spend it for Allah Most High.

First Category:

That you are stingy and avaricious and do not, for example, give the alms-tax (*zakat*), even though you are required to, or that you do not fulfill a specific responsibility on you, such as spending for your parents in their poverty, the children in their need and youth, and spending for your wife's needs.

And in summary, every right that Allah ﷻ has obligated you to fulfill and which you fail to perform becomes a source of censure and blame upon you, and makes you deserving of punishment. A saying of Allah ﷻ, has come regarding that: "And those who hoard gold and silver in treasuries and do not spend it in the cause of Allah, then announce for them a grievous penalty" (Q9:34). The people of knowledge said: "The hoarded treasure (referred to in this verse) is that wealth out of which you do not give the *zakat*, and if you give the *zakat* for it then it is no longer considered as hoarded treasure. In other words, it does not fall under the threat of the verse, nor does it become blameworthy."

Second Category:

Stinginess in giving and spending what is not required, such as if one who gave the *zakat* for his wealth did not, after that, give away anything additional, even though he did what Allah ﷻ obliged him to do. So he should not stop with that (and thus become deficient). For stopping at the mandatory and leaving the supererogatory acts of goodness is the state of the weak.

The believer who is concerned with the rectification of his state with Allah ﷻ should not be negligent in dealing with Allah ﷻ with those acts He did not require for him. Otherwise, he would be like the one who prayed the obligatory prayers but did not perform the supererogatory prayers (*nawafil*) that go with them. And it is enough for you, O slave, what Allah Most High said on the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ: "Those who draw near to Me do not draw near with anything like accomplishing that which I have obliged them to perform, and My slave continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works of devotion until I come to love him. And when I love him, I become for him hearing, sight, tongue, heart, intellect, hand and support." So He ﷻ has made clear that repeated performance of these extra acts of devotion necessitates the love of Allah ﷻ for the slave. The supererogatory acts include everything that you are not required to carry out, such as extra prayers, or charity, or pilgrimage and so on.

The similitude of the one who performs the obligatory prayers and stops there, and who performs them and the supererogatory prayers, or the one who pays the due *zakat* without additional giving and the one who gives the *zakat* and adds to that in charity, is like two servants of a King who

required from each one a daily tax of two dirhams. As for one of the slaves, he paid his master those two dirhams without adding anything to them, nor did he gift him anything or any act of kindness. As for the other slave, he did the same thing that his companion did, but bought some fruit and gifts to give to his master in addition to the tax. This second slave, without doubt, has more worth in the eyes of the master, and a greater portion of his love, and is closer to the master's special approach.

That is because the slave who only gives what is demanded of him has no love for the master, but only gives him what is demanded out of fear of punishment. As for the slave who gives to the master what he demands, but adds a gift to that for the master, then such a one has embarked upon the path of mutual love between the master and him, and has exposed himself to his love. So he is more deserving of his love and proximity.

The Real ﷻ only set up obligations upon the slaves out of His knowledge of their weakness and other qualities of their selves, such as the existence of laziness. So He demanded from them what He demanded from them because if He left it to their choice, then none would perform the obligations except a few, and few are they! So He made obedience to Him obligatory upon them.

From the perspective of the Reality, He only made entrance to the Garden obligatory upon them, and drove them to Paradise with the chains of obligation. "Your Lord is surprised with a people who are dragged to Paradise with chains!"

Know, may Allah have mercy on you, that we have examined the obligatory acts, and we have found that the Real made for every obligatory act a supererogatory act of the same kind, whatever it may be. This is so that the extra act of the same type as the obligatory act would function to mend and complete what would otherwise be defects and flaws in the servants' performance of the obligations. And such has come in the hadith: "He looks at the obligatory prayer of the slave, and if there is any deficiency in it, He completes it with the supererogatory acts of prayer." So understand this, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on you, and do not stop at what Allah ﷻ has obliged you to do. Rather, let there be in you an arousing stimulus born of love, that incites you to deal with Allah ﷻ in extra acts of devotion that He did not oblige you to perform.

And if the servants did not find in their scales (on the Day of Rising) anything except obligatory acts and reward for abstaining from prohibited acts, then they would miss such goodness and bounty as could not be enumerated or appraised. So glorified be the One Who opens for the slaves the door of supererogatory dealings and Who makes plain to them the causes of arrival.

Furthermore, know that the Real Most High knew that among His slaves there are the weak and the strong, so He required from them the obligations and clarified the prohibitions. So as for the weak, they were content with the performance of obligations and avoidance of prohibitions. But there is no reign of love in their hearts, nor does there exist in them any adoration that would carry them to act without obligation. Their similitude is like the servant whose Master is aware that if he does not tax him, he will not give him anything.

For that reason, He (Most High) established times for and detailed the daily exercises of servitude, and made them known as being at sunrise, sunset, midday, etc. And the result of all that is the daily ritual prayers in their times, and the passing of a lunar year for *zakat* on growing wealth, whether it be in the property itself, or farm produce, or livestock, and at the time of harvest ("....and pay its dues on the day of harvest" (Q6:141), and the ten days of Dhu'l Hijja for Pilgrimage, and the month of Ramadan for fasting. In such a way He established these obligations of servitude and detailed times for them. And He also gave the selves in other than these times the freedom for personal gratifications and work at the means of livelihood.

As for the people of Allah ﷻ and the people of Divine understanding, they have made all times and moments to be one moment, and the entire lifespan to be devoted to pursuit of the Way to Allah. For they understand that all of time is His, so they do not take from it any time for other than Him. And for that reason Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said, "It is incumbent upon you to have one constant occupation (*wird*), namely, the abandonment of passion, and love of the Master. Love refuses that the lover be occupied in anything not conforming to the wishes of the Beloved."

And they know that the breaths are the trusts of the Real deposited with them. So they understand from this that they are required to guard them, so they have diverted their attention and aspiration to that. And just as He has the everlasting Lordship, similarly the rights of His Lordship upon you are everlasting. So just as His Lordship over you is not divided into sections of time, the rights of His Lordship should be the same way. Shaykh Abu-I Hasan may Allah be pleased with him said: "Indeed, for every moment there is a portion of servanthood that is demanded of you by the authority of Lordship." And let us stop here on this subject lest we depart from the purpose of the book.

