



[The Source of Evil found in the Disease of Anger and Rancor](#)

Allah Swt revealed in the Holy Qur'an in Surah al-Ahzab:

And those who malign believing men and believing women for other than what they have earned through their deeds surely burden themselves with slander and clear sin.

Then later in the *surah*:

O you who believe! Do not be like those who slandered Musa. Then Allah cleared him of what they said, and he was esteemed in the sight of Allah. O you who believe! Be conscious of Allah and ward off evil from within and from without, and speak words that are straight to the point. He will make whole for you your works, and forgive you your faults. And whomsoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has attained a mighty triumph.

In this month of Rajab, as we come to the Isra Miraj and to the month of Sha'ban, noting how fast this month has come and left us almost, we have to reflect on those qualities within ourselves and outside of ourselves, and how we construct and deconstruct those aspects of ourselves that stand as barriers between us and our spiritual progress, between us and Allah, between us and our brothers and sisters, between husbands and wives, between our children, and the people we work with and the people we are around. To think that we are somehow safe and secure in our habits and customs is a self-deception.

The history of this ‘*āyat* is very important in relationship to talking about the evils in society that are around us. Often, we focus on evil, and we don’t focus on the source of that evil. Despite all the shapes and forms, these evils all tend to revolve around one basic disease: that of rancor, or anger, or jealousy—anger over someone doing something to us; anger because we are attacked by someone, or we are not understood. Then out of that we find jealousy, and I think that speaks for itself, and envy. If we look at the evils and diseases of society, I think we can trace most of it back to these two things, whatever the causes are: custom, culture.

False accusations of people who are innocent—certainly, that is a terrible crime. At the least it causes ill feelings, and at the most it causes hatred. It can be based on ethnicity. It can be based on religion, on gender, or on age. It can be based on physical appearance, since it is extremely effective. The false accusation destroys reality, especially when it condemns innocent people. Islam has declared it the worst kind of falsehood.

Aisha (ra) narrated that the Prophet (sal) asked his companions, “Do you know what is the worst aggression?” And they said, “Allah and His Messenger know better.” He said, “Before Allah, the worst aggression is to make halal for oneself the honor of another Muslim.” He then recited the ‘āyat of the Qur’an I recited: “Those who cause pain to the Mu’min women and men, without any fault of theirs, surely they have earned the guilt or false accusation and open sin.”

It comes back on the person who has no reason for accusation, for false accusation is decreed in Islam to be a punishment in this world. It is difficult to imagine the punishment the false accuser will receive in the next world. We live in a world where the news media is full of lies and false accusations, as you know, tinted in small, semi-false accusations, assumptions and intimations of truth when they are really false. We begin to believe in the reality of these false accusations—sort of like believing in a “partial

pregnancy.” Listening to the news today, lies are put into a form that seems to be acceptable. Allah’s Messenger said:

He, who in order to find fault, says something not true about a person who is not there, Allah will throw such a person into hell until he tastes fully what he has fabricated.

In another tradition:

It is said that if a man spreads a rumor about another man who is innocent in order to bring him into disrepute, it is Allah’s test to melt him in the fire and brimstone until he gets a full taste.

I don’t like to talk about hell, but at least from that ‘*āyat*, we know it’s only up to a certain point. I don’t know how that feels, but at least it is not forever. The question is what do we get from this? Just the fear of being melted in hell? I think we have to understand that Islam, especially from the point of view of Tasawwuf / Sufism is more about purification/*at-tazkiya*, then it is about perfection. For whatever reason, human beings today, especially intelligent, educated human beings on the one hand (and I don’t want to make those parallel—there are educated human beings who aren’t very intelligent, and there are intelligent human beings who aren’t very educated), especially the intelligence supposedly educated human beings aspire to, on the other hand claim perfection, at least mentally to themselves. It is one thing to aspire to; it’s another thing to claim it while disclaiming it. “Who, me? I’m not perfect!” But inside, the person thinks, “Nobody understands me. I’m right.”

