

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[The Message and the Messenger of Islam](#)

Allah also revealed in the Qur'an the famous 'āyat:

**Surely, We created you man and woman, and made you peoples and tribes that you may 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. Allah is Knowing and Wise.**

You may remember a story related to Sidna Umar (ra):

*One day we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah. A man came who had white clothes and hair that was black. There were no signs of travel on him. He came up and sat down right next to the Prophet (sal), resting his knees against him, placing the palms of his hands on his thighs. The man said, "O Mohammed, tell me about Islam." And the Messenger said, "Islam is to testify that there is no God except Allah, and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah, and to perform the prayers, and pay zakat, and fast in Ramadan, and make pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do that." He said, "You have spoken rightly." And people around him were amazed that he had asked the Messenger and then said that he was right.*

*Then the man said, "Tell me about iman." And the Messenger said, "Iman is to believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in the Divine destiny of good and evil." He said, "Tell me about ihsan." And the Messenger said, "To worship Allah as*

***if you are seeing Him, and if you are not seeing Him, know that He is seeing you.” The visitor said, “Tell me about the Hour.” And the Messenger said, “The one questioned about it knows not better than the questioner.” The man said, “Then tell me about the signs.” The Prophet said, “That the slave girl will give birth to her mistress, and that you will see the barefoot, naked, destitute earth men competing in constructing lofty buildings.” Then the visitor took himself off, and I stayed for a time. Then the Prophet said, “O Umar, did you not know who that was?” And I said, “Allah and the Messenger know best.” And he said, “That was Jibreel, who came to teach you religion.”***

I'm not going to draw on the fact of near-naked men building high skyscrapers in New York in the summer time. But the point is we need to talk about these prophets and their messages. The real question of these messages is, are the prophets perfect? Are the messages perfect? And why do they succeed? The Prophet Mohammed (sal) was sent as a blessing to all humankind, and the guidance he brought was a message not for just one period of history, obviously, but for every day of our lives. Though people are wont to put this only in an historical framework and try to keep it there, it is really beyond history, and a message that is endless. But it is a message that has to be received, and it's a message especially meaningful to us in the days we live in, when we see so many contradictions and hypocrisy in society.

You may note that this reality of global warming is still being denied by people. We live in a very strange time. Yet we have to go back to the core of the message and the Messenger. We find out from the Prophet Mohammed that the message was one of peace and contentment. It was an invitation to people to find a different kind of power and wealth, satisfaction and contentment; another kind of understanding, of

the *fadl* / bounty and benefit that was bestowed upon them by Allah; an invitation for people to gain knowledge, and to try to pursue the good life, *hayati tayyibah*.

Inherent in the questions Jibreel (as) asked the Prophet (sal) was the subject of *at-tazkiyat* / purification, and of fulfillment and contentment. It was a message that, as all these messages were, removed distinctions between people of different races, economic differences, creeds, color, and gender; a message that gave us the opportunity to bring humanity some sense of equity and equality. We know from those who came before us, and from some experiences in our own lives, that things like time, space, wealth, and power have different faces to them. The barriers between time and space, between change, ignorance, and knowledge can be broken down or breached. All the groups of human beings, creations of Allah, are equal in the sight of Allah Swt.

In fact, I think we would find from an Islamic point of view that there are some very significant distinctions between the messages, as they were presented in the Torah and Injil, and the way they are presented in the Qur'an. And there is a difference in the attitude of the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and previous messengers – at least the way they are perceived. Allah Swt has no hesitation in creating or maintaining balance; it's we who have that hesitation. It's we who have the inability to affirm a quality. It's we who don't cherish equity in human life. It's we who are charged with bringing peace and understanding to the world and other people's lives, and to measure happiness and contentment not by the amount of money we have, or the size of the home we have, or by the possessions we have, or by the fact that there are things we would rather have, or in another way. It's not that.

It's the message that challenges us to be honest and mature, adult human beings. If we accept it and embrace it and meet it, it gives us the ability to live it and to

transfer it to our children and to others. It is a message that contentment is based on spirituality and affirmation of the *tariqah*, of the path, of the way of Tasawwuf. Until we taste real submission, and embrace the essence of *taslim*, we won't feel really secure and strong in the message. Until we embrace Islam in such a way that we become submitted and understand what is *qadr*/destiny, our *taqdir*, and what is the will of Allah Swt, what is the *tadbir* of Allah Swt, we will not find contentment. We will be wanderers over this earth, from place to place, person to person, business to business, job to job, attitude to attitude, always changing attitudes. We are not going to really be seeking contentment with those we are destined to be with in our work, our home life, in our families, and in our spiritual life. We are going to constantly be seeking things of the outer world, saying, "I wish things could be different. I wish this or that could change."