Third category: spending of the self

This is the greatest of the three categories, and it is preferred above the others on the basis of its nobility and merit. For he who prefers Allah ﷻ over any other, in doing what He obliged from him, might not prefer Him with that which is in his hands which He did not order him to do. And whoever prefers Allah ﷻ with what is in his hands, which He did not order him to do, might not prefer Him with his self, or spend it for Him generously. For being generous in spending the self is a quality of the highly veracious (*siddiqin*), and the state of the people of certainty. They are those who experientially and directly have come to know Allah ﷻ and so have spent themselves for Him due to their knowledge that the slave owns nothing with the Master. And if being selfless in spending the *nafs* in this way is the most complete and perfect of these categories, then being stingy with it becomes the most ignoble and ugly of the categories.

So now the saying of the Shaykh, "and from stinginess and avariciousness after its acquisition", has become clear in a summary fashion and not in an exhaustive fashion, and this book is not the place to devote to this meaning.

Section Two

The third division of the kinds of obstructive states that appear in the matter of *rizq*

We have previously mentioned that the states that appear in the affair of *rizq* are divided into three parts: 1) states that come before its acquisition, and 2) states that come during its acquisition. And we have already mentioned their elucidation in the words of the Shaykh and explained them. Now we come to the third division, namely, the states that appear after its acquisition and use, such as a feeling of loss and regret and ill-fortune over its end and disappearance, and the persistent and longing anticipation for it.

You must be purified of these also. Hear what He (Most High) said: "In order that you may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favors bestowed upon you" (Q57:23); and the words of the Prophet ﷺ when a child of one of his daughters passed away, and he said, "Tell her that what was taken away belongs to Allah, as does all that He gives."

And whoever becomes saddened at the loss of something other than Allah ﷻ has demonstrated the existence of his ignorance and the establishment of his separation from truth. If he had found Allah ﷻ, he would not feel the loss of anything other than Him, for he who finds Allah ﷻ does not notice or find any-thing besides Him that he could lose or feel the effect of its loss.

The slave should know that what left him was not his destined provision in the first place, and that anything which is temporarily with him and which he then loses does not belong to him and wasn't intended for him. Because if it were indeed his destined provision, it would not leave him for someone else. Rather, it was just something given to him to borrow. The One Who lent it to him took it back, and the One Who created it returned it to Himself.

It is narrated that someone was prearranged from his youth to marry his cousin, but when he grew up and the time for marriage came, something occurred that prevented him from marrying her, and she married someone else. So one of the people of understanding came to him and said, "It would be proper for you to apologize to this man who married your cousin, because you were anticipating marrying her but he was her husband from pre-eternity."

The following words of Allah ﷻ are enough of a warning for the believer not to be regretful over something that has left him: "And among men is he who serves Allah ﷻ, as it were, on the edge. If any good befalls him, he is well content with it, but if a trial befalls him, he turns his face away, losing both this world and the hereafter. That is indeed the clear loss!" (Q22:11).

So the Real ﷻ blames the one who becomes at ease and in faithful repose with things at the moment he finds them. Do you not see how He said: "If any good befalls them, they are well content with it"? In other words, that good, which he relies on, becomes the source of his peace, tranquility, confidence, and sense of security. And if he understood the truth, he would not find any peace with other than Allah ﷻ. His tranquility would be with Allah ﷻ alone. The same applies to the one who becomes saddened at its loss, in accordance with the words of Allah, "And if any trial strikes him..."

The 'trial' (*fitnah*) is the loss of that dear thing in which he found peace and confidence. "He turns his face away...." namely, his intellect becomes bewildered, his self in a state of confusion, and his heart heedless. And all of that is due to nothing other than the lack of his knowledge of Allah ﷻ, because if he knew Allah ﷻ, then His Being would make him independent of all other beings, and he would be in Him rich beyond need above every lost thing. Whoever does not find Allah, does not find anything, and whoever finds Him, does not lose anything.

How could he lose anything if he finds the One in Whose Hand is the dominion of everything?

How could he lose anything if he finds the One Who is the Creator and Originator of everything?

How could he lose anything if he finds the One Who is Manifest in all things?

For the people of gnosis, that which is other than Allah ﷻ is not qualified with either being or non-being, for nothing is self-existent along with Him due to the immutable truth of His sole uniqueness (*ahadiyyah*). And there is no non-being to other than Him because there is nothing that is qualified with non-being without first being qualified with being. And if the veil of illusion is rent, then vision would fall on the non-being of the essences of existents, and the light of certitude would shine so strongly that the existence of the worlds would disappear from view.

If you truly understand this, O slave, then you must not become saddened or lose hope at the loss of something, and you must not lean in full reliance upon the being of something (in your possession). For if one finds something in his possession and relies upon it, or loses something and becomes saddened over it, then his servitude toward that thing which gladdened him when he found it and saddened him when he lost it is established. So understand from this what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Perish the slave of the dirham, perish the slave of the dinar, perish the slave of fine clothing, may the one who is pricked by a thorn and does not remove it perish and fall on his face."

Do not, O believer, make firm in your heart anything except the love of Allah ﷻ, for you are too noble to be a slave to anything besides Him. He has made you a noble slave, so do not be an ignoble slave. The understanding of the people of understanding of Allah ﷻ has prevented them from relying on the existence of something or looking out for something lost, to preserve their servitude and make their freedom from other than Him authentic and true.

I heard my Shaykh Abu-l 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him say, "The one who is in a state (*hal*) is in one of either of two categories: a slave who is in the state by that state, and a slave who is in the state by the Changer of states. As for the one who is in the state by the state, he is the slave of that state, who is gladdened by it when he finds it and saddened over it when he loses it. As for the slave who is in the state by the Changer of states (i.e., Allah ﷻ), that one is a true slave of Allah ﷻ, and not a slave of the state. He is the one who is not heart-broken over the state when he loses it, nor is he gladdened when he finds it."

