



The Security of Islam Frees the Heart from Rancor and Envy

Allah says in Surah al Hashr, ‘*āyat* 10:

And those who came after them saying, “O our Lord, forgive us and our brothers and sisters who came before us in faith, and place not in our hearts any rancor towards those who securely believe. For truly, O Lord, You are the Most Gentle and the Most Merciful.”

We certainly live at a time when there is a lot of rancor and anger and a lot of nasty words that are spread, especially in our country at the time of elections, and all around the world. In the hearts of human beings is a lot of prejudice. Unfortunately, we can even find some of that residing in our own hearts at times. There are few of us who can say that there are no seeds of anger or rancor in our hearts. Many things can make us angry, like attacks upon our own person, things that harm others. The loss of those we love can create anger in our hearts. *Alhamdulillah*, it’s also a good time, or at least a better time, because it gives us the opportunity to think deeply about this ‘*āyat*. We think about not only what we feel in our hearts, but what comes across our faces. [It is a time] to once again pray and plead with Allah (swt) through our own conscience that we don’t think of ourselves first in those circumstances. But we ask Allah (swt) to help us try to think of others by thinking of Allah, by thinking about what Allah wants us to do, commands us to do, inspires us to do, cajoles us to do, pleads with us to do, and act as He would have us act and be as He would have us be.

Having said all that, you know I am not referring to a personality. So when I say to act as He would have us act, it is to act as if compassion is ruling our lives, and mercy ruling our lives, and love and justice, kindness and consideration, trust and submission and

faith. I remember from my early days in the pursuit of spirituality. At the bottom line, I would say to myself when I didn't know how to act, and I didn't have the ability in myself to act in ways I thought I should act, when I was not sure what I should do or what I should say— of course the danger is that you think you know what to do or say—I would have my teacher in mind and say, “What would he have me do? How would he have me act?” Unfortunately, over the years we forget some of the things that motivated us in the early days of our spiritual journey.

In the early days of our spiritual journey, we are still questioning and we have some fear, and a little arrogance when it comes to the path. Later on, we have no fear of the path and a lot of arrogance about what we think we know. What would he have me say in circumstances like this or that? Because we have (as I spoke the other night and I hope you really listen to it) [the example in] the Prophet Muhammed (sal) and other great examples, we can pretty well get an answer to the question whenever we ask it, if we take the time to ask it, and if we are willing to study the *sīrah* of Rasūlullāh (sal). Then pretty much every question has an answer to it. What could be a better way than giving comfort to hearts and minds, and removing sorrow from them? Learning to live our lives in such a way with a healthy peaceful, and calm state of mind, those whom we love and care for, those who are present and those who have passed, will be grateful and proud of us, and will feel that we are carrying on the core message.

The heart is designed to be free, to be able to exist free from all disturbances of rancor and jealousy, anger, and ill feelings toward one another. Yet, it can accommodate those feelings to such a degree that it can thrust life into something Allah never intended it to be, but gave us the choice to make it what it can be and what it should be. We should be glad indeed and show our gladness to others. When we see others enjoying the comforts of life, we should be happy. We should understand all the good fortunes that come to human beings (not just to us) come as favors from Allah (swt), gifts of Allah's Mercy, Compassion, Love, Tolerance, and Patience.

Allah has bestowed upon us these things we should remember and say, *“O Allah! You have bestowed on me such gifts. And on all other creatures, so many gifts. Some gifts are only bestowed on us on account of Your favor and love, and none is associated with other than You. All praise and all thanks are for You Allah.”* All that took five seconds to say. I hate to think about how many five or eight second blocks I wasted just today without thinking that way, because thinking that way doesn't get in the way of anything else you are thinking of, especially in this world of multi-tasking. When people find each other in difficulty, when they find people with sorrow in their hearts, they should sympathize with one another and pray to Allah, to Whom all praise is due. *“O Allah, remove these people's difficulties and pardon their sins. Assist them in their need.”* That took about 4 seconds. We hear about and see people every day that we should be praying for, so now I've given you a calculation of somewhere between 9 and 12 seconds. How much good can we do in 12 seconds?

We should remember that Rasūlullāh (sal) said, *“O Allah, if You are the Forgiver, then forgive all the sins of all the creatures. No slave of Yours will be in difficulty.”* That is about another four seconds. What are we up to now, 16? How much good can we do in 16 seconds? There are a lot of “shoulds” and “coulds” in this world. Muslims should live in such a way that they are sympathizers and empathizers with individuals and humanity as a whole, but many don't. Most would love to, probably; but many don't. We should all live as if we share the woes of humanity, but who really does that? We should be content with and thankful for life, but how many of us really are? We should be happy with the achievements that Allah (swt) provided us to have through our capabilities. We should be free from jealousy, rancor, corruption, anger. Jealousy is a fatal disease, and no cure is known for it. It is totally incurable. It creates zombies, the living dead. Do you know how many people walk around this world with anger based on jealousy and envy? They are the walking dead. It causes our faith to dissipate immediately. It is like liquid that runs through our fingers.

