

Reading begins at the highlighted paragraph, below.

Jibra'il came to him and said, "Read." The Messenger of Allah said, "I do not read." Jibra'il's appearance was sudden and the Prophet did not realize the reality of the matter; he was concerned about his safety. He left the retreat and hurried back to his wife, Khadija, and asked her to cover him. She covered him until fear left him and he told her about what had happened. He said, "I had fear about myself, all over myself, and for myself." She said to him by way of comfort, "Do not be grieved; Allah will never make you sad. You join your ties of kith and kin, and carry the weak, feed the needy and the poor and help those who are victims of injustice."

So he went back into seclusion in the cave of Hira'. Jibra'il came back to him again and ordered him to read to complete the revelation. He increased his time in retreat and ascended to the pinnacle of perfection. This is the way of Allah. This is how Allah guides His slaves.

In the same way, if the seeker receives the warm breezes of protection and the tree of his yearning becomes green and blossoms with life and flowers, he no longer has a desire to mix with creation. He is overcome with an affinity to the Hereafter and concerns himself more with the *rida* of Allah. The earth no longer attracts him; he prefers seclusion and retreat. He is fortunate if he has the guidance of a shaykh who is a gnostic of Allah who can show him the way to the Haqq. A shaykh, who is knowledgeable in *tarbiyah*. (This is a quality of the one who raises a child in the perfect way.) The shaykh teaches him the *dhikr* and the continuation of the *dhikr*, so that he is happy in his retreat, no longer desires the creation, and sits in the *khalwa*.

The way of *al-khalwa* was summed up by al-Junayd who said, "The shortest way to arrive at your destination, is founded on eight conditions."

The first condition is to be in retreat and to not leave it in cases of contraction or boredom or to satisfy the passion of the nafs; to leave the retreat only for things like the *wudu* and congregational prayer.

The second condition is to be constantly in the state of purification of ablution (*al-wudu*). He should not leave the *khalwa* except for something very necessary. The *wudu* is an important aspect of retreat that increases the yearning, alleviates laziness and helps to keep the state of *al-sama* (being fresh) for Allah.

The third condition is to be in continual wudu and in the state of fasting if he is able.

Allah's Messenger said, "No vessel filled by a human being is worse than his stomach. If he needs to eat, then one-third is for food, the second third is for water and the third is for his breath."

'Isa ibn Maryam said to his followers, "Starve your stomachs that you may see your Lord in your heart."

Reducing food helps to weaken the *nafs* and its desires. Nutrition is of two kinds: one that is needed to keep the physical body in good shape and another that gives life to the animal appetites. Allah says, "Those are like cattle, but more misguided."

The one who is intellegent on this path, who wants to be complete, eats only of necessity to keep his life going. He does not turn to any of the appetites of the *nafs*. So if you know that reducing your food intake is an important principle, know also that to be extreme in reducing food may also be damaging because it may lead to the weakening of the body, which may then prevent you from engaging in acts of worship and in *dhikr*. Reduction in food is best done through fasting. This has been described by Allah in *al-Hadith al-Qudsi*, "A good deed will bring ten times as much to the credit of the doer, up to seven hundred times as much, except for fasting. Fasting is for Me and I reward it. The odor coming out of the mouth of a fasting person is more pleasing to Allah than the odor of musk."

The fourth condition is silence, except for remembrance or for talking with the shaykh to explain to him what he sees in the states of his heart from the effects of the *jamal* and *jalal* and what Allah has opened to him or revealed to him in his *khalwa*. This is based upon the saying of the Messenger of Allah, "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good things or remain silent."

The fifth condition is continuous remembrance. It is a condition for retreat that the person is engaged in *dhikr* at all times and is not distracted by anything from the *dhikr*. And he does not leave the *dhikr* until he is overpowered by sleep. In that case he does the *dhikr* in his heart; do not do the *dhikr* with forgetfulness. The right way to do the remembrance is to have harmony between the heart and the tongue.

Remembrance should be done with strength so that the effects of the *dhikr* can be seen in all of the body. This way of doing the *dhikr* is more

effective in expelling thoughts. You are engaged in the *dhikr* of the tongue with presence, and this leads you to the *dhikr* of the heart. This gives the heart ease. Allah says, "Surely it is with the remembrance of the heart that hearts are at ease."

Adh-dhikr is a source of nutrition and comfort in the presence of Allah and a cause for separation from the creation. If *adh-dhikr* of the heart is established, you are told to leave the *dhikr* of the tongue. Then your business is to turn completely to Allah, to be present, and to have more watchfulness of the *Haqq*. If you continue then the *dhikr* changes and your remembrance changes into a holy (*al-qudsi*) remembrance and you are engaged upon true reflection.

The sixth condition is the complete banishment of all kinds of thoughts. These thoughts are either from the *nafs* or from the *shaitan* and a few of them are from the angels and from inspiration, but there is no benefit in being busy with any of them because they cut off your connection to Allah. The person in remembrance should be busy with remembrance and not stopping with any of these thoughts. Allah says, "I am sitting with the one who does remembrance of Me." You should be watchful of your heart until you reach the station of excellence (*al-ihsan*).