Certainly, that is part of human life to have those concerns and those wishes. But if we don't take responsibility for our own place, our own actions, and our own thoughts, our own time and place, then who will? To do that, we have to understand what the real answers are behind the questions we are asked by the Archangel Jibreel to the Prophet Mohammed (sal) in such an intimate way. And why is the Prophet Mohammed (sal) a model? You have to look at how he treated people, and how he was mistreated; how he endured the loss of his children, and the separation from the Sahabah; how he lived and made just decisions as the leader of a family, a community, and a nation.

Until we really look at that with an open mind, not with prejudice and preference, or criticism, we are not going to understand why he was called al-Amin. We are not going to understand what it means to live in the Light of the Prophet, the Nuri Mohammed within our own self. We are not going to understand what it means to be patient and tolerant. We are not going to understand what it means to fulfill our

duties and responsibilities properly, or the Dīn of Islam, or the essence of *taslim* (safety and security), or to trust in it fully, and embrace it fully, like we embrace our families and our children and our beloved ones. At least, we should make the effort to make the *niyyat*. At least, we should have that intention not to accept anything but consistency and effort, striving for success in our spiritual life. These are standards by which a Muslim, a human being, should live. These make a human being humane, whether they are Christian, Jew, Muslim or whatever they may call themselves. Allah Swt made these many tribes so that we can come together in love. It's not the message we see on the television set. It's not the message we see in the media. All we see is the effort to use negativity to win. It's because we are in a political season that we use that analogy, but nonetheless it happens every day.

This message is brought again and again to us, and it will be continued to be brought to us. Allah says, **"If you don't live by it, from among you I will raise another people."** Not another person. Not from outside of you. We have to have confidence not to fear to speak out about what is inequitable, and improper, and wrong. We have to have the courage in our community to rectify our ills and to reaffirm our spirit. We have to have the courage to stand up to the dishonest people and the hypocrites, who you might meet on Tuesday or before, who have been sent to disrupt, lie, and imply. These are wonderful opportunities. If we don't have confidence in Allah Swt, we won't have confidence in our self. We shouldn't be negotiating with Allah out of fear or trepidation.

There are duties and responsibilities we have to one another as brothers, sisters, and community members; husbands, wives, parents, children, and neighbors to be respectful, to listen, not to be aggressive or defensive, but to be patient and to listen. Maybe the first question one should always ask is: What's the motive? Why is the Shaykh saying this to me? Why is my mother or father saying this to me? Why am I

saying this to my brother or sister, auntie or uncle? What is the motive? What is the motive Allah Swt had in revealing these messages through all these messengers? What's the real motive? Something controlling? Something demeaning? Something disrespectful? Or something concerned and loving? Something filled with that loving concern for a reason?

If you are not fulfilled, if you let even one day, let alone a week or more go past without addressing our responsibilities, our capacities, and what is needed, then we develop the inability to speak and to think, and the unwillingness to confront and point out the issues and encourage change, and insist on change. If you worry about things that don't matter, you are certainly not going to concern yourself about things that do. I think we should concern ourselves with our own conscience, about our own commitments. Each of us has a long way to go on that, I'm sure; but we should all make the effort at least.

Allah Swt tells us that because He created us with equality, and with a sense of justice and equity, we have this responsibility to one another. With that responsibility, you don't have to compel anything if you understand it. There's no need for compulsion. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said that if he didn't feel the responsibility to the Qureysh even as a child, he would not have brought them together to lift the stone into the Ka'ba. He would not have brought them together with a message. He certainly would not have brought together people from different races, cultures, and languages, from diverse geographic areas, if he didn't trust in the message, that the message would be meaningful to all people. I think it's our responsibility to continue that effort to bring people together, to spread a good message, to understand that there's hope in the world and you can fulfill it.

We are working right now in our work, with Abdun Nasr's class, and Asiye, and here, to spread that message in a simple way. I think we have found some good ways to do that, that young people will respond to, because young people are participating in the process. We have a responsibility here in the community to keep our hope, and to fulfill our hopes and dreams. We shouldn't tolerate things that bring rancor into the heart, or feelings of emptiness or loss. And we shouldn't tolerate – you've heard me say many times – the 800 pound gorilla or elephant in the room that's never talked about, which often is our own personal efforts and commitments, our own cleansing of our self.

That's where we have to begin every day. That's real *dawa*, to bring your children, your husbands, your wives, your friends. Come to our community and see our community—even the ones who live here, see our community. The message of it in our work is equity and fairness, good *adab*, hospitality and love, and hope and affirmation for good things for people in the world, in very, very specific, well-trained, well-experienced ways. It's an important message—and it's a message. I began by talking about messages and messengers. None of us are prophets. But everyone who carries the message is carrying the prophecy to some degree.

