

Ilm Essentials

Purification of the Heart

Lesson 10

Understanding Tasawwuf

The Jibrīl Hadīth: Ihsān

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- “While we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah one day (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), a man came up to us whose clothes were extremely white, whose hair was extremely black, upon whom the traces of traveling could not be seen, and yet none of us knew him...
- That you worship Allah as if you see Him
 - ▣ For if you don't see Him, then truly He sees you”

Islām, Īmān and Ihsān

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□ Īmān / Aqīdah

- ▣ Ash'arī or Māturīdī

□ Islām / Fiqh

- ▣ Hanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī or Hanbalī

- Commonly referred to as madhhab

□ Ihsān / Tasawwuf

- ▣ Bā Alawī, Chishtī, Suharwardī, Naqshbandī, Shādhilī, Qādirī and others

- Commonly referred to as tarīqah

Defining Tasawwuf

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- Tasawwuf is the Islāmic science that deals with
 - ▣ One's inner state
 - ▣ Purification of the heart/soul
 - Such that it enters Paradise directly
 - ▣ Removing all of the blameworthy characteristics
 - And replacing them with praiseworthy ones
 - ▣ Bringing one's life 100% inline with the Quran and sunnah
 - ▣ Perfecting one's īmān
 - Moving our faith from our tongues to our hearts
 - ▣ Ensuring every moment is spent in a way pleasing to Allah
 - ▣ Giving preference to creation over oneself
 - In consideration of the Creator
 - ▣ Beautification of one's character

Defining Tasawwuf

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- Islām is a combination of outward acts and inner states
 - ▣ Fiqh is the science that deals with the outward acts
 - Tasawwuf is the science that deals with the inner states
- “Establish the prayer and give zakāh” (Quran 2:43)
 - ▣ “When they stand for prayer, they stand half-heartedly” (Quran 4:142)
- “Fasting has been prescribed for you” (Quran 2:183)
 - ▣ “And be grateful to Allah” (Quran 2:172)
- Every outward act must be combined with its corresponding internal state
 - ▣ If either is lacking or absent
 - The reward and acceptability of the act diminishes
 - To the extent that the act can become a proof against the person

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- During the time of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam), the dīn was taught as a whole, informally
 - ▣ Individual sciences were not delineated
 - Anyone could come and listen to hadīth for example
- The scholars among the sahābah were well versed in all the sciences of the dīn
 - ▣ But as time went on scholarship declined
 - Scholars began to focus on certain sciences
 - Studies became more formal
- So fiqh, aqīdah, hadīth, tasawwuf, etc. began to be separate sciences
 - ▣ Often with sub-specialties within each
 - Muftī in fiqh
 - Accreditation in hadīth
 - ▣ By the time of Bukhāri, for example, you needed to “register” to transmit onward

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- While the terms may not have existed back then
 - ▣ Their realities did
 - No different than aqīdah or tajwīd
- Certain saḥābah were known for their asceticism
 - ▣ Abū Bakr and Umar, Abū Dharr, Āishah and Fātimah, Abū Hurayrah and the ashāb 's-suffah, etc.
- Imām Shāfi'ī said, "I accompanied the people of tasawwuf and I benefitted from two of their sayings"
 - ▣ Indicates that the idea of tasawwuf or purification existed among the earliest generations
 - One of the main reasons the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) was sent, was to purify the people

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- “If it were not for Abū Hāshim as-Sūfī I would have never perceived the presence of the subtlest forms of hypocrisy in the self... Among the best of people is the sūfī learned in jurisprudence” (Sufyān ath-Thawrī)
- “If it were not for 2 years, I would have perished” (Imām Abū Hanīfah)
- “He who practices tasawwuf without learning jurisprudence corrupts his faith, while he who learns jurisprudence without practicing tasawwuf corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true” (Imām Mālik)

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- “The word sūfī was not well-known in the first three centuries but its usage became well-known after that
- ▣ More than a few imāms and shaykhs spoke about it, such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī and others. It has been related that Sufyān ath-Thawrī used it. Some have also mentioned that concerning Hasan al-Basrī”
- “I have worn the sūfī cloak of a number of shaykhs belonging to various tarīqahs, among them the Shaykh Abd al-Qādir (al-Jīlānī), whose tarīqah is the greatest of the well-known ones” (Ibn Taymiyyah)

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- “He (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah) was a scholar of the knowledge of sulūk, and the speech of the people of tasawwuf, their instructions and intricate matters. In each of these sciences he was a specialist...
- During his imprisonment, he remained occupied with the recitation of the Quran, which he used to do with meditation and contemplation
 - On account of this, great goodness opened to him and he experienced a great deal of spiritual bliss (dhawq) and authentic ecstatic states (wajd). As a result he became overcome with speaking about the knowledge of the people of marifah and delving into their mysteries. His writings are full of this” (Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī)

