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Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Tajdīd: Consider Your Decisions Carefully](#)

DVD title: Tajdīd: Inner Renewal through Care-Full Decision-Making
Change Oneself in order to Change the World

Opening duas. *Asaalaamu aleikum.* Allah (swt) reveals in the Holy Qur'an:

And there followed them successors who inherited the Book, and while they grasped at the goods of this lower life, saying it will be forgiven to us; all the while they are ready if a similar chance or fleeting good comes to them to take it. Was not a covenant taken from them on the Book that they would not say anything about Allah save the truth? And they studied what was in it. And the home of the final life is better for those who guarded themselves for Allah. Will you not use your intelligence? (7:169)

Again, Allah reveals:

O you who believe, answer Allah and His Messenger when He calls you to that which gives you life, and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, but to Him you are all gathered. (8:24)

Today, I wanted to continue on the subject of reformation, *tajdīd*, and renewal. There are many things that can be understood by the writings in the Qur'an, [such as]:

Except the ones upon whom your Lord has mercy, for [this] He has created them, and the words of your Lord should be fulfilled, 'I shall surely fill hell with jinns and humans all together.' And all that We related to you about the messengers of the past is to make you firmly rooted in your heart. There has come to you in this Qur'an the truth and an instruction for remembrance for the believers. (11:119)

There are many things these ‘*āyāt*, when put together from different sides can tell us. One not so obvious thing we can discuss is the concept of change/*isla* or reform/*tajdīd*. Whether we realize it clearly or not, every single day there is a force in our lives for change and for reforming in our lives –every day. It’s like a magnetism or gravity around us. Sometimes there are very subtle things to notice, and sometimes there are earth-shattering experiences that change how we are thinking or reform our ways somehow. If it’s not happening to us, it is happening to someone around us. We are usually not more than one degree of separation from someone undergoing some kind of major challenge. Certainly we see that today and in the last few days.

Reform is needed on a personal level as well as on a community level. As individuals, we need to change and reform in the true sense; reform our lives from the form it was in to a new form. Societies need to reform; human beings need to reform, and human beings need reminders that can remind them about the truth, about justice, about ethics, about morality, about understanding life, about *akhlaq*. Without constant reminders, checks, and balances, people tend to forget. They can fall into actions that are not leading them in good or right directions. It can be subtle things: how you spend your time, how you direct your attention, to whom you are responsible, what your personal commitments and responsibilities are to the group, how you put aside your own desires in order to put forward someone else’s needs before you. These are subtle things. Mostly we think we can sandwich these things in, amidst our own ‘needs.’

Those needs range everywhere from a new BMW to a 3-month cruise to whatever it may be. Every time we have a need, we should really examine it from the point of view of our larger duties and responsibilities. It may not be how we grew up, some of us. It is certainly how we trained our children in our community. But some of us didn’t grow up that way. We had to learn this concept, and consequently sometimes we learned it with some convenient caveats. When we wrap our needs in the cloak of religiosity or spirituality, then we have even a better excuse to fulfill our needs, because it has the patina of the Divine around it. Sometimes we hear in English idiom, “Well, I’m only a

human being.” This is the greatest of God’s creation, and only human beings have been given the opportunity to see what is true, good and right. They have been given a great tool; therefore, we know how to use it.

I think Abul Bakr would disagree with that, because you can’t give a tool like a bandsaw to a child who doesn’t know how to use it. Just because the tool has potential and the child has potential, it doesn’t mean they match up. We have been given a great tool, the tool of choice and decision. We have to understand that every single choice that we make, and every decision we make has implications. Every one of them has implications. We have justifications for every decision we make, and when we inform others of our decisions, we tell them, “This is good for you (or for me). If it’s good for me, it must be good for everyone; and it must also be good for the community (whatever it is); therefore, don’t you dare question it or cast any aspersion on it.” Don’t debate it. Don’t ask a question about it.