So His saying "And among men is he who serves Allah ﷻ, as it were, on the edge," i.e., he worships Him from only one aspect, so if it disappears, his obedience disappears, and his compliance to His orders ends. 'Had He understood from Us he would worship Us in all states and all aspects.' Just as He is your Lord in all states, then be His slave in all states and conditions.

Regarding His saying, "If any good befalls him, he is well content with it...", in other words, if any good comes to him that conforms to his self and its desires, it becomes good in his eyes, even if it is in reality harmful at the same time. "If a trial befalls him, he turns his face away," i.e., he loses that good by which he was at peace. He calls it a trial (*fitna*), because in loss is a test of the believer's faith, and in loss the states of people appear.

How many are they who believe they find their richness and independence in Allah ﷻ, whereas in reality they have only found their independence in the existence of His secondary causes and the many sources of his acquisitions? And how many are they who believe their intimacy is with their Lord, whereas their intimacy was really with their state, whose proof is the end of their intimacy at the end of the state. Had his intimacy been in his Lord, it would go on perpetually by His going-on (*baqa*).

And His saying, "...losing both this world and the hereafter." He has lost this world for he lost what he desired of it, and he has lost the hereafter because he failed to work for it. 'He lost what he sought out, because he did not seek Us so that We may be for him.'
So understand!

Chapter Twenty

The Harm of Tadbir with Allah Most High

Summary

This chapter is a series of examples and parables which illustrate the necessity of abandoning both tadbir and worry over provision.

Text

In this chapter we mention some similitudes of *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ, and those who are its people, and similitudes of *rizq* and the Real's guarantee of it, for through examples the situation is made evident.

1) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah is like the one who erects his building upon the seashore. Every time he struggles to complete it, the waves come upon it in greater numbers, and the building gives way and crumbles. Such is the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ, who erects the buildings of *tadbir*, while the onslaughts of the Decrees bring it down. For that purpose it is said: "The planner plans, and the Decree laughs." And the poet said:

'When will the day come when the building reaches its completion, if you build it and other than you destroys it?'

2) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ is like the one who comes upon a heap of sand, and places his building upon it. A strong wind comes and disperses the sand, demolishing his building. It is said:

*"Their promises have, in the sand, been obliterated;
and such is what happens to what is founded upon sand."*

3) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ is like the child who travels with his father. As they travel by night, the father, out of his concern for his son, watches him and keeps his eye on him from where his son does not see him. The son cannot see his father due to the intense darkness of the night, so he is filled with anxiety and concern over how he should act and take care of himself. But when the moon rises with its light and he sees the nearness of his father to him, his anxiety and worry become silenced. For he sees his father's proximity to him, and he finds sufficiency in his father's care of him, so that he does not have to care for himself. Similarly, one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ for himself does it because he is in the night of separation, and so he does not witness the proximity of Allah to him. Had the moon of Divine Unity (*tawhid*) risen, or the sun of gnosis, he would have seen the Real's nearness to him, and he would have been ashamed to do *tadbir* with Him. He would have found sufficiency in the *tadbir* of Allah ﷻ for him so that he would not need to plan and manage for himself.

4) *Tadbir* is a tree that is watered with the waters of distrust and having a bad opinion of Allah, and its fruit is separation from Allah Most High. For had the servant corrected his opinion of his Lord, the tree of *tadbir* would wither away from his heart, because its supply of nourishment would cease. Its fruit is separation from Allah ﷻ, because he who does *tadbir* for himself has found sufficiency in his intellect,

and is contented with his own management, and has resorted to employing his own stratagems and trickery. So his punishment is that stratagems are employed against him, and the arrival of Divine grants is prevented from reaching him.

5) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ is like the servant whose Master sent him to a certain town of his so that he might make clothing for him. So when the servant entered that town, he said to himself, "Where shall I live, and whom shall I marry?" He became preoccupied with these thoughts and suggestions, and spent his energy (*himma*) on them, and he was unable to carry out the command of his Master. So his punishment from the Master was that he punished him with separation and the existence of veils due to his preoccupation with himself instead of the rights of his Master. And your situation, O believer, is similar. For the Real brought you here to this abode and ordered you to serve Him in it. He took full responsibility and care for your needs in it. So if you become too busy with *tadbir* for yourself to be concerned with the rights of your Lord, then you have lost the way to guidance, and traveled the road of destruction.

6) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ and the one who does not is like two slaves to a King. As for one of them, he is busy with his Master's commands and does not turn his attention to food or clothing. Rather, his service to his King makes him heedless of paying attention to his self's portions and needs. As for the other slave, every time the Master seeks for him, he always finds him either washing his clothes, or taking care of his mount, or fixing his appearance. The first servant is more worthy of the attention and approach of the Master to him than the second slave, who is totally preoccupied with the gratification of his self. The slave is bought for his master, not himself. Such is the perceptive servant, whom you never see without his busying himself with his Master's rights, and his careful attention to His commands over the callings of his self and its needs. So when he is in such a state, the Real ﷻ comes in and takes charge of all his requirements, and directs His numerous gifts to him due to the truthfulness of his reliance. Qur'an: "And whoever relies upon Allah, He is his sufficiency" (65:3). The heedless one is not like this, for you do not see him without his being occupied with his worldly means and with those things that take him to the fulfillment of his desires. He is established upon his own *tadbir* for himself and is in full dependence upon it, which cuts him off from having trust and sincere reliance upon Allah ﷻ.

7) The example of *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ is like a shadow extended upon the earth before the sun has reached its zenith. Then when the sun reaches its zenith, nothing remains of the shadow but the form itself (which casts the shadow), which is not effaced by the movement of the sun's facing it from various angles. Thus is the sun of knowledge of Allah ﷻ. When it directly faces hearts, it effaces all but the form of the *tadbir* of the servant, which remains for the necessities of fulfilling his religious obligations.

