

THE URGENT NEED TO CHANGE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

Jumuah lecture by Brother Bashier Rahim on 9 February 2018 at the Ahlul Bait (a.s) Masjid, Ottery, Cape Town

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran in Surah Hijr Verse 21:

"And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure." Among the various verses of the Quran that got people of spirituality pondering deeply upon is this verse. It gives us a completely different perspective on how we view literally everything around us. Most of the time in our limited minds we think of things around us as being living or non-living and then consider non-living things to have no value or much meaning.

So we will think that the walls of this building is lifeless, or this carpet I am standing on is lifeless or the ground beneath us is lifeless, but pondering upon this particular verse completely changes that perspective.

It teaches us that there is not a thing - whether we think of it as having an external reality like the things that I mentioned, or whether it is something that purely has an intellectual reality - there is not a thing except that its treasures, or a reality far beyond our comprehension, that exists with Almighty Allah.

Almighty Allah then took that reality and then it into this world only in its limited form.

We have to thus ponder upon everything beyond its limited form to get a glimpse of its greater reality.

THE NEED TO CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE ON WATER

It is rather interesting that Almighty Allah then says in Verse 22 of Surah Hijr, something in relation to water:

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"And We send the winds fertilizing, then We send down water from the sky, so We give it to you to drink of, while you are not its treasurers." In this blessed verse, our attention is drawn to two aspects of the discussion on water, which these days is discussed by almost every one in Cape Town: - firstly the purpose of water; and - secondly the management of water

After speaking in the previous verse regarding the Realities or Treasures of everything being with Almighty Allah, one needs to look at water and ask ourselves "have we pondered upon the DEEP REALITY that water reflects"?

As Capetonians, who for decades have been privileged to having among the freshest and near endless access to water than most places in the world, our relationship with water became one of being completely oblivious and negligent to its reality.

WATER IS NECESSARY FOR OUR MATERIAL EXISTENCE

The discussion on the topic of water in the Quran is rather diverse. But for today I simply wish to share a few thoughts on these two issues raised by the above mentioned Verse. The Verse says:

And We send down water from the sky, so We give it to you to drink of"

Why do we drink from the water?

Obviously it is to remain alive.

We all know that water is the source of this material life.

Elsewhere in the Quran Almighty Allah makes this very statement when He says in Surah Anbiyah Verse 30:

"And We have created from water every living thing". We are so dependent on water for our continued material existence such that even the oxygen we breathe in is of no value to us if our lungs are not moist to process it....again the issue of water for every second of our material existence should be easily understood.

So water is the source of life of every living thing. Water is required for our continued existence every moment of the day and night.

Water is even necessary for returning us to good health when we are ill as it is a component of many medicines.

In the beautiful Quranic story of Prophet Ayub (a.s) we learn that Almighty Allah tested him when he had a skin illness for many years. Narrations differ in terms of the period of time that he had this illness, and it seems to range between 7 years and 18 years. But in the end to heal Prophet Ayub (a.s), Almighty Allah gave him an instruction which is recorded in Surah Saad

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Verse 42:

"Stamp with your foot, here is a cool washing place and a drink."

The narrations then state that Prophet Ayub (a.s) stamped the ground beneath him and water from a spring gushed out. By drinking from that spring water and washing himself with it, he was internally and externally healed. This is just a hint at the great healing properties of spring water, which is abundantly available in this very Cape Town that we live in for free, and yet we still see reports that place doubt in the minds of our citizens whether that water is good for us to drink or not.

And similarly the story of Prophet Ismail (a.s) and the spring of Zamzam is something that we benefit from to this very day and the water of Zamzam has special spiritual healing qualities.

WATER IS A PURIFIER

So thus far we have looked at water from the perspective of our material existence which is where most of our understanding generally ends. But from a Quranic perspective we see that water takes on a role beyond the material life of what is considered to be living things.