It’s all part of a greater reality, a greater choice. We tend not to want to think that way, because it seems to be a restraint on us. God forbid there should be any restraints on us, because restraints must not be good. Restraints must be bad. Yet, if we knew the choices we make could lead us to open fields instead of closed doorways, that they lead us to beautiful places instead of potentially horrible places, that they lead us to deep understanding and peace in our hearts instead of confusion, we would have no problem. Unfortunately, we don’t know that. There are all these shades of gray, all these subtleties that we don’t see. Then sometimes someone else sees them, and they make a comment and you get offended; or the Shaykh sees it and makes a comment, which he probably shouldn’t do. [Then you just say], “Let it happen. People will find out for themselves.” Then when they don’t seem to find out for themselves, you start to think maybe that’s bad advice.

Sometimes as we climb the mountain, we have to go down instead of up, and it’s confusing. These constant reminders, and checks and balances, come in many ways. They come in the form of the Qur’an, of the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), in

the form of family's words, or followers, in the form of the *shuyukh*, and parents and friends, and hopefully in the form of the inner self and mind, where we realize we are never alone in this world. Our life is never just our life, and the decisions we are making have a lot of implications to them. "Of course, I'll make this decision, and the next one I'll consider the implications." We tend to stack our decisions in a way that they prioritize to us. "I'll take the highest priority, and do that one, because that's the one I really want. The next time I'll consider making another decision, or ask what the effects are to those around me, to my spiritual life, to my community, to my husband, to my wife, to my brother, to my sister, whatever it may be. Those I'll consider later. First, I'll fulfill my desires, because they must be right. Look, they are wrapped up in Islam. I put a spiritual bow on them. Who would dare question that?"

We don't think that any small decision we make can lead to upset or distraction, or detours. We very rarely think that any of our decisions could lead to the depression or problems of others. Yet, if you would ask yourself – and I haven't done this in the formal sense – if you went over the 10, 15 or 20 major decisions we have made as a community in the last, say, ten years – what is the next thing I'm going to say? (How many of them were actually driven by our desires?) Yes. They were all wrapped in up spirituality; they meet that qualification. But what was really motivating those decisions? Maybe it was apprehension about asking for financial support. Maybe it was fear of being rejected. Maybe it was not wanting to cause dissension, all kinds of things like that. Maybe some of them were not the right decisions, or could have been better. We never think that some small, common, every day choice could lead to distraction, misery, grief, or could add to the burden of others, let alone on a larger level.

How many people ever take into consideration the misery, grief, horror, injustices or the loss of quote "treasure." I'm getting sick and tired of hearing politicians use the phrase "our treasure." It's like "family jewels." Yes, human beings are treasures; but if you treasured them, you wouldn't throw them out the door to be killed or get other people killed. I'm sick of them putting the patina of "treasure" on it to make it okay that they die in useless wars and useless actions around the world. In that, I'm very libertarian.

There is a tendency not to think in terms of cause and effect. I mean, how could a small decision I'm making for myself or my family have a tremendous effect on others, really? Of course, we have a community of 50 some adults and children, and the decision I'm making may appear to have an effect on this smaller number; but really it's not that much of an effect in the greater scheme of things. But why are we who we are? If we wanted to turn ourselves into an upscale, gated community; we would have to collect a few hundred thousand dollars from everyone. Then we could tell Safiyya she's got a budget of quarter of a million dollars to do some upgrades in the landscaping, put in a larger pool, a bigger community center, hire some activities, put a gate around it, add another half a million and maybe put in a little 9 hole golf course, and then charge a heck of a lot to live here—and forget about the religious part of it. Well, I don't think that's what we are here for. We can move to Myrtle Beach for that.