8) The similitude of the one who does *tadbir* with Allah ﷻ for himself is like a man who sells a house or an appliance. After the completion of the sale he comes to the buyer and says, "Do not build anything on it," or "Do with it such and such," or he comes to do that himself. So it is said to him: "You have already sold these things, and after the sale you have no authority to control or direct what you sold." For after the sale, there is no contention, as Allah ﷻ has said: "Verily, 'Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth; for that they have the Paradise..." (Q9:111). So it is obligatory upon the believer that he surrender his and everything attached to it, to Allah ﷻ. For He formed it and He bought it, and one of the necessary conditions of surrender is the abandonment of *tadbir* in what you give up, as we have already explained.

Section One

The Harm of *tadbir* with Allah in *Rizq*

As for *rizq*:

1) The similitude of the provision of the servant in this abode is like the Master who says to his slave: "Stay in this abode and perform this service." The Master would not order him to this without providing for his food, drink, clothes and other acquisitions, and without taking sufficient responsibility for him and without neglecting due care of him. Similarly, Allah ﷻ has ordered the slave in this world to obey and conform to the commands, and He has guaranteed for him the apportionment of provision. So let the servant rise to His service, for the Master provides for his maintenance with His grants. Allah ﷻ said: "Command your family to the prayer, and be steadfast in its performance. We do not ask you to provide (for your self). We will provide for you, and the outcome is for the God-conscious." (Q20:132). We have already explained this verse.

2) The similitude of the slave with Allah in this world is like the child with his mother. The mother would not neglect the child without her providing for it, nor would she take it out of her care. This is similar to the believer with Allah Most High. The Real ﷻ undertakes his sustenance and support with His excellent guarantee. He brings the gifts to him and protects him from dangers and calamities. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ get saw a woman with her child, so he said, "Do you think she would throw her child in the Fire?" They (his companions) replied, "No, O Messenger of Allah!" He said, "'Allah is more merciful with His believing slave than she with her child."

3) The similitude of the slave in this world is like the slave whose Master says to him: "Go to such-and-such a land, and prepare yourself to travel from that land to such-and-such a place, and take whatever equipment and supplies you need." So if his Master permitted him such things, then it is understood that he has given him full permission to eat what he needs to strengthen his constitution so that he can strive to obtain the supplies for his journey and the equipment that he requires to establish himself. Such is the slave of Allah ﷻ. The Real ﷻ brought him to existence in this abode, and commanded him to take whatever provision he needs for the journey to his destination. For He ﷻ said: "And take what supplies you need for the journey, and indeed, the best provision is God-wariness (*taqwa*)" (Q2:197). So it is understood that if He commanded him to take provision for the journey to the afterlife, then He has also permitted him to take from this world that which would aid him in the journey and prepare him for his destination.

4) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ, is like a Master who owns a garden, and who ordered his servant to till the land and sow it, and to tend to its needs. So if this servant performs and carries out what the Master requires of him, without ever abandoning his responsibilities to his Master's garden, then the Master will never find him blameworthy, and would not prevent him from eating from the fruits of the garden, because he works in it. However, the servant must only eat as much as he needs to perform his duties, and not eat with extravagance and desire.

5) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a father who planted a great garden, and who built a large dwelling, and when he was asked about the purpose behind that, he answered, "I did all this for a son that I might have." So he prepared for his son everything that he might need before he even came into being, out of love for him. So do you imagine that if the father prepared for him before his existence, he would prevent him from having these things after his existence? Such is the slave with Allah ﷻ. The Real ﷻ prepared the Grant for him before He created him in this world. That is because the Grant precedes your existence, if you have understanding. Do you not see that His gifts to you preceded your being, and His Grant preceded your coming into existence in this life? For He was giving in pre-eternity before there was any slave and before there was any action from him. Therefore, what He apportioned in pre-eternity and stored up for you, He would not deprive you of. Would He prepare for your coming into being, and then deny you what He prepared for you when you became existent?

6) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a king who hired a laborer and brought him to his house, and ordered him to carry out some tasks for him. The king would not bring the laborer to his house and demand his service without feeding him and providing for his needs. For He is more generous than that. Such is the slave with Allah ﷻ, for this world is the house of Allah the King, and the laborer is you, and the work is obedience to Him, and the payment is the Garden of Paradise. And Allah ﷻ would not command you to action without then bringing to you what you need to help you to perform that action.

7) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a guest who is invited to the house of a noble and generous king. This guest must not worry about food or drink, because if he did he would be suspecting the King, and that would constitute having a bad opinion of him. And this has already been discussed in the previous words of Shaykh Abu Madyan may Allah be pleased with him, namely, that this world is the house of Allah ﷻ, and the slaves are His guests in it. And Allah ﷻ would not command having and entertaining guests on the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ while He Himself is negligent of that. So the one who suspects the King and worries about his food and drink is despised by the King; were it not for his doubt in Allah, he would not worry about his condition.

8) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a servant who was ordered by the King to stay in such-and-such a land to fight an enemy over there, and to expend his strength in fighting him, and continue in that state of war. So it is understood that if he ordered him to do that, then He would permit him to eat from the food of that land and to partake of its resources out of a trust with the King, so that it could help him in fighting that enemy he was ordered by the King to fight. Such are the slaves of Allah ﷻ, for the Real ordered them to fight against Shaytan with His words, "And struggle in the Way of Allah as He deserves" (Q22:78), and His saying, "Indeed Shaytan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy" (Q35:6). So when He ordered them to fight him, He also permitted them to partake and use any of His gifts that they need to help them in fighting and defeating Shaytan. For if you abandoned food and drink, you would not be able to perform His service or rise to His obedience. So the command of the King to wage war on the enemy and struggle against him necessarily includes within it the permission to use whatever belongs to the King that would aid you. This is, however, according to the dictates of the Divine Trust and its preservation.

9) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a tree planted by a planter who intends its growth and fruition. The tree knows (if it has the capacity to know, or if we are aware of any such capacity) that he would not plant it and deny it water at the same time. How could he, if he is desirous of its growth and intending its fruition? And you, O slave, are similarly the tree of Allah ﷻ. He planted you and is watering you, and in all moments is attending to your wellbeing with His continual nourishment of you. So do not suspect Him, that He would plant the tree of your being but deprive you of water and nourishment after planting you, for He is not heedless.

10) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a King who owns slaves. He built a large mansion and perfected it, and took the responsibility for growing its gardens and perfecting the desirable things within it in a place other than where the slaves were, and He wanted to move them to it. Do you imagine that if this were His intention for them in what He prepared for them, He would deny them His favors and bounties, while at the same time He set up for them a grand affair and great gift? Such are the slaves with Allah ﷻ, for He placed them in this world, and prepared for them Paradise as He prepared for them the life hereafter. And He desires to give them in this world that which would facilitate their voyaging. For that reason He said, "Eat and drink of the provision of Allah" (Q2:60), and, "Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him" (Q34:15), and, "O Messengers, eat of the good things and perform wholesome and righteous deeds" (Q23:51), and, "O you who have attained to faith, eat of the good things We have provided you" (Q2:172). So if the Ever-Continuing (*al-Baqi*) stores up His provision for you and gives it to you, then no perishing creature (*fani*) can stop it from coming to you. And if He does stop it from coming to you, then He has only denied you what He did

not pre-apportion for you in the first place. That which He did not destine for you, does not belong to you. So that apparent deprivation is in reality a gift from Him and a consideration of your wellbeing. For He knew that in this deprivation lay your wellbeing and the rectification of your affair, just as He stops the continual flow of water to the trees so that they will not be damaged by it.

11) The similitude of the one who is unduly concerned and anxious over the affair of his world, while not paying any heed to saving up provisions for his voyage to the next world, is like a man who is about to be attacked by a lion. As the lion is about to pounce upon him, a fly comes to him and he busies himself with repelling the fly instead of protecting himself from the lion. This indeed is a foolish slave, totally lacking any intellect. For had he had any intellect, he would have worried about the attacking lion and saving himself from its danger instead of thinking about the fly and occupying himself with it. Such is the one who is completely engrossed in his worldly affairs, while not taking any measures for insuring his success in the Hereafter and planning for it. That condition of his is proof of his foolish stupidity. Had he been intelligent and understanding, he would have prepared for the Hereafter, for which he is held accountable, and he would not occupy himself and fill his time with concern over the affair of his daily provision. For being anxious over it in relation to the Hereafter is like being anxious about the fly in relation to the lion and its imminent attack.

12) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ is like a child who does not suffer any worry or fear any neglect from his father, because he is certain that his father takes full responsibility for him. So through this trust, his life becomes pleasurable, and his dependence upon his father removes any worry he would otherwise have. Such is the believing slave with Allah ﷻ. He does not suffer any worry or fear, and no distress or anxiety over provision occurs in the wide expanse of his heart, because he knows that Allah ﷻ never neglects him, and never severs him from His abundance of favors, and never prevents His beneficence and generosity from reaching him.

13) The similitude of the slave with Allah ﷻ, is like a slave who has a rich King, who is characterized by having an open hand and being generous to His slaves, and is not known to have ever denied his slaves any of his gifts and grants. And this slave is confident in his favors, and looks towards his beneficence to him, and that stops him from having to suffer any pains or troubles. This, in fact, is the very cause of the repentance of Shaiq al-Balkhi, may Allah have mercy on him.

He may Allah be pleased with him related, "One time I went through a period of famine and starvation, and I found a young boy who was happy and fully at ease with himself, not knowing what people were going through at that time. So I said to him, 'Young man, do you not know what people are going through?' And he replied, 'Why should I care or worry, when I have a master who owns a private city, and who brings to us from it what we need every day?' So I said to myself, 'If this youth's master owns a private village, then My Master owns the treasures of the heavens and the earth. So He is more worthy of my trust in Him than this boy's trust in his master...' and that was the cause of my awakening to the Truth."

14) The example of the slave of means is like a slave who was told by his master, "Work, and eat from the earnings of your work." And the example of the slave of divestment is like a slave who was told by his master, "Stick to my service, and I will bring my gifts to you."

15) The example of the slave who penetrates through the secondary means to the Reality of Allah ﷻ is similar to a man who sits under a waterspout that drains water from a roof. If the sky rains, and water comes to him, then he is grateful to Allah ﷻ alone, and his sitting under the drainage spout does not necessitate that he ascribe or attribute the source of the rainwater to it (as a cause). Rather, he understands that if he were not under it, he would not find rain. Such are the means and secondary means (*asbab*), which are the 'waterspouts' of the Divine grants. So whoever enters into the means will

not be harmed by that while his *himmā* is directed towards Allah ﷻ and not the means themselves, and separation is not to be feared for him in that.

As for the one who stops with the means (not penetrating through to their source-reality), and who is heedless of their Master, he is like the cattle. For when their owner walks among them they do not even turn to look at him, while he is their owner and king, and the one who provides the cowherd with what their cowherd gives to them. But when their cowherd passes among them, they turn to him and look with expectation toward him, because of their being habituated and accustomed to taking their food from him. So this slave (whose perception stops at the secondary causes and their outward aspect) is like these cattle, because of his seeing that his needs are met through the hands of the creation and their apparent beneficence to him, while being unaware of the True Source. He is like the cattle; rather the cattle are in a better state than. he is. "These are like cattle; no, even more astray. These are the heedless" (Q7:179).

16) The example of the one who stops at the means and the one who penetrates through to their true Reality is like two men who enter a bathhouse. One of them has a great intellect, while the other is foolish and lacks understanding. The water coming from the faucet stops. The one with the intellect knows that there is someone who controls the water and its flow, so he goes to him to re-open the flow of water that he stopped. As for the second man, he comes to the faucet itself, and says, "O faucet, bring out your water, why have you cut off the water?" To such a one it is said, "You are indeed ignorant! Does the faucet hear anything, or do anything? It is only a place of manifestation for what moves through it and in it."