We look at the news and see misery, greed, selfishness, self-aggrandizement, and lack of concern for other human beings. Elements of that can exist in our own homes. We, in this community, are so unique in how we treat one another. You cannot sit back on your laurels, and you cannot turn your back on it. There are many different groups, classes, and nations of human beings in the sight of Allah Swt. He has no problem regarding them as equal (if I want to anthropomorphize Allah, which I don't.) If you understand the way the system operates, you understand that by affirming equity and equality, it becomes a reality. You understand that good

intentions create good actions, as the Prophet (sal) said. How many times a day do we try it out? How many times a day is it tested?

Allah Swt may be All-Knowing and All-Aware, but not in the cognitive sense that we relate to, but Present. We have a responsibility to keep the playing field playable. We have a responsibility for life to exist in a good way in this world, for people to be able to have a meaningful life. That's our responsibility, given to us by Allah Swt. It doesn't mean growing the religion of Islam. It means living what Islam truly is, helping to create safety and security and peace, love and understanding; fostering appreciation; understanding one another; gathering together for good things, and good actions. I don't know if you have noticed, but every few days there is dust on the floor, balls of hair in the corners, and cobwebs, and dishes lying around, and not everybody takes their responsibility. Some people dump the dishes in the sink, and others wash them. Some people have eyes but they don't see.

We all have housecleaning to do: literally, symbolically, personally, inter-personally, communally. We have good opportunities to do that periodically—during the month of Ramadan, and the months that precede Ramadan, during this month of Dhul Hajj. But in reality, those are sort of exclamation points for things we should be doing every day. If it's true, in the message:

**Lo, Allah has removed from you the arrogance of the days of ignorance when people boasted of ancestral glories. Man is either an Allah-conscious believer, or an unfortunate sinner. All people are the children of Adam, and Adam was created out of dust.**

Or as the holy Prophet (sal) said, ***“He is not of us who proclaims tribal partnerships; and he is not of us who fights and dies in tribal partnerships.”*** He

may be talking about literal tribes, but there are a lot of tribes in the world today. There is the Republican tribe, and the Democrat tribe, the birther tribe, the Tea Party tribe, the diatribe... When asked to describe what he meant by tribal partnerships, the Prophet said, ***"It means helping your own people in an unjust cause."*** You can see how this is violated. You can extrapolate from this the lesson for today. When we bring new children into this world, we have to re-affirm to ourselves what this world is all about, to have a new member. We have students and friends who right now are growing another one, waiting for the spring to come. The question has to be, are you just dumping another human being into this world? What should they become, and how do you guarantee that? You know you can't guarantee that. But you should certainly try to build a foundation for it.

If our children don't know good *adab*, if they don't know the value of knowledge, if they don't know the value of equity; if they don't know the value of their family and their community, then what do they value? Popularity? It's fleeting. Recognition? It's fleeting. It's not bad. How do you use it? What good will you do with it? How will it humble you? When we contrast what we see on tv and the supposed 'reality shows,' and the reality show of the political world we are living in right now, with familial love and caring, with *tariqah*, with brotherhood and sisterhood, with concern, with the opportunity to pray for another human being, is there any comparison?

Yet we get distracted. No matter how rich or how poor, or how high or low a person's status is, he or she has to be able to be accorded respect, even if it's just [saying,] *"asalaamu aleikum"* from the heart. No matter how educated or uneducated, how simple or complex, we all deserve the respect of one another. No special allowance should be shown to those who have wealth, or power, or knowledge, or lack of knowledge, unless the person is so totally incapable, mentally

or emotionally unstable, or aggressive, that the attention has to be to create balance. There is nothing better than reminding ourselves of these things, and then asking ourselves, how well am I doing? How well am I practicing?

O Allah, we pray for those who are ill, those who have passed, and those who are in need. We pray for those who are displaced from their homes, who are living in fear, with their children crying in the streets. We pray Allah that no sickness descends upon them from the terrible pollutants from the water they walk in, that is in their homes, and from the disease of ignorance. Allah, if it's not too late, give us the way to change. And if it is too late Allah, then pity us and have mercy upon us. Allah Swt, as wars come to an end, and as people's lives turned upside down begin to heal and return to some form of normalcy, help us to learn the lessons of these, to get the true knowledge, the true lesson, in all of this. After all, life is one of *tarbiya*, education. Help us, in our remembrance of all of these things, to be humble and grateful for what you have provided for us here. Give us a better way to make it understood and known and appreciated within our community, among our children and our families, and from those outside. *Amin.*