On the other hand, it's a little too obvious, a little too new-age-y to think about people who really, really, really can make a commitment for the rest of their lives when they are in their early 20's or 30's and idealistic – a little too mystical, maybe. As we read:

After them succeeded a generation that inherited the Book but they chose the vanities of this world saying, "Everything will be forgiven us." Even so, if similar vanities came they way, they would seize them again. Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth? And they study what is in the Book, but best for the righteous is the home in the Hereafter. Will you not understand as those who hold fast by the Book and have established regular prayer? Neither shall We allow the reward of the reformers to perish. (7:169-170)

There is need for reform, and a need for reconsideration of things, of course. Ultimately, the blink of an eye we call this life, which we don't much want to contemplate, is the staging area. All Allah says is, "Hold fast to the Book and pray." If you add to that more, you should have more understanding, more humility. It's a duty of those of us who

believe and who understand, and who have grown up or been shown and guided to work both levels, personal and social, community level and national, international level or global level. In fact, this goes along very well with what I have been talking about over the past few weeks – this moment of reformation and understanding and our role.

Believers have to reform their own selves and improve their own character and shortcomings, which of course is like turning the chicken house over to the fox. The assumption is we really are going to be very anxious to take true responsibility for our own lives in a way that truly takes into consideration what are truly our needs and our wants, but also what are truly the effect and needs and wants of other people. Though it sounds very good, it doesn't always work out. So we need each other. There is a more scientific way we should operate, too.

Working on improving ourselves and our society, our social structure, we understand that it takes personal piety. But personal piety without social reform, without community reform, without family reform, without consideration of others, cannot be effective and cannot continue for a very long time. It's like when you are using satellite, while streaming a video from YouTube. You realize that with some of the video, you are going to have to pause so that the feed gets ahead of the playback; otherwise, it will buffer and it will stop. We have to keep up our reformation and consciousness at a speed at which we can manifest it, because Allah is constantly downloading onto our system.

It's also a bit hypocritical if one causes the whole world to change, and doesn't change oneself. Usually people are not that philosophical. Do you understand what I mean by that? Are you making that connection? People don't usually think, "I'm going to make this decision, but to do this I have to change myself." We assume our decision, we assume our needs, and we assume that if what we want is right, the whole world will adjust to it. The world will adjust to it! Stop putting carbon emissions into the air. Well, you have been putting carbon emissions in the air for the last 150 years. Why are you asking us to stop, we are a developing country! Like that. The world will adjust. Yes, it will; but not in a very good way.

It's also a bit hypocritical if one calls for the whole world to change, and asks themselves to change, and expects the world to change but doesn't expect themselves to change. That's a little more subtle. "I know I have to change." And the affirmation of you know you have to change is enough; mañana. Sorry, I didn't mean to use Arabic! We remember the prayer attributed to the Prophet (sal) when he said, "Change me, O Lord, not my circumstance." Did anyone catch that? Who was it? It was Prophet Isa. Just wanted to see if you were paying attention. All efforts of social reform are useless, if the reformer hers/himself does not benefit from them. In the same way, all efforts to change our external circumstances will really come to naught (at least), and to pain and suffering with loss, confusion, and ignorance (at worst) if we really believe we can change our external sight without changing our inner state. Allah (swt) revealed:

O you who believe! Respond to Allah and his Messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life. And know that Allah comes between man and his heart, and it is He to whom you shall be gathered. Be conscious of a trial that will affect not only those of you who do wrong, and Allah is strict in His punishment. (8:24-25)

Well, most of us haven't been to "chop-chop" square on a Friday after Juma in Mecca. Don't you know what "chop-chop" square it? It is where people are beheaded on Fridays after prayer, or whatever part of their body is removed at that time. Most of us haven't been there to see "God's wrath" on people, by people who call themselves Muslims. Anyway, I don't want to get political. We don't often see what punishment is. But then, we don't live inside the minds of tortured people who commit suicide, or who do wrong acts toward other human beings, or who cheat people in their businesses, or who pollute the atmosphere. We don't usually hang around with those people while they are admitting what they are doing.

