

May 22, 2009

Khutbah

Title: [The Leadership of the Follower](#)

DVD title: The Leadership of the Follower of Allah Swt
Should manifest Belief, Good Deeds and Taqwa

Opening duas. My dear brothers and sisters, esteemed Dr. Hassouna and others who have gathered here today, children, today we want to talk a little about the qualities of leadership in Islam. I don't mean the leader of some nation or country, but the leadership in each one of us. Allah Swt revealed in Qur'an in Sūratu-l-Anfal,

O you who believe! Do not betray Allah or the Messenger, and do not betray your trust knowingly. (8:27)

In Sūratu-l-Ambiyā, He says to us:

And We made the leaders to guide people in accordance with Our orders, and revealed to them the doing of good deeds and the establishment of *salat* and the giving of the *zakat*, and they were Our worshipers. (21:73)

Here we have two intentions for the khutbah today: to talk about belief and good deeds. These are the qualities of leadership that we will look at. We live in a very volatile and confusing world, one which many of us get frustrated here about at times. We have to remember that what often frustrates us is the lack of or false kind of leadership we find in the world today. I don't mean just in the Western world, the Obamas, the Bushes, or just

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the political leadership in this country. All over the world we find a lack of leadership and understanding of what it means to be a leader. That is also not to discount the fact that most people claim themselves to be believers. We have to understand what that means.

We have to think about our own selves, too, and what is assigned to us if we find ourselves in a position as a trust of Allah or Islam, as it is a clear contract or pledge between a leader or a follower. Of course, each one of us has responsibility as a leader. Like in the battlefield, and in companies and in families, there are people who are leaders and those who are followers. We are talking about those people who have to follow and guide others, who understand what it means to be a follower, and [to have] a sense of protection and fairness and *'adl*/justice. Ultimately, if we were to understand the injunctions of Allah Swt given to us in Qur'an, we realize that we are all people who have to learn to follow. There is one ultimate leader, Allah, and His Messenger Rasulallah (sal). Then there are those who are assigned to carry on the guidance and teachings of Allah Swt on behalf of Him.

At the very core of the moral character of the human being are two aspects to really understand what it means to take the responsibility of leadership and humble following of Allah and His Prophet (sal). That is *iman*/faith or belief, and *ikhlas*/sincerity. *Iman* in this case implies a belief in the oneness of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (sal). By extension, we have to also understand that it is a quality in the human being to be developed. A leader of any type—whether teacher in the classroom, parent in the home, corporate or political or spiritual leader (all of whom we see rising and falling every day) – a leader of strong *iman* will consider him or herself, all their possessions, all their strength and knowledge as belonging to Allah Swt.

It's not just something that is said, but that is felt and understood. This is understood because the person has reflected and been brought to a state of humility, and practiced looking at one's own self in the context of being in the company of Allah Swt, and in the company of the Light of Rasulallah (sal). Such people will bow their ego before their Lord. They will submit their ideas and even their passions to the thinking and guidance of Allah Swt. It also implies that what they believe is not just of this world, and therefore leadership of a believer is not just of things in a worldly way. They may be leading people *in* the world to think in a much higher frame of spirituality of Islam.

How to lead a person to develop, and how to develop in one's own self a firm *iman* [are questions worth reflection]. [If] a person implies belief in the Hereafter and accountability on the Day of Accountability, that person will reflect both on how they led their lives and how they followed and dispatched their responsibilities. [And we will want to reflect on] how all of us led and followed during our life time. A leader with firm *iman* and deep, abiding sincerity will not turn away from the responsibilities and duties, but will constantly and continuously strive to do good deeds and good acts, and reinforce this concept. The Qur'an links *iman* with good deeds no less than 60 times. These two things we must always keep in our minds: good deeds and acts, and a deep abiding faith (or belief).

We know that Muslims globally and over time considered it desirable to appoint a leader with *iman*, but it might not always be possible to find that kind of person (because of *dunya* issues). We know that from experience. So the people may need to choose from a good Muslim with weak leadership skills, or a strong leader with weak understanding of Islam. It's the way of life, reality. We can't just create our communities in the way we want to. Even in our own community here, we have many, many things to adjust and reflect upon. That means you have to have time to do that, and not be distracted by every

day demands and necessities. Even when you have a selective process and many years of experience, you still have to deal with the qualities and characteristics in the character of every individual.

There is the example of Amr Ibn al ‘Asr who had only been a Muslim for four months when he was appointed by Rasulallah (sal) to a key leadership position. We have to understand that times and places have a great deal to do with how we grow, and not just who we are. Sometimes we find ourselves growing into situations because we have been placed there out of necessity, as in his case. Even if a skilled leader is not a strong Muslim in knowledge or understanding through study or even consultation, it can come about. Good leadership can evolve. Some people become very resigned to their role as followers, but harbor inside of them great desires, not necessarily to lead but to be critical. If we all see ourselves and make ourselves into true believers, and if we make ourselves people who only wish to do good deeds and work, that leadership not only can evolve, it does evolve. It becomes something that one has no control over; but something that Allah assigns you. Allah assigns you leadership.