Almighty Allah says that water also has another purpose - the purpose of serving as a purifier. In the verse on how to perform wudu and when to perform gusl, the Quran says it's purpose is that

"He desires to purify you". (Surah Ma'ida Verse 6) How does wudu and gusl purify you? It purifies you physically AND spiritually as each one requires niyyah or intention of "getting closer to Allah" for wudu and gusl to be valid, otherwise it is a mere physical wash.

So water plays a role in spiritual purification too.

Then we read about water purifying you on an even higher spiritual level and brings about spiritual ascension.

Thus we read in Surah Anfaal Verse 11 which was related to the people of Badr but has lessons in it for us:

"And sent down water from the sky upon you to purify you with it." What type of purification is this? At the very least it starts with physical purification - simple washing of our bodies that every human being does.

But from a Quranic perspective and this verse, that purification does not end there - it goes further.

Before I mention what the verse says further, I wish to remind you of another famous verse in relation to the Ahlul Bait (a.s) that you are all familiar with and that is Ayah Tathir in Surah 33 Verse 33.

Here Almighty Allah says:

"Allah only desires to keep away from you O Ahlul Bait all forms of impurities and to purify you a

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thorough purification."

In terms of this verse, Allah takes it upon Himself to keep away from the Ahlul Bait (a.s) all forms of impurities.

The Ulama explain that this will of Allah is referred to as Irada Takwiniyya, which is the Will of Allah that definitely materializes. And in this case, by keeping away from the Ahlul Bait (a.s) all forms of impurity, they are thoroughly spiritually purified and reach status of infallibility.

Now, in relation to the rest of us, the verse 11 of Surah Anfaal says:

"And sent down water from the sky upon you to purify you with it." The next part of this verse then explains that this purification by water has a higher purpose, it's not just an external wash or even an internal wash through drinking water, rather it has the role of higher spiritual purification.

What is that role? It has 3 parts: - "And remove from you the impurities of Shaytaan" - "And to fortify your hearts"

- "And make steady your footsteps thereby."

Our ritual acts of using water to perform wudu and gusl of different types has a major spiritual significance. Do we think of water in that way when we use it??

This Irada of Allah or Will of Allah in this case is also for us to achieve spiritual purification, but that Will is dependent on OUR action first, and then we will be spiritually purified by Almighty Allah through the use of that very water. And because it is dependent on us first taking action, thus this Will of Allah is not always actualised. **ARSH / AUTHORITY IS ESTABLISHED ON WATER**

So we have said, water is the source of the material existence of living things and water is essential in spiritual purification to the highest level. But from a Quranic perspective, the purpose of water goes even beyond that.

We read in Surah Hud that right at the very beginning of all creation, water played a role and has a relationship with Allah's very "Arsh" or "Throne" which we understand to be Allah's Authority.

Verse 7 of Surah Hud thus says:

"And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth within Six Days (periods), and His Throne was upon the water".

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Allamah Tabatabai says that "the verse gives the idea that at the beginning, there was some broad reality that was under the rule of Allah's Throne in place of the universe and Allah's Throne governed over it. Afterwards these forms and shapes emerged from that broad reality, but then again these forms and shapes will disappear and fade away." That's how the Throne of Allah on the Day of Judgement goes back to water.

Thus water has much deeper meaning than just drinking, washing or entertainment or sport in the form of swimming or surfing or riding jetskis on it.

In changing our relationship with water, there's firstly a need to appreciate its reality and deeper purpose.

If we do not have this appreciation for water, then that very same water which is a blessing and related to the very Arsh of Allah, that very same water can become a source of our very destruction.

The son of Prophet Nuh (a.s) had no regard for the power of water and was drowned.

There is even a narration recorded by Allamah Majlisi about Firown once having prayed to Allah for rain as the Nile River had dried up, and Allah granted his wish. But when the time came to save the people of Musa (a.s) and the sea was split, Firown remained arrogant and would not submit to Allah and was drowned by that very water.

MANAGEMENT OF WATER

This then briefly brings us to the second topic relating to water that Verse 22 of Surah Hijr highlighted wherein it says that in relation to water: "while you are not its treasurers".

