

Classical Tafseer Class' Summary

Session 03

Friday, 13 May 2005

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah

We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him

That Mohammad (saaw) is his slave and messenger

Introduction

The Prophet's Explanation of Knowledge

- The Prophet of Allah (saaw) was asked:
“**What is Knowledge?**”
He replied: “**to keep silent**”. He was asked: “Then?”
He said: “**to listen attentively**”. He was asked: “Then?”
He said: “**to remember**”. He was asked: “Then?”
He said: “**to act upon** (what is learned)”. He was asked: “Then?”
He said: “**to propagate**”.
[Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 28]
- Allah SWT has stated in **Surah Mujadalah 58:11**, that
“Allah will raise up in rank those of you who believe and have been given knowledge, and God is aware of the things you do.”
يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ
- It is narrated that one who proceeds on the right path and pursues knowledge, Allah will lead him on the path towards Paradise.
- The Prophet has said that we should seek knowledge from the time when we are in the cradle until the time that we end up in our grave.
- Indeed the Prophet has said that “*the path of knowledge is the path to eternal peace*”.
- We have gathered here to pursue knowledge. So let us hope that Allah may guide us on the path leading to *Jannah* and eternal peace (Insha'Allah).

Some Comments on The Feedback from The Last Tafseer Class

Before proceeding to the main Classical Tafseer Class, let us first discuss the invaluable feedback that we received from last week's class.

- Last week we discussed how the dot below *Ba* signifies Imam Ali (as).

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- In the last class, we discussed the dot of *Ba* and we all were curious as to why the dot refers to Imam Ali (as). The question that arises is if a rational explanation exists to explain that the dot of *Ba* signifies Imam Ali (as).
- Imam Ali (as) in a hadith has stated that **Surat Al Faathihah** is the quintessence of Quran. *Bismillaahir rohmaanir rohiim* is the essence of Quran. The letter *Ba* is the embodiment of *Bismillaahir rohmaanir rohiim*. And the dot below the letter *Ba* is the spirit of *Bismillaahir rohmaanir rohiim*. Imam Ali (as) then stated, "*I am the dot below the Ba*".
- This implies that Imam Ali's closeness to Quran is like that of spirit to the body and that he is endowed with deep and complete knowledge of the Quran.
- This is consistent with and derives support from the Prophet's famous and widely accepted saying that "*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the Gate*". So whoever has to acquire knowledge has to pass through the gate.
- This is a well known hadith but unfortunately it has been removed from the latest edition of **Sahih Turmudhi**.

Interpretation of The First Verse of Surah Al Faathihah: Bismillaahir rohmaanir rohiim

A Note on 'Ism'

- The Arabic word 'ism' means 'name'.
- Usually when we start our work, we take the name (*Ism*) of a famous personality in the hope that this will grant us success. Alternatively at times we name something important (our children, mosques etc) after important personalities.
- At the war of Khyber, Merhub, the opponent of Ali (as) asked the Imam, 'What is your name?' Imam Ali (as) replied, 'I am the one whose mother named him Haider (Lion)'. There is a riwayat that Merhub then recalled a dream, which he had recently, where he was being devoured and torn into pieces by a Lion.
- Hence a name can have a significant impact on our personalities.

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- In fact Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) was once asked question the following question:
“We name our name after your name and your forefathers, will it benefit us?”
Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) replied by reciting the verse of the Holy Quran (**Surah Al Imran verse 3:31**):

“Say ‘If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive your sins, for God is Forgiving, Most Merciful’”

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

and said that “*our deen is all about love*”. [source: *Thawaabul ‘amal Wa ‘iqaabuha*]
He said if you love Allah and follow us (the Ahlul Bayt), only then will you get the love of Allah in return. There is thus nothing wrong in naming our children on our forefathers especially after the family of the Prophet and the Imams, as that reflects our love for the Ahlul Bayt.

Bismillah

- The meaning of *Bismillah* is that ‘I begin with the name of Allah’.
- There is no substitute for the name of ‘Allah’ in English, Malay or for that matter in any other language. The general title ‘God’ is an understatement to the attributes of Allah. This is because in some religions, there is a belief in multiple *Gods*, or it is referred to idols. However in Islam, *Allah* can best be described by attributes rather than any physical quality.
- In **Du’a Mashlool** Imam Ali (as) said,

*“O Thou that art "He" of whom
no one knoweth what "He" is
nor how "He" is
nor where "He" is
except "He"”*

- This again emphasizes the point that Allah is best described by his attributes, for instance, He is merciful, compassionate, etc., rather than by any physical qualities.

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ar-Rohmaan ar-Rohiim

- The words '*Rohmaan*' and '*Rohiim*' are both derived from the Arabic word '*Rahma*' which means *merciful*.
- The word '*Rohmaan*' is a paradigm for magnificence, while the word '*Rohiim*' is a paradigm for beneficence.
- '*Rohmaan*' signifies the mercy of Allah which encompasses both the believers and the unbelievers. However, '*Rohiim*' signifies the mercy of Allah reserved for the believers. Thus, Allah is merciful for all but is especially compassionate towards those who do good deeds and are his believers.

Mind Blowing Story

Bahloul – The Witty Scholar

Bahloul was originally called Wahab. He was the son of Umroo. He was a student of Imam Jaffer-e-Sadiq (as) but also lived in the time of Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (as). He was from the tribe of Bani Aman.

Once, Haroon Rasheed (the caliph) was misled into thinking that Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (as) and his companions were going to rise up against him and he made plans to arrest and punish them.. When the companions approached Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (as) for advice, the Imam merely pointed to the letter ج (jeem).

Some companions interpreted it as *jala watan* (migration) and prepared to migrate. Some thought that it refers to *jabl* (mountain) and hence interpreted it as a message to hide in the mountain. Bahloul interpreted it as *janoon*. He started acting insane (*janoon*) and was named Bahloul Al Majnoon. Because of his perceived insanity, he was saved from the punishment of Haroon Rashid.

It is said that once an evil and unmannerly person said to Bahloul, "I have a great desire to see Shaitan."

Bahloul said, "If you don't have a mirror in your house, then look in clean water. You will see Shaitan."

Disclaimer:

In this Classical Tafseer Class, there might be shortcomings in imparting the knowledge of the tafseer. If there is any information that requires correction, please do not hesitate to let us know. Allah knows best.