17) The example of the slave who stores and hoards up for himself is like a slave whose king placed him in his garden to maintain it and care for it. The slave is allowed to eat from the fruits of that garden to strengthen himself for his responsibilities of farming it and sowing it, and he does not need to hoard anything. That is because the fruits of the garden are continual and uninterrupted, and his master is rich and powerful. So if he stores up for himself without the permission of his master out of suspicion that he won't provide for him, then he has acted disloyally and deceptively.

The example of the slave who does not hoard for himself is like a slave in the garden of his master or in his house. He knows that his master will not forget him or neglect him, but rather will spend his goods on him and be beneficent to him. So he finds sufficiency in his master from having to hoard for himself, or that he should be in need of or depend upon anyone other than him. This slave is more worthy of the favorable approach to the King, and of receiving his bounties and grants.

18) The one who withholds and stores out of the Divine Trust is like the slave of a king who does not see himself as owning anything with him, whether withholding what is in his hands or spending it. Rather, he does not choose except what his Master chooses for him. So if this slave understands that withholding is what his master desires of him, then he withholds for his master, and not for himself, until the master chooses a place for its spending. He spends it when he understands from his master his desire to have it spent. So his withholding is not blameworthy, because he withheld for his master, and not for himself (or out of his own self-choice).

Such are the people of gnosis of Allah ﷻ. If they spend, it is for Allah ﷻ, and if they withhold, it is also for Him. They desire that in which lies His good pleasure, and they do not want in their spending or withholding anything except Him. They are trustworthy treasurers, and slaves of immense stature, and free and noble. The Real ﷻ has freed them from bondage to creation, so they do not lean towards it in love, or approach it (with their *himmā*) out of love. They are prevented from that by the love of Allah ﷻ that has become established in their hearts, and by His immensity and glory that has filled their breasts.

Nor is the one who withholds by Allah ﷻ lower in status than the one who spends by Him. For things have become in their hands as if they were still in the treasuries of Allah ﷻ before they came to them, out of their knowledge that Allah owns them and owns what He gave them to own. And whoever does not excel in withholding for Allah ﷻ cannot excel in spending for Him, so understand!

Chapter Twenty-One

Utterances of the Realities

Summary

This is the final chapter of the book, and is perhaps the most beautiful and eloquent of the Shaykh's writings. It is taken from the point of view of Allah Himself, ﷻ, and consists of 'Divine munajat,' or an intimate Divine soliloquy directed to the slave, calling him to cease tadbir. The book ends with a concluding supplication.

Text

In this section of the book we mention the intimate communications (*munajat*) of the Real ﷻ to His slave upon the tongues of the exclamations of the realities (*haqa'iq*) on the subject of *tadbir* (self-direction) and *rizq* (provision).

O slave: direct your listening to Me while you are a witness, and the increase will come from Me to you. And pay attentive heed with the hearing of your heart, for I am not far from you

O slave: I was for you in My *tadbir* for you before you were for yourself, so be considerate of your own self's well-being by not being for it. And I took upon Myself its maintenance before your appearance in existence, and I am even now still keeping it in My protection.

O slave: I am alone in creating and forming, and I am alone in decreeing and managing. You were not a partner with Me in My creating and forming, so do not be a partner with Me in My decreeing and managing. I am the Planner for My kingdom, and in it there is no equal to Me. And I am alone in My act of decreeing, so I am in no need of a minister in it.

O slave: do not contend with the One Who was for you in His *tadbir* before existence, and do not repay with stubborn rebellion the One Who accustomed you to His excellent consideration for you.

O slave: I accustomed you to My excellent consideration for you, so be with Me with the dropping of *tadbir*.

O slave: is there doubt after experience, or bewilderment after clarification, or misguidance after guidance? Is not your knowledge that there is no planner for you other than Me enough to make you depend upon Me in your utter need? Is not that which previously came to you of My goodness enough to make you abstain from contending with Me?

O slave: consider well the relation between your being and My creation of the worlds; you will see that you are disappearing in that which is annihilating. So what do you think of One Who does not succumb to annihilation? You have submitted to Me My maintenance of My kingdom, and you are part of My kingdom, so do not contend with My Lordship, and do not oppose My Divinity with your *tadbir*.

O slave, is it not enough for you that I am your sufficiency? Do not My previous grants to you require your reposing in Me?

O slave: since when have I made you needy of yourself, so that you must turn to yourself for help? And when did I give the responsibility for anything in My dominions to other than Myself, so that I should turn them over to you?

O slave: I have presented My Being to you before I brought you forth to My Existence, and I manifested My Self in everything through the attribute of My Power, so how are you able to deny Me?

O slave: when did anything that was under My *tadbir* not prosper, or when did anything which was under My aid suffer defeat?

O slave: let My service busy you from seeking the lot I have already apportioned for you, and let your good opinion of Me prevent you from suspecting My Lordship.

O slave: it is not fitting that one who is beneficent be suspected, or that one who is all-powerful be contended against, or that one who is invincible be opposed, or that the judgment of a wise judge be rejected and rebuffed, or that there arise any fear or anxiety with one who is kind and gracious.

O slave: he who has left his personal choice with Me has indeed attained to the true success. And he who has come to Me out of necessity and extreme need has been shown the way to ease. And he who is truthful in his impoverishment and need of Me has won the treasure of richness. And that slave who, if he moves, moves through Me, has of necessity acquired victory from Me. And he who has taken hold of My means has taken hold of the strongest of means. I have required of Myself that I reward the people of self-management (*tadbir*) with turbidity, and that I bring down what they build up, and unloose what they bind together, and that I leave them to themselves. They are denied the comfort and ease of contentment and the bliss of reliance. Had they understood from Me, they would have been content with My *tadbir* for them rather than their *tadbir* for themselves, and with My guarding them instead of their guarding themselves. I would then cause them to travel upon the road of contentment, and cause them to follow the way of the people of guidance, and make My providential care for them a protection for them from everything they fear, and a means for their acquiring everything they hope for. And that is easy for Me.

