



One Community: One Heart
Sustaining Ourselves and the Community

Allah says in a familiar *'āyat* in Surah al-Baqarah:

And thus We have made you a community of the center, that you may testify against the people, and that the Messenger may testify against you. And We did not make it a change in the direction in which you faced for prayer except to know who followed the Messenger, and who turned heel and rejected his guidance. It was a difficult test, except for those whom Allah has guided. And Allah would not permit that your faith be in vain. Truly, Allah is the Gentle and the Bestower of mercy to all people.

And in Surah an-Nahl, Allah reveals:

And on that day We shall raise up from every community of believers a witness against themselves, and We shall bring you as a witness over these people. We have sent down to you a Book, which has made everything clear, and in which is guidance and mercy and good news to those who surrender themselves. Do not be like she who breaks and completely unravels the yarn which she herself has spun and made strong, taking your oath as a means of deceit from one another, simply because one community among you is stronger than another. Allah only tests you by this, and He will certainly make clear to you on the Day of Standing about which you used to differ.

We see in a number of the verses in the Holy Qur'an, many similar things are revealed. These *'āyāt* are followed by,

If Allah had wanted to make you one nation, He would have made you one community, but He made you different so you could come to know one another.

Obviously, because we are all intelligent human beings, we know that when we think and speak of community, we speak of the middle way. The reference to the center that Allah is talking about is also reference to the heart. There is a relationship in understanding Islam and Sufism that the 'one community,' or the center Allah refers to, is an analogy between the heart and the community. There are many *āyāt* in Qur'an that tell us the importance of being aware of our self. Sometimes what happens is people think Allah creates things the way they are because we are supposed to be a passive participant in this creation. When we look closely at the Qur'an, we see we are not supposed to be passive at all, but to be very active participants. The concept of community is not one of passivity, but one of engagement.

Certainly, at these times we are facing many challenges. As we meet and talk about those challenges, it is important to realize we are talking about challenges not only of the physical community but of the heart. For us, it is important to realize that Allah Swt gave us consciousness so that we might act and make decisions with an awareness of that presence of the Divine in our daily life. When Allah says, **"We revealed the scriptures to you as an exposition of things, and a guidance and a mercy and good tidings for those who have submitted to Allah,"** that is one side of the equation. But that is followed by another statement: **"Lo, Allah enjoins**

justice and kindness, and giving to kinfolk, and forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness.” It assigns, therefore, an understanding that justice, kindness, and giving to one another are the tools we have against lewdness, abomination, wickedness, and negativity. This is the way we sustain ourselves and the community. We have to act, and we have to struggle.

When He says, **“Allah exhorts you that you might take need and fulfill the covenant that you made, and not break your oath after the assertion of that contract,”** it tells us that there is a contract, an agreement, that demands not only our action but our loyalty. Allah Swt goes on, **“When you have made Allah a surety over you, Allah knows what you do. Be not like her who unravels the thread after she has made it strong.”** Again you can see that we have created strength in our lives by our practices and by our faith, which has been revealed to me in many different ways. Just today, and over the last two days, in communications I have had with people who are traveling in our work in the Middle East, people have said to me directly that their lives were changed.

Former members of Congress said that this was one of the best trips they had ever been on in their lives. One woman said, “I’m retiring soon; I’m yours. What do you want to do with me?” And another man said, “I never believed I could have a life-changing experience, but this is “Congratulations” to your whole team.” Today, from an attorney in Roanoke, we were talking about the kindness and generosity of our sister Iman alaihe ramo. He said, “I never met anybody in the community that I didn’t feel was sincere and trust [worthy], and who tried to live their principles.” This is the kind of feedback we want to hear, of course. The point of it is Allah has made a guarantee.

Allah knows what you do, and be not like her who unravels the thread after she has made it strong.

Well, the community has been made strong. We have to be very careful not to unravel the thread, not to let it unravel. Think about that. What does it take? It is not just good ideas and good thoughts, but it takes hard work, and generosity, and sacrifice, and service, just like we give to Grandma Lora, and Iman, and Khadija, and anyone who is in need in the community, and outside of the community. I just had a conversation with someone today who was having some difficulty in a foreign country. I tried to give them good advice. Where do they turn? The community. They are talking to me, the Shaykh, but they said, "Give my salaams to everyone in the community. To your family. Thank everybody for their support." Another person from Turkey every Friday sends me a message: "Jumah Mubarak" to everybody here. Also from Homaira from Maryland always calls me on Friday. If it's strong, it doesn't always stay strong. You have to keep it strong.

My dear friends, brothers and sisters, we speak about the implications of these *āyāt*, and the implications of consciousness and self-awareness. There's a *hadith* of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) that says, ***"If my servant makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself. If he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly greater than that. If he draws near to Me with a hand, I draw near to him with an arms' length."*** We are making mention here, in an assembly. Each of us, whether or not we know it, has a personal relationship with Allah, whether we believe it or not in the moment. Eventually, we come to know, when we can't utter words anymore, when we say Allah's Name only, one of those Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names will bring us closer to Allah Swt. If we say in one sentence with sincerity, even the word "forgiveness," then you come nearer to Allah as the Forgiver. If something happens, God forbid, and someone is hurt and

you speak of compassion, then you bring compassion to that circumstance from your heart and you are nearer to Allah as Rahmat.