What I have been talking about recently has to do with this understanding. Allah Swt is the fosterer of growth and development, and things do change. Things evolve. We have to pray to Allah Swt that things change and evolve in good ways. That’s not good enough: not just through our prayer, but we have to take actions and make that happen. If we build on good works, if one does good works and acts, those acts themselves form a foundation. If our intention is to do good works and acts, then the foundation is made for deep belief. We don’t have to do more than that. Islam does not just mean submission to Allah; it also means to create an attitude of securing ourselves to Allah.

When we say, “*Taslim* means security,” does it mean “I feel security in my own self?” It

means that I tether myself to Allah, that I hold fast to the rope of Allah, that I secure myself to Allah. What does that mean? Securing ourselves to Allah means not just living the qualities of the *Asmā' al Husna*, it means practicing, making *muraqabah*, awakening the *latā'if*, turning the light on in a dark room, shining the light of the *latā'if* wherever one wants to look, so that we see the divine presence all around us. Finding that security and safety within Allah Swt, we come to another level of human potential. We become stronger in our ethic, and better leaders, and develop the personality and character of a Muslim. When I say Muslim, I mean one who is in submission to Ya Rabb. I don't want to say just a person who puts their head on the ground is a "Muslim," but any believer who has this deep and abiding trust in Allah. In that, the potential for leadership is there, and Allah assigns us things to lead. He assigns us reflection on following. If *iman* is a seed, then Islam is the fruit.

Because of a person's *iman*, the leader who practices Islam will never see himself or herself as "the supreme leader" like they have in Iran or wherever. (*Astaghfirullah*, I don't want to reflect on any one government or title.) The "supreme leader" is a difficult concept in Islam. Perhaps, it would be better to say the supreme leader has evidenced and is proven to be the supreme follower in Islam. There is only one supreme leader, and that is Allah. We have to remember the letter Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib (ra) wrote to Malik the governor of Egypt. He said, "You must never forget that if you are a ruler over them, then the Khaliph is the ruler over you. And Allah is the supreme ruler of the Khaliph." We have to keep that in mind. This fits perfectly with the meaning of *rabb*. The evolutionary process we grow through in acquiring knowledge, humility, and faith means that we grow in our potential to lead and to follow. We grow in understanding, but we need an environment for that growth.

Everything needs an environment for growth. Given the opportunity that Dr. Hassouna

is with us today, I want to say that the seed has the potential to grow. When it is placed in the light of Nur i Mohammed (sal), when what is given to it is something to stimulate its perfect potential, it grows and produces more fruit. The fact of Dr. Hassouna's decades of research is also an analogy to the human soul. When you add the Light of Mohammed (sal) and have complete submission to the potential Allah has given us, then exponentially the fruits come. That's what I mean when I say the environment for growth.

That environment for growth (which brings me to the last point I want to make today) begins with *taqwa*. As we submit to Allah Swt, we develop this awe and all encompassing excitement. Here's the seed; you plant it in the ground and it grows x-number of potatoes. When you see that seed has the potential to produce ten times that many potatoes, then [you make] the analogy: This is what I have grown to be in the environment I am in [now]. When I add the process of *muraqabah*, when I add *dhikr* and proper prayer, what, then can I grow into? When you put that in a community, what is the yield of that community? The yield is increased exponentially. Everything is analogical. Whatever you discover in science is already existing in the metascience. You just bring it into reality. What does it take to bring it into reality? It takes years of devotion, meditation, humility, starting and failing, trying and improving, years upon years—and there is always more. You are in the flow of that Divine Energy, the *Fā'id* of Allah, the endless Divine Energy that will always yield more if you submit to it.

If you bring your knowledge, effort, trust, love, passion, and focus to it, Allah shows you the potential. There is no reason to think you can ever reach the fullness of it. Every day, another challenge comes, another answer comes. After a day, week, month or year, then you know there is always more. This is *taqwa*, real piety. The essence of *taqwa* lies in the attitude of the heart and mind, not in some outer form. When an individual is imbued with *taqwa*, their mind, thoughts, emotions, inclinations, and desires will reflect

Islam. This *taqwa* will act as a restraint from behaving wrongly, unjustly, and being distracted. In a way, we can measure the quality of our *taqwa* by the quality of our own behavior. We have an opportunity to understand that measure, and why repentance becomes a very important part of *taqwa*, why reflection, *muhasabat*, becomes a very important part. Reflect upon what experiments I did today; what work I did. Could I have done something differently? [Reflect upon] how we act toward the community, toward our brothers and sisters, how we act toward our employees and employer, how we act towards our children who we teach at school, towards our customers or suppliers. This is all part and parcel of the reality.

