



[The Truth that is Islam](#)

Asalaam aleikum rahmatullahe hu wa barakatu. The Eid falls on a Friday, so we give two *khutbahs* today, *alhamdulillah-Llāh*. There is always the opportunity to remember before we begin to forget.

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

O you people, surely, We have created you from a man and woman, and made you people and tribes so that you might come to know one another. Truly, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most conscious of Allah, warding off evil from within and without. Allah is Knowing and Aware.

The subject again comes of the community of believers. As we prepare for the 'Eid Qurban, 'Eid al Adha, we then spoke about the theme of the sacrifice and the model of Ibrahim (als), we have to think about the reality around that. We have to look very realistically at the world we live in today and the kind of sacrifices that people are making consciously and unconsciously, purposefully and apparently without any purpose. Allah knows best.

We can look over the events of the year, which is a good thing to do at this time of the year. At the end of this month, we come close to the new year, which is at the beginning of Muharram. There are many special events that come in the months that follow. It is also very auspicious that at this time of the season of fall, we, for us,

in the cycle of time, there is a repairing to the infinite. The inner aspect of life all around us rests and tests us to see how important life and growth is and has been. We have to think about the sacrifices that have been made. The leaves hold fast to the branches, almost competing for longevity, and in that, also reflecting the *ihسان*, the beauty, the *hasana* of life as it changes and awes us with its temporality— its color, all too quickly passing. I have been looking and speaking the last few days in Washington about the movement of Islam and democracy in the world today, and about balance and harmony and mutual benefit. At the same time, we are seeing the people of Islam in Mecca moving toward the Ka'ba, moving back and forth from Mecca to Medina, moving as one body, one people; but reality tells us that we are not acting as one body.

We are not acting as one people. What we don't see is the diverse characters and personalities, and the arrogance of some of them, and the piety and generosity and submission of others. Just today we received the news of a bomb going off in Kabul, killing over 40 people during the Eid prayers. From these people, aside from the fact that we know that they will spend eternity in hell, *inshā'a-llāh*, we see very clearly that everything is tainted in the world today. Moving as one, of course, should be everyone, but in reality we must hope and be satisfied with the majority. The potential to understand the inner principles of mutual benefit, and gratitude, and love for one another, [we] pray that this becomes a dominant force for good and motivates people, inwardly and outwardly. Nothing could be more shameful than performing these acts that people have done in the name of Islam. But really, there is no way to even understand such ignorance and stupidity, other than to know that ignorance and stupidity creates such things.

So we have to recommit ourselves to education, and to the values that we hopefully hold dear. We know in our hearts, and we know in our minds, and we know through

Qur'an, and we know through the *sīrah* of Nebi Mohammed (sal), and we know by the good people of the *shuyukh* that there are such good values and such good lives. We should remember that this killing of Muslims upon Muslims did not start 100 years ago, or even 200 years ago, unfortunately. It started over 1400 years ago, within 34 years of the Prophet (als). It is a travesty, carried on by the Omayyids and the *muawiyya* and *yazid*. Remembering that even Aisha (ar) went to battle against Sidni Ali (ra) who, because she was duped into it and deceived into it by a false letter. After all these people were in battle, they met and they understood that it was all a deception and they forgave each other. But so many people had died in the interim. This deception was carried on again and again and again.

Sidna Omar (ra) before that, though a pious man, unfortunately, had sent his relatives to rule in Egypt. People were squeezed out of their wealth for the public coffer; whereas, at one time, everything was distributed equally. It changed. You see the corporatization of Islam as we see the corporatization of Democracy. This is nothing new, unfortunately. You saw it between other tribes and other peoples, in dispersions throughout the world. We should know that Islam should be a real calling to cultural and spiritual renewal. Yet we see these splintered factions of individuals, Muslims. We see around us a fragmented world of Muslims and non-Muslims, and the prospect of such a miserable, humiliating future for such a beautiful *dīn*. It causes angst in us.

Here we have the *dīn* that has surpassed all others in its capacity for toleration and proven it, and surpassed all others for understanding and decency. Yet when we look at Islam over the past 100 years in this world, and especially in the last ten, fifteen years, we see a greater and greater radicalization. We see more and more failure of the traditional institutions, and the older movements. The states that call themselves Islamic states are questionable in every way that they act and towards

their own people. If we convert the catastrophes that sometimes seem to be manifest, even played out during the Hajj and in Mecca over the past 20 years, not just fires, but radicals taking over, and people crushed to death, and acts of violence during that period of time, they are all signs. They are not only signs of the state of the religion, but they are sign from Allah about human beings. Our concern should be about the well-being of the Hajjis, but also seeking prayers for the people on Hajj who are praying for those who have not been able to go. We have to ask ourselves how it is as we can look around the world (over the past 100 years or so), and have found people who don't represent Islamic values and principles. They have so much of a voice asking why there is an emptiness of Muslims in their brotherhood and sisterhood. We have billions of people that we have failed over decades and decades to bring the essence of Islam to much of the public eye. Then you can look other places. You can look at the so-called poor Christian countries, in Africa, for example. And you can see what is happening in Israel, the "Jewish" state. This is not unique to Islam.