People slowly start to understand that all the answers they have don’t always have the truth in them. They don’t always have the truth in their possession, like the Salafi and other people who wear the mantle of Islam, and accuse others in the way I’m speaking

about today. If people don't see the defects in others, and if people accuse them of defects and try to entangle them in charges that are not fair, then those people are liars and deceivers and guilty of *nifaaq*, and they are without shame. Allah Swt said: **“This obscenity may spread in a group who believe, and for them there is a severe punishment for them in this world and in the next world.”** We see that happening in the world around us, in the United States and all over the world. People are susceptible to these lies and accusations. Allah knows, and you don't know, and I don't know. What is being said here has incredible power that tells us that false accusations and partial truths are not only deceptive but destructive.

We see how this power is wielded and misused by politicians who have total disregard for their constituents and their constituents' needs. It's used among Muslims who have total disregard for the intelligence and capacity of the *ummah*. If you speak and say, “Enough of this. Don't you understand what you are doing is wrong? You should know it from the Qur'an,” for many, many years, we know people don't respect that kind of talk. Allah tells us through the Prophet (sal), **“If you can't correct people by your hand, then you correct them by your words, and if not, then by your intentions and thoughts.”** We don't find, unfortunately, a lot of correction. The assumption is that people are too ignorant to know what is good for themselves, and the second level of assumptions is, even if they had the right to choose what they feel was good for them, they are not permitted to fully carry on the consequences of their choices, whether it's women in Afghanistan and the Middle East, minorities in our country. The fear is there that somehow, people might gain knowledge or power.

So let's assume I am able to choose my health care. The assumption is if I choose wrongly, I should be punished for it instead of taking full responsibility. At the same time, we also understand there is a mandate by Allah Swt that we should care for one another. When politically, a leader like the leader we have now in the US, tries to solve that problem in a just and fair way, people are against it. Not because they are against

health care, but because they are against him. Or not because they are just against him; but because it means their cronies won't make a lot of money. It's corruption. There is a wonderful place, according to Islam, in hell, for these people. We wish they could see a window into that, but they can't. It means the responsibility is on us, as human beings, as citizens, as believers, as Muslims, to try to point to the truth and try to live it.

We've created societies all around the world where people don't have the right to be responsible; yet, we all have the right to be responsible that is given to us by Allah. In fact, the basis of Allah's creation of human beings is choice. Allah says clearly that if you make right choices, this is what will happen. If you make wrong choices, this is what will happen. If you see your brother and sister making wrong choices, it's your job to try to bring them back to the *siratal mustaqim*. Tell them what is right, tell them what is wrong. If they don't listen, explain it again. Try to speak to them in a language they will understand. Give an argument that is good. It's all worked out that it is choice.

Then we see what is happening today in Egypt. People know it is their choice, but they are not granted the choice properly. It's a great blessing of Allah. It is *fadl* of Allah to His 'abd that He approves of covering the defects of His creation. At the same time, it is not permissible for a Muslim to feel cleansed by condemning other Muslims. Even if the condemnation is correct, there is a correct way to deal with that. Because people who are of a healthy mentality and clear mind and strong *iman* feel pain when they see others in pain, it's natural to wish to see that the person recovers from that pain, that they have the welfare available to them in society. What I cannot do individually, maybe I can accomplish collectively.

Yet even in our own families, we have miscommunications, and we don't understand the subtleties of the pains people may be feeling, not just the physical ones, but the emotional ones and the mental ones, the stress and strain of work. We don't have the gratitude and love in our hearts enough to really truly feel grateful for what we have, instead of

focusing on what we don't have, and what we wish we had. It's very different to point out what's wrong, and try to correct it, than to condemn. The condemnation doesn't have to be with words, it can be with thoughts and emotions. It's different to warn what would happen if someone follows what is wrong, than it is to backbite. It's different to warn and see the person is not taking the warning, and to turn to someone who may be able to speak to that person and tell them in a way that is not backbiting, nor with envy or jealousy.

Sometimes we don't understand the difference between these, and it becomes very convenient for us to say, "Oh, that's backbiting. That's condemnation" because people don't want to take responsibility. Sometimes you label something in the negative to stop the conversation. "I don't want to talk about this. Not now. I have a headache. I had a hard day." These are ways of controlling communication. It's one thing with the human being, but it's another thing to understand that this is not the way of Allah. I don't care if you are Christian, Jew, or Muslim; it doesn't matter. It's not the way of Allah. What happens? If you can't change yourself, and therefore you can't change your circumstance, what do you do? You reject the whole thing. You think that somehow you are going to live your life and everything's going to be fine. Indeed, it very well may be somewhat fine or very fine in the physical world, but you go to your grave bankrupt. You take nothing with you to your grave.