I said there is no known cure; but of course there is a cure. It is only known by some people. It is not an external cure, but an internal one. It is called paying attention to the heart, *wuqufi qalbi*, pausing, looking into the heart. It is not just something we do in meditation. Paying attention to the heart is something we should do all the time, which is why Tasawwuf is so important. A black or tarnished heart is tarnished even worse at the moments of anger. If the heart is glowing and filled with light, then Allah bestows prosperity and happiness on that heart. It doesn't matter if a person is a high person or low person, an educated person or uneducated person. Even the smallest act of righteousness, of good rushes directly to the repository of your heart and makes a place for itself there, and light begins to grow.

Even when I say the words, we have different interpretation. What is anger? What do you perceive it to be? What does someone else perceive it to be? Today I was on Skype with Matt. He and his wife are going to a Lifespring thing, where they hear what women think about men and how they listen, and what men think about women and how they listen. It's wonderful, *alhamdulillah*. Of course, I made a couple of jokes. I had an impulse, and got up and pulled out "Guide to the Perplexed" by Moses Maimonides. I opened it up, and it opened to the chapter where Maimonides talks about people not hearing each other's words. He gives exactly this example where the Hebrew may say this and use this word, but the Arabs hear it this way and hear it with this word. I typed some of that to him, and said, "Study this over your Shabbat."

You see? This is the result of being in *tariqah* all these years, that I follow my impulse. I followed my intuition. I went and got the Maimonides book. I didn't think anything. I opened it up, and this is where he had me open the book to, on this subject. I did this before Matt told me what he was going to do. I told it to you in the wrong order! I have to give it to you in the right order in order for you to get the right impact. I wished him a "Good Shabbas," and I thought, "I should give him something to study." I got up, got the

book, opened the book, and by that time, he had written to me that they were going to this course. So I did it before he told me. Not me. What did I do? I don't know every page of the "Guide to the Perplexed." And if you read it, you will be very perplexed; it's not exactly an easy read. This is what Allah sent me to do for my Jewish brother. Yes? And what does he write back? "Amazing!" I said, "Make sure you study this." He said, "I will, for sure."

You have to get to the point where you trust your knowledge and intuition. Abdul Ibn Amr narrated, "*The Messenger of Allah was asked, 'Which people are great in virtue?' And the Prophet (sal) said, 'One whose heart is neat, whose heart is clean, and whose tongue is truthful.'* He was asked, '*We are aware of the truthful tongue, but what is the meaning of the neat and clean heart?'* The answer was, '*One who fears Allah (he's using the word *taqwa*, which means piety) is free from evil (if you love Allah, you are free from evil). His heart is clean who has no sin in it, neither insubordination nor jealousy nor rancor.'*" Islamic society has to be based on something that is totally removed from our own selfishness. It has to be based on mutual love and affection, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood, cooperation, and dealing honestly with one another.

There is no room for an ungrateful person or a jealous heart. Yet we talked recently about honesty, and I told you two stories on the subject. You may think, "Well, those were not honest. Those were lies." But they weren't lies; they were honest at the core. Again, we are into the subject of the semantics of the truth. There is no room for an ungrateful person or jealous heart when you have that piety. There is no room for rancor if your heart is filled with love. The last moment I was rancorous and angry, which was not too long ago, I was outside of my Islam. The last moment I was jealous, which *alhamdulillah*, I think was many, many years ago (but I might be wrong and it might be today), I was outside of my true Islam, my true submission. I was away from peace, away from security, away from sanctity in that moment. In that moment, we could leave this earth. I couldn't ask for His safety then, or His security, because I wasn't in that state.

Islam is not a religion; it's safety, security and peace. There is no place in Islam for a person who nurtures jealousy. There is no place for someone who is judgmental, who has envy in their hearts, no place for an arrogant person. A lot of people would say this is very heretical; who am I to say what is inside and outside of Islam? But I don't say it. The Prophet (sal) tells us. When quarrels intensify and the roots of difficulties go deep, and the thorns of the bush come, and the branches of the bush increase in number and gives forth fruit... the freshness of the fruit becomes adversely affected. Though the bush wants to produce good food, the person tending it doesn't tend it properly. The person given responsibility for it doesn't prune it or fertilize it or care for it. There is no softness, no light.