We have to take these moments in Islam as Muslims—the 'Eid, the Ramadan fast, the Hajj, the Muharram, the Miraj—these moments that are given to us every year, these rhythmic moments in every year like the seasons, and stop and ask ourselves questions, over and over again. [We have to] commit ourselves over and over again to bring spirituality back to Islam, and present Islam in the proper way in the world we live in today. If it is possible to prosper in this revival of Islamic thought, the world has to be made to see, and we have to see that there is crisis around us, and we have to respond to that crisis. Our resources: our mental, emotional, intellectual, spiritual resources have to be sufficient to meet the contemporary challenges and that can only come about with practice and focus.

The media challenges. Do you ever wonder, as I do, what do people from other parts of the world, especially Muslim majority nations, think when they see American Reality TV? Have you ever thought about that? The “Honey Boobos,” the costuming on “Dancing with the Stars,” or the lack thereof; the depiction of terrorists on “Homeland,” or countless other inane and materialistic programs. Now they share some, if not many, of these distortions of human potential, albeit truthful representations of elements in society. “Honey Booboo” is reality, unfortunately; so is “Swamp Man,” and “Wives of Miami,” (something like that). They now see all over the world, unfortunately, truthful representations of elements of the population.

The challenges of the drug culture, alcoholism, violence against women, violence against minorities, and rampant corruption is nothing new. It began under the representative of the Khulafa Rashadin, unfortunately, and continued to grow with the Omayyids, and others that came after them. The oppression of women in regards to education and freedom, political power—none of this is new. It is just another flavor of bubble gum. That is all it is, a bunch of bubbles that have no purpose, except self-pleasure. The challenges of illnesses, viruses, and bacteria not being stopped by the medicines today, because of the narrow-minded view of the medical community, or lack of funding for boutique diseases, people starving, people dying, people being oppressed—there should not be one day in our life that we don’t think about these people and these things. Not one day.

We can think about Paradise, but we better realize that we are not living in Jannah, and hopefully not in the *jahaliya* either. The response that we have to have has to be grounded in an act of active *muhasabat*. As I spoke about today, there is the personal *muhasabat* and there is the collective *muhasabat*—collective self-examination in terms of transcending some ideological neo-pseudo Islamic thought, which the revivalists around us would have us believe is the purity of Islam.

Somewhere back a thousand years, at least. We do not want to just return to just classic, indigenous Muslim attitudes and dialectics of the past. We need to go forward, [away from] the disease that we are exposed to today, which some of us (not all of us, I hope, Inshallah) have, but some of those who call themselves Muslims certainly are infected with. We have discussed this term *muslim*, too, versus *mu'min*.

We should have deep in our hearts and our minds who we are and what we can be. There are some people who are carriers of this disease among us. Either they have to be cured or they have to be isolated; otherwise, the epidemic spreads. We don't isolate them out of anger. We don't want to isolate them because we fear them, either. We want to isolate them out of prudence. The only way to isolate such people who do not understand is to create understanding in their hearts and minds. If we can't [create understanding in] their hearts and minds, then [create that understanding in the hearts and minds of others, so that they can reject their ignorance and stupidity. So when they meet these people, they can say, "These people are not representing Islam. These people are not of me. Nor am I of them." The symptoms of these diseases, if we really look at them, show the crisis in the world today.

The only authentic Islamic interpretation is that Allah is present, and the Truth is one, and the Qur'an is applicable in good ways that support our *fitra*. Allah alone knows the truth, and we should strive to be of Allah and for Allah. We should ask, when we see this disease, "Is Allah (swt) present or is Allah apparently absent from these people?" Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their own self. I don't know anyone who does not quote this quote. The question is who understands it? It seems that many people do not intelligently grasp the simple principle. It is assumed that the sacred text, the Qur'an, is doing

nothing more than enjoining individuals to some kind of moral reform as a pre-condition for society to have collective success. But I don't think it is necessarily the truth. I think it is very dangerous to measure moral reform against the yardstick of *fikr*, without concerning ourselves whether the virtues that have been gained have been acquired through conformity, or whether they have proceeded spontaneously with an alignment with one's soul.

Is there a genuine change of heart and soul in individuals, or is it just some sort of conformity? Is it some kind of political expediency? When we look around the world and the Islamic world, we see a lot of conformity, but who grasps the truth? Have the heart and the soul been re-aligned? Spiritual change is necessary, and it is taking us through a transformation of *nafs*, not just a moral change, not an attitudinal change only, a total change out of which a good life comes about, a moral and ethical life comes about. More and more we see religion—whether it is Islam, or Christianity, or Judaism, or other religions—being forced on people to conform to certain ideas and rules, and ways without demanding of ourselves to teach, or those who teach us to show us the essence of that teaching, the real meaning.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) never tired of reminding people that there was little value in just outer conformity to rules, unless the outer conformity is mirrored, unless it engenders, unless it creates an authentic truth or righteous disposition in the heart. No one shall enter the garden except by his works, we are told, as it is expressed. What does that mean in the modern, revivalist Islam? We have to avoid this word 'fundamentalism,' because, though it is a good word, it has become a bad word. [It has come to mean] where people are fixated either on the length of your *abaya* or your *jellabah*, or how much your hair is showing or not hair showing, whether you have nail polish on when you pray or you don't. These are really critical things!