There has to be a reason that every religion and every path talks about what happens in the grave and beyond the grave. It's more than just a convenience or a religious belief, so a group of elite individuals can run your life for you. This is belief based on experience. The Prophet (sal) said no to this kind of mentality. People will walk out and say, "The Shaykh said in the *khutbah* that you shouldn't do such and such." But, we jump to the defense of the lower state too quickly. The truth is, when we relate to the defects of others and uncover their evils, and we publicize them for no good reason, without sufficient proof, and without proper authority, then there are caveats that go along with it.

We can't be acting truly as believers, even as good human beings, because Islam has declared that it is *haram* to backbite. You know the story from Ramadan about the women who backbited and they vomited up blood and flesh.

But there is a kind of passivity in the anger and rancor. It is an opportunity for that rancor to come out, and people are deprived of the grace and blessing not only of those who would give them that, but also in the sense of Allah because they are now accused. Abu Hurayra said that Allah's Messenger (sal) said, ***“Do you know what backbiting is?” And the people said, “Allah and His Messenger know better.” He said, “To remember your brother in a way that would be disliked by him.”*** That goes for anyone and everything. So we have to have good intentions when we are speaking about someone or relating a story, and question ourselves. ***He was asked, “If my brother has a defect and I am relating it, is that also backbiting?” And the Prophet (sal) replied, “If that defect is in him, then it is backbiting. If the defect narrated by you is not in him, then it is false accusation.”*** What about if you are narrating something that is a lesson, that is told with love, and not backbiting? It's a slippery slope.

I did that today, actually. You have to know what your intention truly is: to pass on information, to help someone, to give it in a way that is not accusatory, to say it in a way that draws attention to something that might give understanding or relief. Unless you go through that process before you do it, it's a very slippery slope. So what do you do? Does it mean you don't make any corrections? Does it mean you give no insight in that way? Does it mean you don't ever speak about anyone at all? Having pointed that out, sometimes we use it as an excuse, so that we don't have to see things in our own self. There is an *adab* that is also formulated through which we can deal with this. It's an *adab* based on the security of friendship itself, of trust. Those who claim to be friends need to be able to communicate with one another. They need to be able to assist one another, and do it, knowing that today it is my turn to be spoken to. Tomorrow it may be your turn for me to speak to you.

If people here have to discuss something with one another, they have to be able to say, “Well, this is based on our friendship. This is based on the fact that you are my mother, my father, that you’re my brother, you’re my sister. This is the truth.” Now, you understand the response to the truth may not always be something easy and palatable. So you have to communicate that relationship, and understand if there is something that is said to me and I feel a strong response, then you have to understand that it is coming from love, care, and concern—not from jealousy, envy, or anger. It’s very easy to say, “Oh, if I say something to the Shaykh, my mother or my father, they will get angry at me.” It can be a big excuse not to face yourself or the truth. You have to understand the relationship. You can say, “I don’t want to disturb my relationship, my friendship; if I do, maybe it will destroy it.”

But the *adab* and the principles formulated by Islam for the security of friendship, for safeguarding against divisive tendencies are very important. They include the forbidding of telling tales, because it creates an ill feeling among friends, and destroys the cleanliness of hearts. The Prophet (sal) used to restrain his companions from saying things which would hurt the feelings of others. He said, ***“None of you should convey to me any hurtful thing about my companions. For I want that as long as I may come to you, my bosom should be clean in respect of every one of you.”*** Does that mean there is nothing to be told? If someone hears a wrong thing about others, then they should not widen the hole in the cloth that’s been rent by putting the finger through it and pulling on it. Gossiping people die their own deaths, and if they are left to themselves, it will not be pleasant. Many statements give rise to misunderstandings, to wars, to genocide. Large numbers of people copy them and encourage them. A flying spark falls on a dry leaf and everything ignites.