The Messenger of Allah said, "Worship Allah as if you see Him and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you."

Divestment is made easy for those who have a sincere will in their seeking. It is important not to turn toward any thoughts because they disturb the heart and separate you from the reality of the inward and distract you from the sweetness of the *dhikr* of Allah. If the seeker does all of the things that are required, he will be led to the reality of singularity, to comfort by Allah and with Allah, and he will be successful in expelling the *shaitan*. He then replaces the chapter of the *nafs* with the discourses of the heart and the spirit of the *Haqq*, with Allah in all the ranks and stations.

The seventh condition is making a connection with the heart of the shaykh. This is the connection made by the heart of the seeker attaching himself to the heart of the shaykh and holding this as a conviction, until it becomes clear to him that it is he (the shaykh) who connects him with his arrival to Allah. This rank expresses to him what is between him and Allah. If the *murid* has the idea that other than his shaykh is capable of

giving him this connection, then the *shaitan* has an inroad and will disturb him in his *khalwa*. This is especially true when the *murid* is going through states of contraction or trial and has a disturbance in the heart. If his conviction in his shaykh is weak, this can lead to the *shaitan* taking on the form of his shaykh. The *shaitan* will show him things that will corrupt his belief in his shaykh.

In the reality it is impossible for the *shaitan* to take on the form of the complete shaykh. The shaykh with his student is like the Prophet with his *umma*. The *shaitan* cannot take on the form of the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, as the Messenger of Allah said, "He who sees me in a dream sees me truly, because Satan cannot assume my form." In the same way the *shaitan* cannot take on the form of the shaykh, and the student is safeguarded.

If the student is attached to his shaykh with this condition, he also needs to have the certainty that the spiritual strength of the shaykh is not divergent (*al-mutahayyiza*). We say that whoever is not *al-mutahayyiza*, is equal distanced from all places. So regardless of where the seeker is, he is not separated from the spirituality of the shaykh, even though the bodies may be separated by distance. When the seeker remembers his shaykh, the shaykh draws near to him and the seeker's heart becomes attached to the shaykh's, then the seeker can benefit from the shaykh. The distance between the seeker and the shaykh is only from the perspective of the seeker. Then if the seeker remembers his shaykh and attaches to his heart, he will benefit from him. This happens in three ways.

If the seeker sees something which he does not fully comprehend, he can call upon his shaykh with his heart or he may ask with the tongue of his heart. The answer will come to him from the spirit of the shaykh through inspiration. This is made possible when the seeker ties himself to the heart of his shaykh. The answer from the shaykh opens the way for the heart to be in the presence of the truth.

If the seeker has an appearance of the *shaitan* either outwardly or by some fear in his heart, if he remembers his shaykh and calls out for protection, he is granted protection.

If the seeker repeats the name of his shaykh on his tongue, he will witness the burning of the *shaitan* and the removal of his fear. Allah says, "The plotting of the *shaitan* is weak."

The eighth condition is not to object to Allah, Glory to Him and Exalted is He.

One of the prerequisites of the disciple is to wash himself as if he were dead in the hands of Allah; to completely surrender to the Lord of the worlds.

Allah's Messenger, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, used to pray every night to his Lord. As he was preparing to go to sleep, he would say, "O Allah, I have given up myself to You. I entrust my affair to You and I entrust my back to You."

In the same way, the seeker surrenders himself to Allah and does not object to Allah in any way. If he is given expansion, he gives thanks, knowing that expansion is from Allah. If he is protected with contraction, he thanks Him for it and he has patience with it, knowing that the contraction is from Allah.

The seeker with Allah is like a sick person with the physician. If the sick person has the conviction that the physician knows about his condition and has mercy for his state, he surrenders his affair to him and stops objecting to whether he is given a sweet medicine or a bitter medicine. He accepts whatever it is and takes it. He knows that the sweet in that case is better than the bitter or the bitter is better than the sweet. In the same way, if the seeker is certain that Allah is *al-Latif* with His slaves and merciful toward them and has full knowledge of everything in the heavens and the earth, he entrusts his affairs to Allah. And if the seeker knows that he himself is unjust to himself, and that in his natural state, he ruins his heart and spirit, then he surrenders his affairs to Allah's decree.

So if the remedy for his illness is provision and expansion, he takes it and gives thanks for it and knows that this is the medicine for him. And if it is contraction, he thanks Him and knows that the health of his heart requires this state.

I have entrusted all my affairs to the Beloved;
If He wishes, He gives me life,
And if He wishes, He takes it.

Allah says, "Beware of hating something that is good for you; and beware of loving something that is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know."

So, if you prepare yourself from the beginning with total surrender to the perfection of slavery, if you start with total surrender, then your end is toward perfect slavery.

Al-Junayd said, "If my Lord were to give me a choice between the garden and the fire, I would say that I am the slave and the slave has no choice."