O slave: We desire and will for you that you desire Us and not desire or will alongside of Us. And We choose for you that you choose Us and not choose alongside of Us. And We are pleased that you be pleased (*rida*) with Us, but We are not pleased with your being pleased with other than Us.

O slave: if I make a Decree for you, then there is no one to prevent the appearance of My favor upon you. And if I make a Decree against you it is because I desire to bring to you, in My decree, the secrets of My subtle tenderness.

O slave: do not make the existence of contention with Me as a recompense for the blessings I made to you; and do not make the existence of opposition towards Me the substitute for what I graciously gave you of intellect, by which I differentiated you above others.

O slave: as you submit to Me My management of My earth and My heaven, and My being alone with My Decrees and judgment in them, then submit to Me your existence also, for you are (made) for Me. And do not make any *tadbir* alongside of Me, for you are with Me. And take Me as a disposer of affairs, and trust in Me as a trustee, and I will give you immense grants, and gift you with majestic pride.

O slave: I have decreed in My eternity that the illumination of submission to Me and the darkness of contention with Me shall never unite in the heart of My slave. Whenever there is one of them, there cannot be the other with it, so choose for yourself! Be warned: for We have exalted your worth too highly that you should be busy with yourself, so do not belittle your worth, O he whom We have elevated! And do not humiliate yourself by going to other than Me in need, O he whom We have exalted! Be warned: you are too sublime in Our eyes that you should occupy yourself with other than Us. For My Divine Presence have I created you, and towards it have I summoned you, and by the attractions of My providential care have I attracted you. So if you become busy with your self, I will veil you. And if you follow its capricious desires and illusions, I will expel you. And if you leave it, I will draw you near. And if you seek My love by avoiding other than Me, I will answer your call and desire.

O slave: is it not sufficient for you if you have found sufficiency, and does it not guide you if you are guided, that I am the One Who created and formed and gave? Does that not prevent you from contending with Me in what I have decreed, and from opposing Me in what I have given?

O slave: he who has contended with Me has not believed in Me. And he who has planned alongside of Me has not truly realized My Unity. And he who has complained of what I sent down upon him to other than Me has not become content with Me. And he who chooses alongside of Me has not chosen Me. And he who has not submitted to My invincible power has not conformed to My Command, and he who has not committed his affair to Me has not truly come to know Me, and he who does not rely upon Me is indeed ignorant of Me.

O slave: it is enough ignorance for you that you repose in what is in your hands but do not repose in what is in My Hands. I choose for you that you choose Me, and you choose over Me?! Be warned: never do true servitude and free choice come together, nor do darkness and light, nor do your orienting yourself in coming towards Me and going towards the creation. Either I am for you, or you are for yourself, so choose upon insight, and do not substitute guidance with loss.

O slave: if you asked *tadbir* for yourself from Me, you would be ignorant, so what if you planned and managed for yourself without permission? And if you chose by yourself with Me, you would not do justice, so what if you chose against Me?

O slave: if I allowed you *tadbir*, then you should shy away from *tadbir*, so how should it be if I have ordered you to not have any *tadbir* (for yourself)? O one overly and unduly concerned with himself, if you would only cast its affair upon Us, you would find rest and ease. Be warned: none can carry the burdens of *tadbir* except the Lordship, and human nature does not have the strength for it. Again, be warned: you are carried, so do not carry. We intended your ease, so do not tire yourself. He Who planned for you in the darkness of the wombs, and gave you after existence what you desired, must not be contended with in what He desires.

O slave: I ordered you to My service, and guaranteed for you My apportioned provision, but you have become neglectful in what I ordered you and doubtful in what I guaranteed you. I was not satisfied with My guarantee for you until I swore, and I was not satisfied with swearing until I struck an example, and I spoke with servants having understanding. And I said, "And in the heavens is your *rizq*, and all you were promised. So by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is indeed as true as your having speech" (Q51:22-23). The gnostics have found sufficiency in My quality, and the people of certainty have all but been in utter need of My generosity. Had My promise not been, they would nonetheless know that I would never cut off My support from them. And had My guarantee not been, they would still trust in My beneficence. I have provided for those who are heedless of Me and rebellious towards Me, so how could I not provide for those who obey Me and guard My orders? Be warned: the One who plants the tree is the same one who waters it, and the supporter of the creatures is He who originated

them, and it is enough for them that I am their sufficiency and I am enough for them. Existence came from Me, and the responsibility of perpetual sustenance is upon Me. The creation came from Me, and the responsibility of continual provision is upon Me. Be warned: do you invite to your house anyone without intending to feed him, and do you relate yourself to anyone without loving to honor him?

O slave: Make your *himma* for Me to be in place of your *himma* for daily provision, for do not tire yourself with what I have already taken the burden of for you; and that burden which you have taken upon yourself, then try to carry it! Would We cause you to enter into My abode, but keep you from My goodness? Would We bring you forth to My creation, but keep you from the existence of My aid? Would We take you out to Our existence, but keep you from My generous giving? Would I demand from you My right, but keep you from the existence of My provision for you? Would I require from you My service, but not require from Me My allotted portion I destined for you? Be warned: I have with Me for you various gifts, and in you I have manifested My universal mercy. I was not satisfied with the world for you, and with all I stored up for you in My Garden, and I was not pleased with all of that for you until I granted you the vision of Me. So if such are My actions, then how can you ever be in doubt of My bounty?

O slave: there must be a recipient of My blessing, and a receiver of My favor. I am Myself independent and beyond benefiting from benefits and favors, as the overwhelming evidence shows. So if you asked Me to stop My provision for you I would not answer you, and if you asked Me to deprive you of My blessing I would not deprive you, so why are you always asking Me? And much do you ask of Me! So be shy of these thoughts if you are not shy from Me, and understand from Me, for he who understands from Me has been given all that can be given!

