

تزكية النفس

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

GETTING TO KNOW ALLAH

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Getting to Know Allāh

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



We spoke about the honor of ‘Ubūdīyyah to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Now, in order to attain ‘Ubūdīyyah, your first step is to get to know Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The attainment of ‘Ibādah is contingent upon a profound understanding of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and a deep consciousness of His presence. Knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is essential in humbling the heart before Him. Knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى attains one a state of ‘Ubūdīyyah with submission and humility. Let me give you this topic in a way you’ll understand it. When you first meet someone, you usually see him just like another person. You may not even pay attention to that individual. But as you get to know this person better, when you learn more about that individual, you learn about skills he has, you learn about experiences, you learn about qualifications, or other positions that that person may hold, you begin to respect and admire him. Respect and admiration for that individual grow significantly after you learn about him. When you see someone, you don't know if he's a Jāhil or a layman or a Tālib ‘Ilm or an Ālim, but then you learn more about him, you learn about the Shuyūkh he studied with, or his credentials, or something he memorized and studied. The level of respect and admiration for that person increases considerably. This change in perception affects how you interact with that person, and it's going to be very different from the initial impression and how you dealt with him in the beginning before you knew him, والله المثل الأعلى. We need to deepen our understanding about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, because it will enhance our reverence, our fear, our hope, our Tawakkul on Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, along with other aspects of ‘Ibādah. You become afraid of an opponent when you realize his strength. You request something from someone, after you're aware that they possess what you need. You seek assistance from someone after you know their skills — والله المثل الأعلى, to Allāh belongs the Supreme Example. You will worship Allāh سبحانه وتعالى properly after you learn about Him. Khashyah for example, fear of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, how do you attain that ‘Ibādah? Allāh سبحانه وتعالى told us,

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

Only those fear Allāh, from among His servants, who have knowledge.

With knowledge of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, just like with all the other 'Ibādāt. The greater the completeness of knowledge and understanding of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the more profound and abundant the reverence towards Allāh سبحانه وتعالى becomes. He told us,

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَصَرَ

Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision

He told us,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

There is nothing like unto Him

He told us,

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا

but they do not encompass it [i.e., what He knows] in knowledge.

No vision can grasp Him. There's nothing like Him. So how do we know and learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? We, as humans on this Earth, have been granted a limited understanding about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that our small minds can comprehend. We were granted a sufficient amount of knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that's necessary for our existence in this Dunyā and our performance of our 'Ibādāt.

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Messenger ﷺ taught us about the Names and Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Many people live their lives without truly understanding the simple, basic meanings of many of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Names and Qualities. Some might go for months or years without using certain Names of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and it may be Names that they know about! They might not even use them in Du'ā, even though using them in Du'ā increases the likelihood of the Du'ā being accepted. But they don't even use those Names when it benefits them. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى has given us the understanding that we need to know about Him in order to live our lives and to worship Him properly. This understanding is derived, in this particular matter that we're talking about, from the Names and Attributes of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that He revealed to us. The impact of these Names and Attributes is evident in His creation. As you delve deeper into the effects of the Names of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Qualities and how they affect the world around us, your knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and your Īmān and Yaqīn in your 'Ibādah will deepen significantly. Knowledge about the Names of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Attributes is not something that can be achieved in a brief discussion or in a single class of 'Aqīdah under an instructor that's trying to teach you the Salaf's interpretations of the Names and Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. That, right there, is merely the beginning. That, right there, resembles a child learning the alphabet as they embark on their journey of reading and writing. Understanding Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and properly comprehending His Names and Attributes begins with the 'Aqīdah course that's rooted in the teachings of the Salaf, however, this knowledge is something you will continue to explore and deepen throughout your entire life. Each day, you'll

come to see how much you don't know about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. It's a lifelong journey of learning that continues until the end of your life. At times in your life, you may encounter experiences that deepen your understanding of a Name or an Attribute of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that you've known all throughout your life. You may have recited that Name in every single Salāh that you performed and every Du'ā that you asked Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Yet, a particular event in your life can lead to a profound realization about a Name or a Quality of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that significantly enhances your Īmān. During one of my toughest times, I had a dream about the verse,