They are meaningful to the person they have meaning to, but they are meaningless to the person who does not understand. Women walking around in black shrouds with metal things over their noses, gloves on their hands, looking out from behind their bandito eyes – this has no basis in Islam. I am sorry, my friends, it has no basis in Islam. It is pre-Islamic. What was the purpose? If the purpose is modesty, then let us all respect the women, and there will be modesty. If the purpose is to disappear, then disappear; don't draw attention to yourself by your presence. What is the purpose? Is it to protect someone? How do you protect them? Do you think nobody knows what is underneath that black shroud? Maybe that is the same as holding a pill between your knees to prevent getting pregnant—ignorant people.

You can't just live a complex set of rules. You can find the complexity of those rules in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam very easily. Have you ever seen the rules in Hinduism? We have to believe that Allah (swt) wants us to be restored in our hearts and our minds, and to work hard. We have to find His Grace and His mercy and His compassion, and to find purity and balance and harmony. That is what we are here for. The rules and guidelines are there to guide us to be balanced and harmonious.

Have you not seen how God coins a likeness, a goodly word, like a goodly tree, a root set firm, its branch in the heaven that brings forth its fruit every time by the leave of its Lord. Thus, does Allah coin likeness for man that perhaps he may reflect. And the likeness of an evil word is the like of an evil tree that hath been torn up by the roots upon the earth, possessed of no stability.

What is this Truth, this goodness, this kindness? According to scholars, to the reference of *kalima* of faith and unfaith, the former is illustrated as a natural growth,

whose moral and intellectual achievements is nourished by firm roots, which in turn denotes the basis of faith, the quality of proof that one receives from certainty, and awareness, and the presence of Allah (swt). How Qur'an applies to the reality of our day to day existence is most important, because only then are we rooted in some kind of reality—not a historical reality, not just a theoretical reality, but a moment to moment reality. People walking across this country or that country or some country, protesting and insisting that people act in a certain way is never going to happen. It can only happen from the inside out, not from the outside.

The fruits are yielded from the tree which is grounded. It is not just knowledge that comes through us, but the knowledge that comes through the grace of Allah. The alternative life is one of disbelief. Disbelief in this case means not grounded in reality, just in fantasy. "Everything is going to be fine. Don't worry everything is going to be fine. Everything is great. Don't even vote. Don't bother to vote. It is all in Allah's hands." That is as foolish as the crazies, because we are supposed to tether our camel. We are supposed to act out our responsibilities.

We have to have knowledge, not just faith. We have to have knowledge, and understanding, and commitment, and perseverance, and then and only then can we begin to hope that truth will stand out from the untruth. Then we can hope to get the truth out of all the *hadith* and the Qur'an. There are the stories about people – many, many stories that come from Qur'an and our guides. But we have to understand that faith is not fragile, and faith is not weak, and there is no burnout in faith. What attracts young people to activism, and what attracts people to what is the essence of Islam has to be a sense of duty and responsibility. Why do you care about people who are starving? Why do you care about helping the people where a hurricane has just passed, or a tsunami? Why do you care about the health of more

than someone you have heard about? Why do you care? Why do you care what people think about you or others or Islam?

The answer can only be because Allah put that care inside of us. Then you have to ask yourself, "Why do I care? Why is that alive in me? How can I make it more alive?" There has to be a sense of piety, but we also have a joyful outlook in life. We should seek not only our own contentment and fulfillment, but the contentment of others, probably before our own. We should have a deep love and affection for all people, especially our brothers and sisters in Islam. Not *tawbah* made out of insecurity and fear, but *tawbah* made out of piety and respect, like the Prophet (peace be upon him). We should repent, as he did. We should nourish ourselves so that we can help others.

As for the activist part of ourselves, [there is plenty to do]. Each one of us has an activist part in us. It gets more buried as we get older, and sometimes [becomes] a little more selfish as it applies to our life. Except people who are a bit crazy like we are, who reach out beyond ourselves, that activism inside of ourselves, tells us that there is plenty to do. There is plenty to do. So let us try to have a sound heart. In a famous *hadith*, the Prophet (sal) said,

Verily, inside this body is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the body is all sound and if it is corrupt, the body is corrupt. Verily, this is the heart.

So let us try and have a sound heart and follow the teachings. Really trust in Allah. Do what is right and do what is good. Build on what has been done. Give of yourself. Make things your own. That was my hope for the work that we do. That was my hope for this community. I don't want to spend much time wondering whether I will

be fulfilled or not. I just want to keep hoping and praying that it will be, *inshā'a-Llāh. Asalaam aleikum.*