

Receiving God's Blessings with Awareness

When a blessing (*ni'ma*) comes to you from an apparent outward entity, do not receive that blessing in the name of the apparent entity, as if the blessing were coming directly from it. If the entity does not have free will, like a tree or an animal, then it actually gives the blessings in the name of God. For it says *bismillah*, “in God’s name” through its very being (*lisān al-ḥāl*). Therefore, you should also take it in the name of God, saying *bismillah*.¹

Now, if a blessing comes to you and the apparent cause of it is a conscious being with free will, then take it only if the person says or acts *bismillah*, i.e. in God’s name. That is, you should only receive the blessing in God’s name, which means that you remember that God is the source of this blessing. If the person who is associated with giving you the blessing is not giving in God’s name, then do not take it. For, the Quran states, “*and, do not eat of that over which God’s name has not been pronounced,*” (Quran, 6:121). In addition to its obvious meaning, this verse implies that one should not accept a blessing that does not remind one of the Real Giver, and is not given in His name.²

In sum, both the one who gives and the one who takes should invoke God’s name. If a person does not give in God’s name and yet you are in need of what he is offering, then at least you take it in God’s name. Say, *bismillah*, and see the merciful God as the real giver, and take the blessing with gratitude to the real bestower, God. That is, take a moment to acknowledge the bestowal (*in'am*) present within that gift. As you notice the bestowal of gifts and blessings, be aware of the Real Bestower who is the real agent behind them. (*Mun'im al-Haqiqi*) Such awareness itself is a kind of gratitude to the Bestower of blessings. Then, you may pray for whoever offered you the gift, since s/he was the means through which God’s gift reached you.

People who are unaware, confuse the conjunction (*iqdiran*) of two things for cause and effect. They believe that one thing causes the other just because the two come into being

¹ See First Word on *bismillah*.

² By the “obvious meaning” the author must be referring to the fact that this verse is commonly interpreted as referring to abstaining from meat not harvested/ sacrificed in God’s name (though there is no reference to meat in this verse).

simultaneously. Thus they direct their love and gratitude to the supposed cause of the blessing rather than to the Real Giver of blessings. Because of their unawareness, they assume that if two things appear together, it must be that one is causing and as though making the other.³ This erroneous perception is reinforced by the fact that when the assumed cause is absent, the blessing disappears; which leads, people to mistakenly infer that the ‘cause’ must have created the blessing. In other words, they equate the cause of the *absence* of a blessing with the cause of its *presence* and direct their gratitude to the apparent means, and feel indebted to it.

This reasoning from absence (i.e. if it were not for X, there would not have been Y, therefore X made Y) is fallacious because the *existence* of a blessing (Y) is associated with many conditions (x1, x2, x3, etc) and preexisting factors (*muqaddamat*, lit. “forerunners.”) In contrast, the *absence* of a blessing happens simply by the absence of one thing (xi). Let us give an example.

When you do not turn on the switch of an irrigation system, you are the cause of the drying up of the land and the loss of all its harvest. This fact does *not* mean that when you do turn on the irrigation system, you are the cause of all its bountiful harvest. For, there are many conditions for a land to yield its crop, (from air, to earth, sunshine, seeds, bacteria that enrich the soil through their role in chemical reactions, and so on,) while the absence of only one condition (such as water) can result in losing the crop.

Moreover, even when all the appropriate conditions are present, they are merely the means, and not the cause of that harvest. The genuine cause that brings the blessings into being can only be the power and will of the Sustainer of everything...I hope you see now

³ [Translator’s note: The following could be helpful in understanding what the author means by confusing conjunction with causation. In summer ice cream consumption goes up and so does the incidents of drowning in the sea. If we were to say that ice cream therefore causes drowning, it would be an example of confusing conjunction and causation. Now, the author is suggesting that what we commonsensically think as causation in everyday life is also a confusion in a similar form. Just because water and growth of a plant are regularly associated, we think water makes the plant grow. Whereas, water lacks the knowledge, wisdom and power to create life and organize a plant, it accompanies the plant’s growth but does not cause it. Rather both the water and the plant’s growth is created simultaneously by the One who has the necessary attributes to create the plant, such as knowledge, creativity and life giving power.]

how fallacious is the reasoning of the unaware who does not see beyond the apparent conjunction of things.⁴

Indeed, the conjunction of two things does not necessarily mean that one of the things is causing the other one to come into existence. Conjunction and causation are completely different. A blessing comes to you. Let's assume that the blessing appears along with a friend's kind intention toward you. Your friend's intention is not a cause for that blessing; it doesn't create it. Your friend's intention cannot bring the blessing into being; it is just conjoined to it. Rather, God's mercy is the cause of the blessing coming to you. To be sure, if that friend did not intend to give, the blessing may not have reached you, in which case she would have been the cause of the *absence* of that blessing. And yet, as we explained above, this does not mean that she is therefore the cause of that blessing. Rather, your friend's kind intention to give can only be one condition out of the many conditions of existence of that blessing.

In this vein, some of the gifted disciples of *Risale-i Nur*, such as Husrev and Refet, were feeling overly indebted to me as their teacher. In that regard, they were confusing conjunction with causation. They were thinking: "If our teacher had not come here and taught us, we would not have learned these great lessons of the Quran. Therefore, he is the cause of our benefiting from these precious lessons." Yet in reality what was happening was a mere conjunction of two blessings of God: God has kindly blessed them with precious Quranic lessons and He has kindly blessed me with the gift of articulating the precious teachings of the Quran. Therefore, my friends, know that God's mercy and compassion is the real cause of both blessings.

⁴ To give another example, if you met your best friend Rose through Maryam, you may think "if Maryam did not introduce me to Rose, I would not have known her, and would not develop friendship with her. Therefore, Maryam is the cause of my beautiful friendship with my Rose." This is erroneous reasoning, because you are hastily concluding from argument of absence; it may be true that if Maryam's introduction was absent, then you would not have met Rose through her, but does that mean that you would not have met Rose otherwise? Or does that mean that she created the beautiful friendship between you two simply because she introduced you? In reality, Maryam may not be aware of your close friendship with Rose, let alone be source of it.

I was also making a similar mistake of confusing conjunction with causation in my relationship to you, my dear brothers and sisters. I was feeling extremely indebted to you for your support of this service of faith, in your transcribing of the *Risale-i Nur*.⁵ I was saying to myself: “If they were not with me, how could I, a weak and half-illiterate person, serve the Quran?” Then, I realized that God first blessed you with the gift of supporting this service and then blessed me with the gift of a successful service. These two blessings are conjoined but they are not each other’s cause. That is why, instead of thanking you, I am congratulating you. And so you too instead of feeling obliged to me, pray for me and congratulate me.

This discussion shows how there are many degrees in lack of awareness (*ghafla*).....

~Excerpted from *Flashes*, 17th Flash, by Said Nursi.

(Translation by Yamina Bouguenaya and Isra Yazicioglu).

⁵ The *Risale* was originally handwritten and copied by hand.