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ

Allāh is Subtle with His servants...

and I mentioned this before in a talk. I'm familiar with the Name of Allāh سبحانه Al-Latīf and the Quality. I've known it throughout my life, I've studied the Tafsīr of the verse, and I had extensive reading on that topic, but this dream made me aware of the Name Al-Latīf. Through the Name and the Attribute of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, Al-Lutf, and the situation that I encountered, I attained an understanding that had previously been beyond my grasp. This experience enriched my Īmān and enabled me to perceive Allāh's Lutf in a way I never thought possible.

While Allāh سبحانه وتعالى cannot be seen by us physically in this Dunyā, the entirety of this universe serves as a testament to His existence, to His Qudrah, to the Names and Qualities that we know about. In everything, in every aspect of existence, there's a sign that points to the oneness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Qualities. Like the poet Labīd Ibn Rabī' Al-Āmiri said,

فِيَا عَجَبًا كَيْفَ يُعْصَى الْإِلَهُ ... أَمْ كَيْفَ يَجِدُهُ الْجَاهِدُ

وَفِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ لَهُ آيَةٌ ... تَدُلُّ عَلَى أَنَّهُ وَاحِدٌ

وَلِلَّهِ فِي كُلِّ تَحْرِيكَةٍ ... وَتَسْكِينَةٍ أَبَدًا شَاهِدٌ

In every moment, in every movement, in every stillness, there's evidence pointing to Allāh و تعالى سبحانه. He informed us that He has Names and Attributes, the effect of what we see in His universe and creation around us. When people describe someone as being, for example, generous, the description resonates with you more when you see evidence of that person's generosity. If you say he's a millionaire and he's generous, that conveys a message. But when you say he's a millionaire, and he gave 75% of his wealth to orphans, or better yet, you see him actually spending that wealth on poor people and building houses for poor people — his generosity becomes more impactful when it's supported by that tangible evidence of that generosity. The more you observe of those acts and the more you witness them firsthand, the more convinced you become that his description of being generous is true. Allāh و تعالى سبحانه has the Supreme Examples. Allāh و تعالى سبحانه told us that on this Earth, there are signs for the people of faith to seek and know. You can start by looking for those signs within yourself. Start by looking at your own self for the effects of the Names and Qualities of Allāh و تعالى سبحانه.

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ

And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?

The more we explore and reflect on these Attributes, the more we learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, which in turn deepens our sense of devotion and ‘Ibādah in our hearts.

We aim to achieve the worship of the heart prior to the limbs. The heart needs to submit in Sujud before the forehead does. The worship of the heart is significantly more challenging than the worship of the limbs. We said that ‘Ubūdīyyah is nothing but honor, we mentioned that in a previous talk. That honor of ‘Ubūdīyyah starts by getting to learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. You will not achieve Dhull or Khudū’ or other various aspects of ‘Ubūdīyyah until you come to learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Understanding His Names and Attributes is essential. The deeper your knowledge of Him, the more your ‘Ubūdīyyah will be perfected internally before it manifests externally. The more you learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the more your ‘Ibādah improves, both in how much you do and how meaningful it becomes. When your heart gains knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, it naturally surrenders and submits and loves Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ^ج

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?

You don’t need to look far to see the effects of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى’s Qualities. Your mind, your heart — things no advanced technology can ever imitate. Your speech, your limbs — some Ulamā’ even mentioned going to the bathroom as signs under this verse.

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?