Allah Swt commands justice in doing good, in liberality toward kith and kin. He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion, and instructs you that you may receive admonition. Clearly a creation of standards to live by is necessary. If *taqwa* is then a sense of the Presence of Allah Swt, awe or “fear” of Allah, then the awareness of that Presence has a quality in us to lead and follow in the love of Allah. The love of Allah Swt motivates us to gain pleasure in praising Allah. How do you love Allah? You love Allah by loving Allah’s creatures in creation. You love Allah by being in awe of this creation and the potential in creation. You love Allah because you are astounded by how one small seed can crack the hard earth. How do you find the love of Nebi Mohammed (sal)? He describes this to his followers: **“Worship Allah as though you can see Him; and if you cannot see Him, know that He is seeing you.”** *Subhanallah.*

In a *hadith* narrated by Abu Aswad, he said:

I came to Medina when an epidemic had broken out. When I was sitting with Umar Ibn al Khattib, a funeral procession passed by where people praised the deceased. Umar said it has been affirmed to him. Another funeral procession

passed by and people praised the deceased, and Umar said it has been affirmed to him. A third funeral procession passed by, and the people spoke badly of the deceased. And he said it has been affirmed to him. And I asked, "O chief of the believers, what has been affirmed?" He said, "I said the same as the Prophet (sal) had said. That is, if four persons testify to the piety of a Muslim, Allah will grant him paradise." We asked if three persons testified to his piety. And he (sal) said, "Even three." Then we asked, "If two?" And he (sal) said, "Even two." We did not ask him regarding one witness.

It becomes extremely important for us to understand the kind of love of Rasulallah (sal). You can't love unless you see the love. You can't love a thing or person you don't know. How you know Rasulallah (sal) is by knowing how he acted. How you know Rasulallah (sal) is by knowing how people responded to his actions. How you respond to Rasulallah (sal) is by knowing what love is in your own life, and how you hope that your children will remember you with good memories, as you remember your parents; and how you hope a hundred years from now your name will mean something. It will be on something that says, "Because of this person, I learned this." You live eternally in the memory of your good works and your good deeds. By looking at the good works and deeds, you are watching the love of the human being. You are watching how love operates, just like the parent watches the child, or caring for the welfare of some other human being. How many times did Prophet Mohammed (sal), acting through the hands, tongue or intention of someone else save us, guide us, awaken us? That constant feeling that Allah Swt is watching us is beautiful: *hasana*.

If we are in a leadership modality or following it, it will prompt us to behave in a better way. The difference between Muslims with this *taqwa* and with that love is explained by one writer, talking about government employees, "*There may be some who perform their*

duties scrupulously, but do not demonstrate any additional commitment.” That’s a person with just *taqwa*. They just do the minimum. “*Others push themselves far beyond the demands, and they are energized and making sacrifices in the performance of their acts and works.*” The first group of employees are like the believers who do what is sufficient and what is necessary. They are the ones who have *taqwa*. By contrast, the second [group] has *taqwa* and *ihsan*, love, beauty. Perhaps those are the ones who are the leaders—that is, the leadership qualities of the true followers. They are not just mechanical followers, but true followers who are conscious of the ones who are following them.

I want to end by touching on one thing else: we have to keep this in mind when we are talking about justice in the world we live in today. I don’t want to develop that today, but just think about what I’ve said today also in terms of justice. Underneath it all, a Muslim should understand what is just and what is right. We see among Muslims today that they don’t understand justice at all. Many, many people do not understand it. They rely on laws instead of justice, on rules they don’t understand and ancient cultural things they don’t understand. We have to strive as Muslims to develop real justice/‘*adl*, wherever we are, whether we are leaders or followers.

O you who believe! Stand up firmly for Allah as witness to the fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. (5:8)

We have to find *mīzān*, and understand the principles of justice. It’s something we should talk again about and understand it in this relationship. (Duas)

O Allah! We ask you to send Your blessing on those who have passed, and open wide

the windows of their graves and let the breeze of Jannah blow over them with the scent of the sweet flowers from Jannah, so that the time there passes in but a blink of the eye. For that, we ask You for Your special Aid, as you are the Best who can Aid and the Best of those who can Forgive us, and the Best Guide. Make it easy for us and give order to our lives. Give us a submissive heart. We beseech You for what is good in our life and well being, free from affliction. Make our faces shine with the light of Your Attributes, and laugh and rejoice on the Day of Reckoning or Resurrection. Bring us among Your friends, and let Your Hand be spread upon us. We ask for Your Mercy and to be our Companion in our travels and our Guardian in our families. Efface the faces of our enemies, and freeze them in our places so they are unable to come against us. *Amin.*