In another tradition, the word “*katai*” has been used. If you look up this word and “*mamam*,” they have the same meaning. But “*mamam*” means someone inadvertently

hears someone talking and they go about quoting them. *Katat* is one who eavesdrops on other people and then quotes them. A *hadith* states, ***“Those telling tales in rancor will go to hell. Those two things cannot gather in the heart of a Muslim.”*** So enmity and rancor create a very false impression. They cause people to search for defects in their adversary. The most terrible thing is the person doesn’t even have to be an enemy. They can be a political adversary they might like as a person—or it used to be, but no longer in this country. You see people on the news reports who shake hands after screaming and yelling at each other and calling each other names, and referring to them as “friend.” Yesterday on a news report, they showed the Greek parliament. A man walked up to a woman and started slapping her. Who knows, maybe the feta cheese wasn’t very good—something really important.

No real Muslim can have any happiness when they see someone else is in trouble. Your heart and your compassion rises. You see them in a terrible state. No one can grieve if they are in a position of jealousy and envy. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Anyone who knows about a defect about his brother and he has concealed it, then Allah will cover his defects on the Day of Resurrection. And he who has veiled the defect of a mu’min has acted as if he revived a baby girl placed in a grave.”*** Understand the context of a baby girl placed in a grave at the time of the Prophet (sal). Women were not held in very high esteem. Girls were buried alive until the Prophet came.

So my dear brothers and sisters, we have to be very careful never to use this capacity as an excuse, but to communicate and to speak honestly and openly with one another, to take what is there, put it on the table if we have to, with an intention for understanding, with an intention to spend time, however much time it takes, to understand whatever the question is or the need is. It reminds me of a story from many years ago. After the *fatwa* was placed on Salman Rushdie, the writer, Shaykh Kaftaro (ar), the Grand Mufti of Syria, said that Rushdie should come and sit with him for one day and discuss the matter. And if he didn’t get it, he’d have to sit with him for two days. If he still didn’t get it, and

understand that what he was doing was not in the best interest of people, he should sit for three days. And if after three days he didn't understand, he should be prepared to sit until he did understand.

Those that we can rely on are Allah Swt, the Qur'an, the Prophet Mohammed (sal), those learned scholars and knowledgeable people who have no axe to grind, and of course, the members of our *tariqah*, our *shuyukh*. To go out and look for wrongs, or crimes, or dirt on someone to bring them down, or to feel the pain of someone doing that to you, to reduce others at the cost of your faith, or to reduce yourself at the cost of your community, your good name, your parents' name, and the name of Islam is to cause you to open a pathway to hell in this world and in the next. The worst of these is to lose the respect of those who love you, and who would serve you with their lives.

One wonders why the good Christians, who are at the root of their own troubles that go on in the world today, as well as the Muslim, could go so far astray as to think that encouraging people to material success overrides encouraging them to spiritual humility. It's a big issue in the Christian church today in this country. Unfortunately, it's not so surprising to understand that Muslims are not so far behind that both in ways of materialism and in their ideological differences. What happens with this wrong thinking this wrong action, un-Christian thought, un-Muslim thought, un-Jewish thought? We have to search the garden of Islam and weed it out. We have to turn our attention back to the topics of trust, faith, submission, tolerance, and be proud of who we are and where we come from, and the choices we made and our parents made that are good ones.

We have to each one of us find what is great, wonderful, beautiful, and exciting about doing what we do, and what needs to be done in this world for others, and give ourselves to that truth. Every one of us in some ways in our lives – physical ways, emotional ways, intellectual ways, spiritual ways – needs to create some level of submission. Love is submission. Certainly, the lover and the beloved love submission. So without any doubt,

it's a very desirable quality and capability of each human being. We have to extend it into our life's work and our daily choices. You know what you need to do. Children, as they get old, know what they need to do. You have to resist the temptation of doing other. We have to really submit to Allah and say, "Okay, Allah. This is my life. You gave me my life. These are my values. You gave me these values. I'm going to live them and pass them on, *inshā'a-LLāh*." Then you excitedly develop your capacities and capabilities around that. The only thing we can be upset about is it hasn't happened fast enough. I don't have more to do. Can we not be like a fruitful tree or a bountiful field? Why not? How do you look at your own self? That's the way you look at others, *inshā'a-LLāh*.
Asalaamu aleikum.