We have to be sympathetic. We have to do what is needed. It is the same thing for each other. Allah gave us this wonderful physical world to make something great out of. He gave us this inner dimension of belief and faith to grow like ripe fruit and to feed others with, and to produce more seeds. [It takes] one seed to produce the plant, [but] a thousand seeds come from the fruit of that one plant. He gave us knowledge to assist others with. He gave us insight and intuition so we can carry on tradition and pass it on in a more high-context way, in the sense of purpose in this life. But if we don't care for ourselves, and we are not careful (full of care), it will be like my fruit trees at the house. They are not producing like they should. Oh, deer! The deer eat them.

Maybe we never knew how to care for them properly. At the end of the season we go and cut them back. This year we cut them really far back. Let's see if we get distorted and disfigured fruit, or any fruit this year. But there are a few fruits on them sometimes, and we are very grateful. Let's raise our standard. We have become so conditioned that we are willing to accept something so much lower than our capability, so much lower than our potential for what Allah (swt) created us for. One of the results of not effectively living within the blessings and teachings and guidance of Islam and of Tasawwuf,

because Allah made us with capability for softness in our hearts and empathy and sympathy and peacefulness, if our worship loses its meaning. We don't try to be righteous, and we cease to benefit from all the goodness around us. We become blind to the efforts others are making, and we become involved in the quarrels and disturbances of other people's lives.

When will we change? When will we become such people, and where are we right now? What happens when a Pandora's box of misunderstandings opens up, and superficial judgments are made, and superficial views are espoused? Do we become petulant and reactive, and [let] fear enter our lives? We become so sure we are right, because we don't want to entertain the possibility that we are wrong. We will have to reestablish a new baseline of thinking, and we become only interested in our own selfish goals or fearful. These are dangerous times we are living in. There are dangerous circumstances for Muslims. There are dangerous circumstances for men and women around the world, and children who are hungry. It's dangerous in this world today where there are wars. People are killing their own people in Syria and Iraq and probably, quietly but definitely, in Iran.

In my humble opinion (and I include myself among the Muslims who don't understand a lot), they say all the right things, like: "Islam is not a religion; it's a way of life." You look around the world and say, "Who would want to live that life? It's terrible!" We become defensive, and wait for the other shoe to drop. But we are blessed to be in *tariqah*. Now we are facing going to Egypt. We have to ask the question: Is it safe for us? Is it safe for the people we are taking? But you know the question behind that? Is it safe for the people who will be greeting us, who will be serving us, whose name may go down on a list because they met the Americans? We leave, and maybe we get home safely, and then what happens to them? We have to be people of forgiveness and kindness, and people of sacrifice, and people who affirm that we live for the sake of others first.

Scholars whose scholarliness complement their insight and awareness and practice are fine, but beyond scholarship we have to be believers. We are not surrounded by only the scholarly people. Most of us are surrounded in this world by people who don't understand and don't listen and don't think and don't act out of anything other than their selfish interests. Does it matter whose causing the problems? Or does it only matter that we deal with those problems ourselves? The only things we can take care of is what our own to take care of. The inclination is to get hooked on things of this world, the political situation, or the social situation, or the desires we have for this and that, or this relationship and that relationship. But the only way we are going to be able to deal with the issues in our society and the world today is to de-politicize them and make them very, very personal. That's what Allah is telling us to do.

He's telling us first of all to control the anger, the rancor, and the jealousies and the fears. We are not so convinced there is a quid pro quo between doing that and the world changing. We think they are two separate things. If we control our heart and our own self, we don't necessarily make the jump and think, "That will make the world better." But it will, eventually. Allah is telling us, telling every teacher, every *imam*, every true believer, that there is a relationship between how I deal with myself and how the world is. So if I or you get angry today, or rancorous or jealous or fearful, and strike out in arrogance, we help to create an atmosphere where someone will do something wrong, and will continue to do something wrong in the name of Islam. I have to believe that. I know we are told very clearly that we can't lift the burden from someone else, but Allah tells us that we are one *ummah*, one community. He also tells us that we are part of a greater whole. The Prophet (sal) gave the example of dropping the stone in the water. We cannot afford at any moment to forget this.

What is and what should a truly Islamic society be? It's not a political entity; it's a personal entity. It's relationships that are based on love, and brotherhood and sisterhood, and cooperation. More than that, it's based on our personal relationship with Allah (swt).

We have to take that time every day and have a personal relationship with Allah (swt), many times a day. Because many times a day, Shaytan is able to make us worship the idols, so to speak – the idolatry of money, power, name and fame, beauty and vanity. He is very keen and able to misguide people, and manages to drive people away from Allah (swt). Even wise people become indifferent. The best method adopted by Shaytan is to sow seeds of enmity in the hearts of people who love one another.