Consider even more simple matters, or what may be seen as simple, but they're not simple. The eyebrows, how they grow outwards instead of growing downwards, because if they grew downward, they would block your vision. The design Allāh سبحانه وتعالى perfected you with adds to your appearance and also helps keep sweat from running down to your eyes. Examine the same verse, وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ, from an alternative perspective to understand the impact of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى on you. Take it from another angle. Reflect on the blessings of your weaknesses to increase your knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Your weakness, your limitations, and your reliance on Allāh سبحانه وتعالى due to your weakness will help you gain knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. It is supposedly among the sayings of the Isrā'īlīyyāt, that

يا إنسان اعرف نفسك تعرف ربك

Understand yourself, you'll understand your Creator better.

Or

من عرف نفسه عرف ربه

The servant is poor, we're incomplete, we're in need. As the servant's awareness of their own deficiencies, flaws, poverty, and weakness increases, so too does their understanding of their Lord's Attributes of Perfection. The more you're aware of your ignorance, the more you will come to know about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Knowledge. The more you recognize your weakness, the more you will recognize and understand Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Strength. The more you acknowledge your incapacity, the more you will become aware of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Capability. Those who perceive their own humiliation will recognize Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Honor. Ma'rifatullāh comes in recognizing the greatness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and respecting Him. This topic, understanding Allāh, comes through respecting Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and recognizing His Greatness. Nūh told his people,

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا

What is [the matter] with you that you do not attribute to Allāh [due] grandeur?

He's telling them that's basically the cause of your Shirk. You don't respect Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, you don't have knowledge of the Greatness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. How do we recognize the Greatness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? Nūh answered it in the following verses. You recognize it by learning about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Qualities, and their effect on the creations on this Earth. The same Tawhīd that Nūh taught his people is the topic today.

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا

What is [the matter] with you that you do not attribute to Allāh [due] grandeur?

وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا

While He has created you in stages?

He's giving them examples to learn about Allāh ^{سبحانه وتعالى}. You were created in stages, similar to what we were talking about earlier.

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?

Look at yourself for the effect of Allāh ^{سبحانه وتعالى}'s creation. Nūh wasn't done there, he said,

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا

Do you not consider how Allāh has created seven heavens in layers?

Look at the effect of the Qualities of Allāh ^{سبحانه وتعالى} in the creation of the seven heavens, one is above the other.

وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا

And made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp?

He set up within the heavens the moon as a light and the sun as a lamp.

وَاللَّهُ أَنْبَتُكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا

And Allāh has caused you to grow from the earth a [progressive] growth.

He bought you forth from the earth.

ثُمَّ يَعِيدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ إِخْرَاجًا

Then He will return you into it and extract you [another] extraction.

Then he will return you to this earth and then he'll bring you forth another time,
Yawm Al-Qiyāmah, on the day of resurrection.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ إِسَاطًا

And Allāh has made for you the earth an expanse

Allāh سبحانه وتعالى made this earth widespread,

لَتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا خِجَاظًا

That you may go about therein in broad roads.

with spacious pathways. Nūh is basically telling them your Shirk is because you didn't know Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. You didn't recognize the Greatness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. He provided them with numerous examples illustrating the Greatness of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, demonstrating the impact of His Qualities on the world around them. To distance yourself from Shirk and from sins and to cultivate a close, honorable, 'Ubūdīyyah with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, it's essential to gain knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and his greatness.

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ

They made not a just estimate of Allāh such as is due to Him.

is in the Qur'ān three times. They have not shown Allāh سبحانه وتعالى His proper reverence.

Let me summarize this talk in a few sentences. In order to embark on the honorable journey that we've been talking about, in order to attain that honorable journey, one must first seek knowledge of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. That's the first step. The first step is to get to know Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The greater the understanding of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the closer one grows in 'Ubūdīyyah of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the deeper the fear of disobedience becomes. If one falters or disobeys Allāh سبحانه وتعالى after reaching this honorable, high status with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى — everyone is destined to make mistakes — but if he's at a high status with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and he does make a mistake, after his repentance, he's elevated beyond his state prior to the sin. So our point is to learn about Allāh