Our attitude towards water determines how we behave in relation to water management. In our water crisis, literally everyone has an opinion on this matter and why we stare Day Zero in the face.

Politicking continues between who is to blame and who has what responsibility.

One part of government says they not responsible for supply and that they only do distribution of water and that another part of government is responsible for supply of water.

Allah says something profound about this:

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"while you are not its treasurers".

We are not the treasurers of water! We are not responsible for supply. Allah is responsible for supply and Allah is its treasurer and Allah has ensured that there is SUFFICIENT supply.

We read in Surah Zukhruf Verse 11:

"And Who sent down water from the sky in due measure"

There is enough water. An exact amount is sent down and is managed in an exact system and Allah is the one who created a storage system for this water in the ground in the form of huge storage tanks and thus says: "while you are not its treasurers".

And that storage system is such that the water remains for a long time in the ground without getting naturally contaminated despite the presence of various materials underground that can contaminate it. What is our role in this grand system? We are responsible for distribution, not for supply.

And how are we going to effectively distribute the water, when we don't even know where these underground springs are here in Cape Town - where apparently only 15% of the springs were on record. Currently officials are running around to find the rest of these springs even though research scholars uncovered this information 10 years ago.

So in the greater system, there is enough water, but we seriously need to improve our management of the distribution thereof.

Secondly related to management of water is our history of wasting water which even continues today.

In the very wudu and gusl that is meant to bring spiritual growth, we committed the sin of being wasteful.

How is it that in Cape Town not so long ago we were using more than double the amount of water that we are currently using?

We have to be extremely conscious of using this resource sparingly so that we can all have continued access to it.

Thirdly in the management of water, we need to ensure that there is a just system in place to have access to it. How is it that possibly the best spring water in Cape Town was used for decades for free by winemakers?

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How do we ensure that this great quality water gets to people who don't have transport or physical means to collect it?

Water is a basic right of every human being in this country, it cannot be monopolized by the rich or subject to unjust profiteering by large corporations who receive licences to sell this water and make outrageous profits out of the frenzy of Day Zero.

Lastly let me remind you all and myself, that if and when Day Zero occurs, it will be a period that will seriously test our humanity. A scene of Armageddon can literally unfold in front of our eyes. During such time, are we going to be selfish and only care about our personal well being? Or are we going to ensure that it includes the well being of others?? The issue of water will certainly test our humanity.

MARTYRDOM OF SHEIKH QASIM UMAR

We have on various occasions highlighted the plight of the followers of Ahlul Bait (a.s) in Nigeria and the incarceration of their leader Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky for over 2 years now. During this time, even the High Court ruling to release him has been ignored.

The Sheikh has sacrificed many of his very own children in their defense of the people of Palestine.

A few weeks ago, during protest marches for his release, the Nigerian police shot and injured the representative of Sheikh Zakzaky which is Sheikh Qasim Umar and during this week we learned the sad news that he succumbed to his injuries and achieved martyrdom.

How much must these people still pay for the freedom of their oppressed leader?

ANNIVERSARY OF IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Last week we listened to the khutbah about what makes Ayatullah Sistani such a great leader. Some of the reasons were his simple lifestyle and inclusive approach which kept him close to all the people of Iraq. On 11 February the people of Iran commemorate the 39th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of its great leader, Imam Khomeini (May Allah Sanctify His Soul). The heritage left by this great leader until today remains the greatest influencer on the Muslim World. Until just a few weeks ago, a few people once again had possibly their hundredth bad dream of a supposed uprising against this system but were proven wrong.

The great leadership of Sheikh Zakzaky in Nigeria is influenced by this very same Revolution and Imam and thus we see he continues to suffer in prison.

POSTPONEMENT OF SONA

Juxtapose these examples of great leadership against what we see in South Africa this week in that the State of the Nation Address has been postponed for the first time since 1994. This

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very act of postponing it is a reflection of the state of our confused nation where it's leadership issues need urgent resolution.