Just by mentioning the Names of Allah Swt—al-Ghaffur, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahīm, as-Salām, etc., we come nearer and near to Allah. Indeed, Allah tells us that He is as near to us as our jugular vein, our own heartbeat, our own blood. That is a purification. If it were not so, and Allah were so far away from us on this journey to Him, and it seemed too great for us to travel, or if we felt that Allah was so far away on the journey that compassion, mercy, peace, love, or submission wasn't available, then we have to come to another understanding. We have to understand that, like those who are traveling, you may fly to one place but then take a bullock cart to the hotel. It takes longer to take the bullock cart than the flight, if the hotel is 20 miles away. It might take you 20 hours to get there in a bullock cart at 1 mile an hour, where it took you less than 20 hours to make your flight. If you have to carry heavy baggage, it makes it even more difficult.

We have to realize that we are all traveling, and we need to keep traveling in the best way of traveling, and we have to travel light, not bringing a lot of baggage with us. There are many things in our minds and hearts that slow us down. If we feel it is such a long distance and a difficult journey, we have to take stock of ourselves and listen to what Allah Swt says, and told us about being part of His *ummah*. We have to listen to the guidance from the Prophet (sal) to understand about the *sayr ul suluk*, this journey. We have to look at ourselves and say, "I could walk there faster, or I could hitch a ride on a truck and get to the hotel; unfortunately, I brought all this baggage with me, so I have to hire a bullock cart. I can't carry it on my back, and the taxi is too small."

Maybe we need to lighten up on some of our baggage. I don't know about you, but I always over pack. I don't know how many times I've traveled out of the country, and [ended up] looking at the closet full of clothes. Every day I'm wearing the same one or two pairs of pants. Even when we went to Myrtle Beach, I only took 2 jackets 3 pairs of pants, and I still only wore two pairs of the pants. At least I cut it down to three. I had five shirts with me, and I only wore two. We washed them every day, and that was it. Don't over pack! I used to love traveling with Musa, who never over packed. He wore the same stuff over and over again. We 'd go for six weeks, and he'd have three shirts, two jackets, two pairs of pants. That was it. And special underwear you could wash out and it would dry overnight.

When I think about all this, I think it is because in many ways we are indecisive. We don't know what to pack, so we pack too much. We have to take stock of ourselves and realize what we really need, and close the store up. Close it down for inventory, if nothing else. I went to town the other day, needing a couple of pairs of pants because I've been shrinking. I have so much in my closet. Anyway, I got sucked into buying three sport jackets. I bought one, because you get two for free. There's a deal! Except if you knew what the price of the one was. I did that, but I took them all back. I figure out I could pay a tailor a third of the price to re-tailor the jackets I already have than to go buy new ones. What do I need? At my age, I should be getting rid of everything. There it is: you always have to take stock of yourself and look at the stock you have.

We have to readjust our thinking, our energy, and our emotions. What is our mind thinking? What am I in possession of? What am I not in possession of? What is possessing me? If we feel there is any value in life, and that life is a gift from Allah Swt, then we have to ask ourselves, "What am I doing with this gift? How am I spending my time, especially the time between prayer, sitting, and salat?" And be

grateful for what we have. And grateful for what has been offered and what has been given to us, and not regret. I got a letter yesterday: the lake house is being sold.

Alhamdulillah-Llāh. Thank you very much to our sister who gave us so much time there, and celebrations there, Fourth of July, and a peaceful place to go to write. I'll miss that, sure. But *alhamdulillah-Llāh* for the time it was given, and the generosity and the sweetness. I talked with the lawyer today, and I already told you what he said about all of you. I said, "Do you want an inventory?" He said, "If I didn't trust you, believe me, it would be a different process. Take what is yours, and give me the keys."

Alhamdulillah-Llāh.

If we examine ourselves and find that we are speaking nonsense most of the time, perhaps going out and spending too much money on sport jackets or whatever, step back from it all and say, "What is the conversation I really want to have? What is the need I really have?" It doesn't mean we have to change our whole world, or have brilliant things come out of our mouths every time we open them. Most of us don't say brilliant things every time we open our mouths, including me. What we want to say is what is good and what is beneficial. We have to ask ourselves, what are we doing with this gift from Allah Swt, this gift of life and knowledge, this gift of this path, this community—and take inventory, *muhasabat*. Then if we have too much, give it away.

Depending on what you give away and who you are giving it to is very important, too. Give things that are useful to people who need them. You don't go give a Cadillac car to a homeless person on the street who needs food, either, just to feel good that you gave things. Remember my story from years ago when I was in India. I saw this brother and sister sitting on the street, eating paper off the street. They weren't even begging. So I reached in my pocket and gave them a few paisa, worth nothing. Maybe a portion of a cent in dollars. Then I walked off. I remembered that

the night before, when I was taken into a Hindu temple, and because they wanted a donation, I gave them ten dollars. But I give the starving kids paisa. This was when I was a yogi, 40 some years ago. I turned around and went back, and I gave them more money. What kind of craziness is this?