Is Tasawwuf Something New

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- Ibn al-Qayyim wrote *Madārij as-Sālikīn* (Stages of the Travelers)
 - ▣ Which is a commentary on *Manāzil as-Sā'irīn* (Stations of the Wayfarers) by Abū Ismā'īl al-Ansārī al-Harawī as-Sūfī
- Regarding al-Harawī
 - ▣ Ibn Rajab writes, “He was a great leader and an imām who was a scholar, an ārif, a worshipper and an ascetic. He was a man of many spiritual states (hāl), spiritual stations (maqāmat), miracles and sacrifice...
 - He would greatly defend and exalt the madhhab of Imām Ahmad...
 - He was a practitioner of tasawwuf and would remain in the company of the sūfis”
 - ▣ Ibn Taymiyyah writes, “The Shaykh al-Islām is well-known and revered by the people. He was an imām in hadīth, tasawwuf and tafsīr”

Why is Tasawwuf Feared

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- Like every Islāmic science
 - ▣ There have been people and groups who misrepresent and/or misunderstand the science
 - Deviant groups considered major sins to take one outside the fold of Islām
 - Infallible imāms
 - Mass fabrication of hadīth
 - ▣ Modern day examples include considering hijāb to be cultural, permissibility of music, eating at McDonalds, etc.
- Tasawwuf has also seen its fair share of misrepresentation and misunderstanding
 - ▣ Superficial scholars who claim tasawwuf has no basis in the Quran and sunnah
 - ▣ Extreme sūfīs who view the Quran and sunnah as exoteric
 - Meant only for the lay people
 - Believing they have traversed them to the realm of the esoteric

Finding the Middle Ground

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- With regard to ecstatic utterances (shatahāt)
 - ▣ “The first group has been blinded from the goodness of this group...and the truthfulness of their dealings on account of these words of ecstasy. They consider them (the sūfīs) invalid on account of these utterances; they severely reject them and view them poorly in an absolute fashion. This is enmity and excessiveness
 - If everyone who commits a mistake or errs were to be abandoned indiscriminately, and all of his good points were to be considered invalid, then all knowledge, crafts and wisdoms would be ruined and those who are distinguished for their knowledge in these matters would be without work
- The second group has been blinded by the goodness of the Community, the purity of their hearts, the correctness of their intentions and their good dealings from seeing the defects of their utterances and their shortcomings
 - ▣ They have praised the utterances and give them their approval
 - These people have also exceeded the limit and are extreme
- The third group are the people of justice and equity who give every man their due and treat people according to their ranks...They accept that which should be accepted and refute that which should be refuted” (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah)

Why is Tasawwuf Feared

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- One can argue that tasawwuf has seen more extreme misrepresentations than other sciences
 - ▣ Degree of misguidance and mistakes are proportionate to the depth, subtlety and intricacy of a science
 - Tasawwuf is the most subtle and intricate because it deals with purifying the inner self
 - Which is unseen by the eye
 - And unmeasured by science
- But just as we don't throw out those other sciences
 - ▣ We cannot throw out tasawwuf
 - However we should be cautious and judicious

Who Should Pursue Tasawwuf

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- “After one has acquired right beliefs and subjected oneself to the rules of the sharīah, one should, if Allah wills, enter the path of tasawwuf. But one should not pursue it in order to get something over and above the beliefs and the practices of the sharīah, or acquire something new
- ▣ The purpose of following the sūfī way is to gain a conviction in the objects of faith that cannot be weakened by the doubts of a skeptic or shaken by the remarks of an objector” (Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī)

The Purpose of Tasawwuf

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- “Likewise, the purpose of sulūk is not to see the forms and images of transcendental realities, or behold color and lights; they are nothing more than a play or fun
- ▣ Material forms and physical lights are no less interesting if one wants to have fun; why should one leave them and run after the spiritual forms and lights, and take up austere and difficult practices for the purpose?”

The Purpose of Tasawwuf

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- “The purpose of pursuing the path of tasawwuf is to strengthen conviction in the objects of faith as stated by the sharīah, which is what faith really means, as well as to acquire the ability to perform with ease the duties of the sharīah as described in fiqh
- ▣ There is no purpose beyond them. For the vision of Allah is promised in the next life and cannot be had in this life”

Is Tasawwuf Wājib

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- Wājib to rid oneself of bad traits
 - ▣ And replace them with good traits
 - “Verily he who has purified the lower self has triumphed and he who has corrupted it has lost” (Quran 91:9-10)
- Wājib to purify one’s heart
 - ▣ “A day on which neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit (to anyone), except one who comes to Allah with a pure heart” (Quran 26:88-89)
- The means to a thing take on the ruling of that thing
 - ▣ Wudū is a means to salāh
- This is why some say tasawwuf is wājib
 - ▣ In its organized form, it is mustahabb
 - In its goals and objectives, it is wājib

The Obligation of Tasawwuf

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- “To be thankful to Allah, which is our primary duty, it is necessary, first, to have right beliefs as defined by the People of Salvation, namely the ahl as-sunnah wa al-jamā’ah
 - ▣ And second, to follow the practical injunctions of the sharīah as enunciated by the mujtahids of this group
 - And third, to purify oneself on the principles laid down by the sūfīs among them
- The first two are obligatory, because they form the basis on which the structure of Islām has been raised
 - ▣ The third is required for perfection, since perfection in Islām depends upon it”

Questions and Discussion

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