

MIFTAAH SEMINAR



REVIVING THE HEART

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SESSION 1

Introduction

- This course will be based on the text Taj Al-Arus, translated as “The Bridegroom’s Crown,” authored by Ibn Ata’illah Al-Iskandari (may Allah be pleased with him)
 - It is a book that studies the sciences of the heart.
 - The full name of the book is the Bridegroom’s Crown in the Refinement of Souls.
- In Ibn Ata’illah’s time, a tiara was the finishing touch for a bride or groom.
 - After they prepared themselves for a big event, the final thing which would be added would be a tiara.
- Metaphorically, islam (the five pillars) and imaan (belief) are what we adorn ourselves with.
 - They are the beautiful outfit of the bride or groom.
 - One must clothe themselves with the beauty of Islam and Iman.
- Ihsaan (spiritual excellence) is the finishing touch.
 - The tiara (bridegroom’s crown) refers to the process of refining your heart.

- Ibn Ata'illah was a well known writer on the matters of the heart.
 - He was unapologetically a Sufi of the Shadhili path.
 - He speaks about his association to the Sufi path in many books.
 - Some may find his realities of his tradition hard to digest or even unviable.
 - In this particular book, The Bridegroom's Crown, it seems he intentionally strayed away from everything that is controversial about his tradition and focused on its essence, tazkiyah (inward purification).
 - This book was an act of love towards the general Muslim community and not just directed towards his own community.
 - It would have been easy for him to write a book for those who followed him and related to all of his content, but a true scholar is one that is able to work for the general Muslim community.

About the Heart

- The arabic word for 'heart' is **قَلْب**
 - The root letters **ق ل ب** which literally means to turn something over/to change.
- The heart is always changing and in order to address the condition of the heart, it requires constant vigilance.
- This is why the Prophet SAW spoke in length about protecting the heart from headlessness.

- In order to be attentive to the heart, one must be constantly vigilant of their hearts condition.
- The Prophet SAW was always aware of the state of his heart.
- He SAW would always make dua that his heart remains firm on the religion.
- In this book, the heart is synonymous with one's character.
- In Arabic, the word **خُلُق** (khuluq) refers to character.
- The word **خَلَقَ** (khalaq) means to create.
- Khalaq refers to how a person appears externally.
 - How a person dresses and acts
- On the other hand, Khuluq refers to internal appearance.
- The Prophet SAW stated: The believer is a mirror to their brother/sister.
- When a person looks in a mirror, they can see what is wrong with their physical appearance.
- When looking at another believer, a person should be able to see their own internal flaws (impatience, anger, greed, etc.)
- 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "O Allah, just as You made my external form beautiful, make my character beautiful as well." (Ahmad)

- We should take care of our outward appearance just as the Prophet SAW did, but we should be more attentive to our inner selves just as he SAW was.
- When we address our hearts and character, we are beautifying the part of us that Allah SWT looks at.
- Allah SWT does not look at our physical bodies, but He looks at our internal condition and our deeds.
 - As we discuss internal character, we must recognize that the Prophet SAW is the most beloved creature of Allah SWT and he had the best character of any creation.
- We must strive to follow his (SAW) example.
 - This is the way that we find relief, cures, and spiritual wellness.

Beginning of Taj Al-Arus – Seek Repentance

- He starts by saying: Oh servant of God, seek repentance from Allah SWT in every moment.
 - Any book on refining the heart or the soul begins with tawba because they are beginning with hope.
 - Sufyan Al Thawri was a tabi'i who was known for having wara' (وَرَعٌ).
 - A person who has wara' is a person that is very careful about their religion.
 - This is a sign that their heart is alive with the remembrance of Allah SWT and with the sweetness of Iman.

- Someone came to Sufyan and said that they are nothing like him because when the Quran is recited it doesn't shake them. The man said that it is almost as if their hearts are asleep.
- Sufyan responded by saying: Your heart is not asleep because when a sleeping person is shaken they wake up and they are aware. If you are listening to the book of Allah being recited and it is not doing anything for you, it is not that your heart is asleep, but rather your heart is dead.
- As the man was about to walk away from Sufyan, he continued and said: But fear not. Your lord is Al-Muhyee (gives life after death).
- When Ibn Ata'illah starts off his book with this statement, he is speaking to those who may be at a spiritual low and who need hope.
 - He is reminding us that Allah SWT loves to forgive His servants and that we should not lose hope.
- The Prophet SAW would seek repentance 70 times daily.
 - The number 70 was used to indicate that he would seek repentance over and over throughout the day.
- He SAW would pray with his community but exert himself in his prayers much more when he was alone with his Lord at night.

- Allah SWT is pleased and overjoyed whenever we seek repentance.
- The Prophet SAW said: The likeness of Allah when accepting the repentance of His servant is that He is so pleased that He is like a man in the desert who has all of his belongings tied to his camel. This man ties his camel and leaves for a moment and when he comes back he finds that the camel has gotten away. This man lays down and prepares to die and just as he does this, his camel comes into view. When he sees his camel he is so overjoyed that he says, 'Oh Allah, I am your lord and You are my servant.' His statement is from the extreme of his joy. Allah is more pleased when accepting the repentance of His servant than that.
- The story of Adam AS shows that humanity started off with the forgiveness of Allah SWT
 - This is so that we may never forget His Mercy.
- When Adam AS and his wife ate from the tree, they sought forgiveness from Allah SWT and He forgave them.
- With a sincere heart, anyone is eligible for forgiveness.
- One day Handalah RA realized that when he was with the Prophet SAW his iman would be very high and he would be certain, but when he would leave his (SAW) gathering it would go down.

- Handalah RA went to Abu Bakr RA and said, "Handalah is a hypocrite." Abu Bakr RA asked why he is saying that and Handalah explained that his Iman shifts when he is not with the Prophet SAW. Abu Bakr RA said that his iman also goes up and down so they went and spoke to the Prophet and the Prophet SAW said, "Iman ascends and descends. If you were a people that never committed sins, Allah SWT would have replaced you with people that did. The angels would be shaking your hands."
 - Human beings make mistakes and we have limitations.
 - This is why we must constantly be seeking repentance from Allah SWT.