If we just stop for a minute and ask ourselves, “How does he do it?” Shaytan has done a lot of extra credit work, and gotten an A++ Ph.d, which in that case means, “Please Hold Them Down.” If the best method is to sow enmity in the hearts of people, then we had better assume that there is an enmity in our heart to be fertilized. If it’s in our hearts, I’ll tell you how to know. How long does it take us to get upset about something? If you are not feeling well, there is a lot of tinder. We have a lot of reasons to be upset: the passing of our dearest brother, this oral surgery that I had done, the strain of the work we are doing. All of this all coming at one time—even the death of our beloved pussycat, old Topi. Anything raises that kind of tinder in you. When there is a lot of dry tinder, it takes only a spark to make a flame.

When you look at the world we live in today, we see what is happening among civilized people –open hostility, reactivity, mindless reactions. Shaytan is so happy. He’s dancing around the fire in those people’s hearts and souls. What does that fire burn? It burns your future, your life. It makes ashes out of your future before it even arrives. A box of ashes comes in the mail and says, “This was your future. Rest in peace.” The Messenger of Allah said, ***“Shaytan is disappointed that he will not be worshiped in Arabia, but he is not disappointed in kindling the fires of anger among the Arabs.”*** This means when wickedness takes root in our hearts, our group, our community, our work, and when love and brotherhood and sisterhood are destroyed among people, and people revert to cruelty and backbiting and enmity, jealousy, and distrust, they break off relations with Allah and corruption spreads upon this earth.

Islam is aware of the destructive causes and forces of excessiveness, and tries to remedy them before they have gone beyond their limit. It is common knowledge that people differ from one another in their viewpoints. That's okay. Ideas change, and people change. Mutual contact doesn't always have to result in agreement. But we live in a world where mutual contact is resulting in estrangements and clashes, and separations. If you are a doctor of Chinese medicine, you have to learn how to take seven or twelve pulses. Everybody else just hears thump-thump. There is more to know, and more to learn, and deeper things to understand from just what is apparently obvious to you that you think you know.

So let's put our hand on the pulse of our own life, and ask: What is it we are feeling? How close are we as an individual or as a community of people, or as Muslims, to being on the edge of illness that is spreading in the world, or healthfulness that needs to come? Are we judgmental, abandoning our practices or embracing them? Are we being quiet or loud, patient or impatient? How is the sickness going? What are the symptoms? Are we catching them? Have we already gotten it? How do we cure ourselves? What does it mean that we have so much sickness in our community this winter? Does it mean nothing? Do you really believe there is a relationship between your faith/*iman* and your health? All these things – are they unrelated to the global situation? It's possible. Let's just assume that the old Shaytan is there, sort of a shadow government in black ops, the hidden. But we have remedies. Take the remedies. Sometimes the oldest remedies are the best. All right; you got the message. No need for me to beat it into your head. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said,

Do not sever relationships. Do not indulge in mutual enmity. Do not enter into rancor and jealousy against one another. Do not be jealous of others. Be brothers and sisters among yourselves and become Allah's slaves. It is not

permissible for a man to sever his relationship with his brothers or sisters for more than three days.

Do you know how blessed you are that you have brothers and sisters? Some of you are the single child in the family. Look at the blessing you have, but do you treat each other that way? Let alone expand that to people of like minds and like hearts? You don't have to accept that the wrongs other Muslims or Sufis do are to be excused. You pray for their well being, and for Jews, Christians and non-believers. But you have to remember what Allah (swt) says about people who do believe.

In a *hadith*, he says,

It is not permissible for a mu'min to have no connection with another mu'min for more than three days. If after three days, he happens to meet him, he should salute him with Salaam aleykum. If he answers, then both shall share the rewards of that. If the other person does not answer, then the sin will be on him, and the Muslim will be innocent of severing relations. He who has harmed a brother's right or hurt his honor, should please him today before the day comes when there shall be neither dirham or dinar with him. If he would have virtues, then he will be taken in proportion to the transgression he has committed. If there be no virtues in his record, then the evil deed of the oppressed will be thrust into the oppressor's account.

The Prophet (sal) also said,

If a Muslim apologizes to another Muslim, and the latter does not accept the apology, then on him will be the same sin as a person who collects a tax which is not due. And if a person pleads his innocence to another person, and that

person rejects it, then he will not be brought to the water tank and will have thirst in the Hereafter.

With this clear guidance for two opposing parties, Islam fights rancor, hatred, and jealousy, and destroys these diseases and germs at the outside, and brings Muslim society to a high level of love, friendship and justice. If someone says to you, “Who are you?” what do you say? “I’m an American, I’m a Muslim. I’m a Sufi. I’m a boy, I’m a girl.” What do you feel in your heart? I pray that Allah (swt) helps us to say something like, “Me? I’m just a seeker trying to understand who I am, and trying to live a better life every day. I’m someone who could spend a lot of time in repentance and apology. I’m just someone who doesn’t deserve all the good I have been given.” *Inshā’a-llāh. Asalaamu aleykum.*