O slave: seek My choice and do not choose above Me, and turn your heart to Me in truthfulness. For if you act in such a manner I will show you extraordinary secrets of My subtle pervading mercy, and the incomparable marvels of My generous giving, and I will cause your innermost secret to delight in the witnessing of Me. I have indeed shown the Way to the people of realization, and I have clarified the signposts of guidance to the people of divinely granted success. So upon a truth have those of certainty submitted to Me, and upon clarity have the believers trusted in Me. They have come to know that I am better for them than they are for themselves, and that My *tadbir* for them is more beneficial than their *tadbir*. So they have yielded to My Lordship in complete surrender, and cast their selves before My Hands fully trusting. So I substituted for that, ease in their selves, and illumination in their intellects, and gnosis in their hearts, and true realization of My proximity in their innermost secrets. All this is for them in this abode, and they have with Me if they come to Me in the Next World My magnifying their position, and elevating their station, and My spreading the banners of glory above them. And they have, if I usher them into My abode, what no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or heart has ever imagined.

O slave: I have not demanded of you service in the moment facing you in the future, so how do you demand of Me a portion in it? If I place a burden upon you I also bear its hardship for you, and if I ask service from you then I will feed you. Know that I never forget you even if you forget Me, and that I mentioned you before you mentioned Me, and that My provision for you is never-ending, even if you disobey Me. If I am like that in your ignoring Me, then how do you think I will be with you in your directing yourself towards Me? You have not given Me My true measure (*qadr*) if you do not submit to My Power (*qahr*). And you do not keep the right of My goodness over you if you do not conform to My command.

So do not ignore Me, for you will not find a substitute for yourself besides Me. Nor can you find any sufficiency in other than Me, for absolutely no one can make you independent of Me. I am the Creator by My power, and I am the One Who grants you My bounty and increases you in it. Just as there is no Creator other than Me, there is no Provider other than Me. Do I create, and then leave what I create to

other than Me, while I am the Benefactor? And do I deprive the slaves of My goodness? So trust in Me, O slave, for I am the Lord of the slaves. And depart from your own desire and will that you have alongside of Mine, and I will bring you to the source of all desire. Recall My previous kindness upon you, and never forget the right of the mutual love between Us.

Concluding Supplication (Du'aa)

We want to end this book with a supplication that is appropriate to its subject and content, and it is:

"O Allah ﷻ, we ask you to send Your blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, just as You sent them upon 'Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim, in all the worlds, verily You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

"O Allah ﷻ, make us of those submitted to You, and of those established before You; and remove us from *tadbir* with You or against You, and make us to be of those who commit their affairs to You.

"O Allah ﷻ, You were for us before we were for ourselves, so be for us after our existence as You were for us before our existence. And clothe us with the raiment of Your subtle mercy. Approach us with Your affection and care. Remove the shadows of *tadbir* from our hearts. Illumine our innermost secrets with the light of consignment to You. Show us the excellence of Your choosing for us, until that which You decree for us and choose for us becomes more beloved to us than our own choice for ourselves.

"O Allah ﷻ, do not allow us to become preoccupied with what You guaranteed for us from what You commanded from us, or with something You have guaranteed for us from something You seek from us.

"O Allah ﷻ, You have summoned us to yield to You, and remain continuously before You, and we are incapable of that unless You enable us for it, and are impotent unless You strengthen us. And how could we ever be in something without Your bringing us into being in it? And how could we ever arrive at something unless You cause us to arrive? And how could we ever have strength for something unless You aid us in it? So grant us success in our performing that which You ordered us to, and help us to avoid that which You have warned us against.

"O Allah ﷻ, cause us to enter into the gardens of consignment and the paradises of surrender, and grant us blessing and grace through them and in them. Cause our innermost secrets to be with You, and not their grace and comfort, and delight us with You, and not with their beauties and attractions.

"O Allah ﷻ, shine upon us the light of total surrender to You, and of drawing near to You, lights by which our innermost secrets find delight and joy, and by which our light is perfected.

"O Allah ﷻ, You have planned (*tadbir*) everything before the existence of everything, and we have come to know that there will never come to be anything except what You will, and this knowledge will not be of benefit to us unless You will that (benefit). So will Your good for us, and elevate our station by Your grace. Seek us with Your providential care, and surround us with Your protection, and clothe us with the raiment of the people of Your friendship (*walaya*), and cause us to enter into the existence of Your safekeeping, for You are capable of everything!

"O Allah ﷻ, we have come to know that Your judgment is not to be opposed, and Your Decree is not to be countered, and we are unable to revert what You have decreed, or repel what You have decided. So we ask from You tender kindness in what You have decreed, and support in what You have decided, and make us in all of that among those You have sheltered in Your protection, O Lord of the Worlds!

"O Allah ﷻ, You have allotted for us an allotment which You will no doubt bring to us. So bring us to it with ease and safety from toil and hardship, preserved from Your veils in it, surrounded with the lights of arrival in it, while we witness that as coming from You, and are thus made to be grateful to You for it, and ascribe it to You, and not ascribe it to any other in all the worlds.

"O Allah ﷻ, the provision is in Your Hand, the provision of this world and that of the next. So provide us from it with that in which You know our well-being and advantage lie.

"O Allah ﷻ, make us of those who choose You, and do not make us among those who choose against You; and of those who commit their affairs to You, not of those who turn their backs on You.

"O Allah ﷻ, we are in need of You, so give to us. And we are incapable of obedience to You, so strengthen us and grant us the ability to obey You and the inability to disobey You. And further grant us complete submission to Your Lordship, and patient perseverance in the judgments of Your Divinity, and glory in our connection to You, and rest in our hearts through dependence upon You. And make us of those who have entered the gardens of contentment, and drunk from the spring of submission, and eaten of the fruits of gnosis, and worn the raiment of election.

"Make us of those who have been gifted the gem of proximity, and been illumined from the Presence of Love, while they are constant in their service to You, and realized in their gnosis of You, and, following after Your Messenger, inheriting from him, and taking from him, and realized in him, and standing on behalf of him. And complete our lives in good, O Lord of all the Worlds!"

"And may the blessings and peace of Allah Most High be upon our master Muhammad, and his family and companions!"

Our end is our beginning: I bear witness there is no deity save Allah