Because someone has a good setup and organization, they catch you when you come in and when you go out, but these kids weren't even the usual beggars that were on the street. They might have been. They might have been just taking a lunch break, eating paper. Then I had to say to myself, if I give them too much, they could get in trouble. Whoever is controlling them might beat them or something. You have to be very careful what you do. What do we give to ourselves? Look around our inventory here. Think about what we need, and what has to be done, and how we are all going to take responsibility. Is it too late? Are we too old? Is it too late to strengthen the yarn to make sure it stays strong? Are we attached to old ideas, old situations, old fears, old doubts, old hopes? If we don't do anything with them, if we don't plant the seeds and keep them watered, at the right time of year, under the right circumstances...

Mustafa learned a lot this year from the garden. He also knows that we have to help. He can't do it all himself. You like the food from the garden? I'm missing the dried tomatoes already. I have them every day; and they are gone. We all have to help, all of us. What you get from that is the kind of praise we got from those former members of Congress, from the lady who works for the Library of Congress, from the lady who works for the Corporation for Public and National Service, from the lawyer, from other people. That's the blessing, that people see the connection. It's all part of growing, I understand. It's also about staying alive, but we have to choose how we spend our days and nights. We are responsible for every choice we may, and how we are going to live.

When we make a mistake, Allah is All-Forgiving. Allah forgave Hazrat Adam. He gave him and Hawa one instruction: stay away from that tree—that's all. And they break that one instruction. He forgives them, but they are cast down to earth. Now they are not immortal. Now they have all the problems. Now they have to make all these decisions. That starts a whole process which I will talk about here and in Charlottesville. Very important mystical things which are taking place inside of us, in our Adamic self. When we come to the end of our temporary stay in this world before we move on to the next terminal and check our baggage, we have the opportunity to look back. When we do, we find out whether we learned the real lesson or did not.

Once there was a king who went out hunting in the desert with a party of men. He became separated from them, and was riding alone. He came across Bedouin tents. Searching for water, he entered the tent and announced himself. An old woman came out of the tent and said, "What can I do for you?" He said, "Can you get me a glass of water? I am thirsty." She said, "This is the middle of the desert. It is not easy to find a glass of water." The man replied, "I am the king!" She said, "You may be the king of all Arabia, but you are not the king of this tent." She brought out a glass of water and held it up to the king and said, "What will you give me for this glass of water?" Before she had a chance to finish the sentence, he reached for a bag of gold. Before he could pour it out, she said, "I don't want your gold." He said, "What is it you want?" She asked, "How long have you been king?" "Forty years," he replied. "I will take forty years," she said.

He asked, "Do you want the forty years that have already happened, or the forty years that might come?" She replied, "I will take the forty years that have

passed.” He looked back over those forty years, and realized they were all encapsulated in the very second he was facing that woman. He reasoned that she was asking for nothing in exchange for the water. He said, “Okay. You can have those forty years.” And she gave him the water and said, “If you don’t have the faith in Allah, and if you don’t treat people with respect, the next forty years will be the same as those which have just passed in one second.” When he finished the water, he turned toward his horse and got on it. When he turned to bid farewell, the tent, the woman, and everything else had disappeared. He concluded that it had all been a dream... but he realized that he was no longer thirsty.

No matter how old we are, seven or seventy, somewhere on either side of it, we can see that we had joys and pains, happiness and unhappiness, and we see that all of this is contained in one second. We are just sitting here thinking about it, and listening to this *khutbah*. If we didn’t have faith in Allah, if we didn’t repeat His Name, if we don’t try to live and repent when we look back at our lives, it will be just the blink of an eye; just a quick second and it will all be gone. That’s the way it will be for those who have no path, and for those who have left this path, and for those who have never found this path.

You have invested your life in this path and in this community. You have both pleasant and unpleasant memories. You have had difficulties and challenges. But you will know just by your association with this *tariqah*, and with each other, that you have not wasted your life. You have left good impressions in the hearts of many, many people. The Sufis want to remember these things more than anything. We want to associate with everything that reminds us of the Names of Allah Swt, the beauty of Allah, the truth of Allah, the tests of Allah. We even want to remember our

failings. We want to be taught from everyone, and to be able to take from everyone what is good, and give them from us what is good.

We want to be servants of everyone, because we are servants of Allah. Everyone can teach us something, even the homeless person living in the street. I hope, *inshā'a-Llāh*, we remember that, especially in these days when we have so much turmoil in the world, when there is so much difficulty, when the name of Islam is so tarnished by people who call themselves Muslims, when the Christians are making fun of the Muslims, when the Jews in Israel are thinking about bombing Iran, when the Iranians are under such oppression, when the Afghanis are killing one another. When are we going to remember what the truth of this all is? *Bismi-Llāh, inshā'a-Llāh*, we will try to remember to remember. *Asalaamu aleikum*.