Many years ago, a man who worked for Dow Chemical claimed his company didn't pollute anything, and one of his favorite activities was taking his son fishing. When asked

where he went, he named a river that is highly polluted by Dow Chemical. We have to respond to Allah (swt), His Messenger, and the guides who carry His messages. Allah (swt) is inviting us through the prophets to that which will give us life and revive us, and this is the promise of life's improvement – these gifts of extended, deepening aspects of our life. Those of us who see that and respond to the call, who don't look to the past only, but to the future; those who use the past as a stepping stone to the present and the future, and turn a positive attention, a positive eye, a positive mind to what is to come have to then ask ourselves, "What is it we are contributing to?"

Asking yourself 'what are you contributing to,' is the reason why people join organizations like Sierra Club or protection of the animals, or become vegans, vegetarians. After all, it is a much better diet than anything else – that was a plug. Well, I used to have power, but now I don't.

Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness from which he can never come out? Thus to those without faith do their own deeds seem pleasing. (6:122)

So, how do you stand there Shaykh and tell me, "If I'm doing the wrong thing, it means I don't have faith?" Well, you have faith; you wrap it in God, and call it faith in God, but it's faith in yourself. You are only one degree separated, so that's okay; Allah created you. So if you have faith in yourself, you must be having faith in Allah. You can have faith in the form of form, and even in the form of belief, but if you don't connect the dots... You can have faith in yourself and faith in Allah, and that's wonderful; but if the self is making decisions that are selfish, or selfish enough that it affects others, it seems not to touch this faith in Allah. That's where you have to draw the connection.

This is also about faith and our commitment to righteousness and to live a good life, as hard as it may seem, as much as we might want to pull against the rope at times, and go off the path. Then we say, "Well, it's okay to go off the path. It's fun to go through the

woods.” I just walked from the road to the deck yesterday afternoon, from the parking lot where the iconic green van is (dead sculpture), and guess what? How many ticks did you pull off my pants? Ten, twelve? Just running quickly, because we knew there were ticks there. Little ticks, big ticks, sand ticks, flea ticks, tick-tock! You just can’t go through life without some ticks. You think it’s fun to go through the woods; it may be, and you will be reminded of it for weeks, scratching.

Every person on an individual level has to respond to Allah (swt). Every individual Muslim has to make sure that his or her life has faith, sincerity, honesty, decency, purity, cleanliness and justice, and draw the line to the decision you are making. Connect the dots. Whether it’s the study of the Qur’an, Hadith, *ibāda*, *dhikr*, *muraqabah* or *tafakkur*; whether it is observing what is *halal* in food and actions, avoiding what is *haram*, being modest, being proud of who we are as Muslims (but really the ideal of *mu’minūn*), the reality of being the best we can be in every circumstance and being proud of it is not theory. It has to be put into action. The interesting thing is, if you put any three of those in action, all the rest will follow.

We should not be hiding it through our behavior or in some other way, not making excuses for what we are doing or the work we choose to do; hiding it in the way we dress or speak, or in the way we treat our neighbors, the way we treat our brothers and sisters. It should be overt. Goodness should be there; good decisions should be there. It comes naturally to a human being who is not distracted in some way, or being misled by others or by themselves.

O Lord, we have heard the call of the one calling us to faith, “Believe you in the Lord,” and we have believed. Ya Rabb! Forgive us our sins, blot out from all our inequities, take Yourself our souls in the company of the righteous. Ya Rabb! Grant us what You did promise us through Your Messengers, and save us from the shame on the Day of Judgment, for You never break Your Promise. (3:193-194)

Does that sound familiar? There is more to say on this subject, but little time in the *khutbah*, so maybe I'll continue it later. But I think you get the point of view, right? So starting tomorrow, after completing all the decisions you have already made without reconsidering them; or the day after, after finishing all the decisions you want to make about the things you really want to do and really want in life; when you are done with that in a day or two, a week or two, or a month or two, you might put this into action. When you do it, at least you should know that others are doing the same thing. *Asalaam aleikum.*