At the beginning, the seeker should choose everything that opposes his *nafs* rather than what pleases it. He should not be happy with what pleases the *nafs*, because those who have completion choose only what Allah has chosen for them. The principle of progressing is abandoning the objection to Allah. So one of the conditions of the seclusion is to stop objecting to his shaykh in all his dealings with him and with others because he does not encompass all the knowledge of the shaykh.

The seeker should surrender in all of his affairs, objections, and rebelliousness. He should surrender first with the heart, that it may become open to the order of the shaykh. It is through this opening that the lights of *awliya* appear in the heart of the *murid*. If the seeker closes this door, he is prevented from seeing the lights. The darkness of the *nafs* overtakes him and he makes room for the *shaitan* to have authority over his heart. Then he may be overtaken by sickness that cannot be overthrown and he may be expelled from receiving Allah's protection.

It is in the *adab* of the *khalwa* to sit as though you are sitting in the presence of a king. One of the beloveds said, "I was sitting in my *khalwa* and I extended my legs and I heard a voice say, 'Is this how you sit with the King?'" Allah says, "I sit with those who remember Me." So you should not extend your legs, but you should sit facing the *qibla*, place your hands on your thighs, and engage yourself with the word of the unity – Allah. If you leave the room for *wudu* or for *salaat*, you should walk with *adab*, not turning to the right or to the left, and be present in your heart with the remembrance. If anything is revealed to you in the *khalwa*, you should go to your shaykh and tell him about it. Do not tell anyone else about it. In the *khalwa*, you should always be turned to Allah and should be empty of all *dhikr* except the *dhikr* of Allah. You should be empty of all worldly desires, empty of all the demands of the *nafs*, and you should run away from all material things, otherwise your *khalwa* will lead to a great trial.

The forty day retreat has benefits, in accordance with the rank of the seeker, that cannot be counted. As there is no end to ranks, there is no end to the gifts.

The opening at the beginning of the *dhikr* is to see the flashing lights that pierce the clouds of the humanity. These lights are from the suns of spiritual qualities, and they give pleasure to meaning and then pleasure then the realities of the attributes of the heart and then ecstasy with the *waridats* and desire and yearning for divine inspiration.

The people of the middle are the people of presence, revelation, and witnessing. The people of the presence are those who are present in their hearts in the station of nearness and the authority of the *dhikr* overtakes them. They are in the pleasure of the highest degree (*darajat*). As for those of unveiling, they are the ones for whom the veils are being lifted, whose blindness is uncovered, and who no longer need any proofs. The people of witnessing are totally engaged in the ocean of witnessing the lights and the benefits of nearness. The heaven of their secrets is clear of any clouds or traces of the *nafs*. The light of the sun of the spirit has arisen and sees the light of the unseen. The night becomes day. The hiddenness evident and it is said, "Laila, your face enlightens even though the darkness over takes people." People are in the darkness and we are enjoying the light of day.

These are the endings (*al-nihaya*) of the people of arrival (*fana`* and *baqa`*) in continuous meeting with their Lord. After they are annihilated, they are constantly in *dhikr*. Their actions are in the actions of their Lord through the following of the *shari'a*. Their attributes are annihilated in His attributes through walking the path which allows their hearts to become like jewels from the effects of the lights of *dhikr*. Their *dhikr* has gone beyond the outside letters of sound. The light of the *dhikr* is stamped in the mirror of their hearts. They have been purified from the impurities of human attributes. They go to the *ruh* and the *ruh* becomes a jewel through the *dhikr*. The *dhikr* here is the *dhikr* of the essence. His essence takes on the light of his *dhikr* because he encompasses it. Allah does the *dhikr* with him and to him arises the good word.

This *dhikr* is the one which is not connected with any aspiration for the *dunya* or the *akhira* (the world or the hereafter). It is done purely for Allah. This is the point at which the *dhikr* leads to the annihilation of the

self. And this is emphasized by saying, "Remember Me," so that, "I will remember you."

This *dhikr* is the *tajalli* of His beauty which annihilates (*al-fana`*) the rememberer and gives *baqa`* to the One remembered. There is effacement in the tasting of the *tajalli* attributes, then an effacement in the *tajalli* of the *tajalli* attributes. And whoever has annihilation in his actions has *baqa`* in the actions of Allah. And whoever is annihilated from his attributes has *baqa`* with the attributes of Allah. And whoever has annihilation from his essence has *baqa`* from the essence of Allah.

As I say: A people who have wandered in wilderness; a people who wander in the field of His love. They annihilate and then annihilate and then annihilate. Then they have *baqa`* and the nearness of their Lord.

The first is the *fana`* of his attributes in his *baqa`* in the attributes of the *Haqq*. Then his *fana`* from the attributes of the *haqq* in the witnessing of the Truth. Then his *fana`* from the witnessing of his *fana`* by extinguishing him in the Existence of the *Haqq* (the Truth).

Allah is my Witness
and my Existence
and Allah is the Existent.
Everything else is not to be found.
So understand, my beloved.