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Thursday

Title: [Tajdīd: The Struggle to Move Society Up](#)

DVD title: The Responsibility of Tajdīd: The Struggle to Renew Society

*Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem.* I want to maybe conclude about the subject of *tajdīd*, because I think it is an extremely important subject for the world we live in today. From the earliest recorded history, perhaps the time of Hammurabi in 1800 BC to today is a lot of time, nearly 4000 years. We should have learned with some degree of *yaqīn* that, despite human beings' desire to get revenge on others, retribution doesn't work. It certainly is not a deterrent, and it certainly doesn't cause other people, who then return the retribution, to be any less severe in their return.

Wherever we look around the world today, we are still seeing acts of violence, revenge, and retribution on almost any continent. Some are slightly more subtle than others: a little more subtle genocide or some other thing. In fact, it has its opposite effect: violence begets violence. For people in Tariqah, we also understand that love begets love; and peace, peace. When we think in terms of the systems of the world in which we live, we see things that really are beautiful like nature make us appreciate Allah Swt, even the things that are *bida hasana*. When we talk about this word *tajdīd*, which is usually translated as renewal, theologically it also has another aspect to it. That aspect refers to the *jihād*, the human *jihād*, the struggle to move human society as a whole toward more justice, toward more equality, toward more responsibility, toward more compassion, mercy, and understanding. This is also *tajdīd*.

There are very practical ways that serve the purpose of renewing the different systems.

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For example, in terms of ‘*adl*’/justice, there are ways in which we can depart from notions of revenge or vengeance. Yet we look around and see what is happening in Afghanistan and Iraq, and hear the stories of the young people who are here. The young man Osamah is only 28 years old. He looks like he is in his forties from his struggles. His own brother was killed, even before this war. What we need to do is realize that as people of Tariqah, as Muslims, we have a responsibility to promote justice, compassion, and mercy—not just as Muslims, but especially because we are people of Tariqah, people of Tasawwuf. We have a special ability, knowledge, and understanding that come from many years of reflection/*tafakkur*, and *muraqabah*, many years of *dhikr*, many years of promoting an understanding that transcends the usual limitations one finds in society, the limitations of gender, race, nationality, language, or age.

Especially because we live in a world that is globalized, we have more opportunity to take a message that is a global message of Al Islam and to help people understand its essential application and to make life better. That’s a responsibility. What else would the acceptance of the *amanat* mean, other than in any time and at any place, at any century and any era, the Muslim should take advantage of the time, place, and circumstance and promote goodness, and to really give out the message of *maruf* and *munkar*? What better opportunity would it be? We are not living at a time when it takes months or years to traverse the globe by ship. We are not talking about taking months or years to bring a product from China to the Mediterranean and to distribute it to the Europeans. We’re not talking about even things that were impossible 50 years ago. We are talking about a globalized world with instantaneous communication and transmission of wealth— instantaneous transmissions of money. And wealth is power; knowledge is power.

There is no reason, except the unreasonableness of human nature, that we are not striving to educate the world to what is right and what is good according to their culture and

needs. It is not imposing the MTV view of the world on the smallest villages in Africa or Asia or Southeast Asia, but it is to speak about justice and compassion and mercy in practical terms. We have the means to end hunger and poverty, to bring a sense of justice, equality and equity to the world in which we live. But that means is not being used properly. That responsibility is *tajdīd*/renewal. The responsibility is Islam. We have the ability to seek constructive approaches to heal humanity and restore goodness, and to oppose harm, not to just wish it away. The people in the streets of Tehran and Isfahan and Tabriz are hoping this whole issue of globalization, the truth of the internet and the instantaneous transmission will allow them to be successful. In what? Not overthrowing a government. Their intention was never to overthrow a government. Their intention was to make the government just and responsible.

They weren't in the streets to overthrow the government, like some of their parents were in 1979. That isn't the objective. Yet the government reacts, impervious to world view, as if no one is seeing. Like going to eat the banana where no one can see it. Maybe nobody can see it, but Allah Swt can see it. And it doesn't matter what color or what size the 'imma' is on a person's head, they are still *munafiq* if they kill or injure one another, especially in the name of Islam. I put the writing I wrote for CAIR up on the Legacy website and I've already gotten responses to it in blogs. It's called "You Be The Judge." I just quoted Qur'an and Hadith and said, "You be the judge of what's happening in Iran." You don't have to be a Muslim. You can only have half a brain. If you can read, you can be the judge. You don't have to have a Ph.D. or be an '*alim*. You don't have to be *hafedh* of Qur'an. You don't even have to know anything about Islam. You can be the judge. Why can we do this?

Just the fact that we can do this is *tajdīd*, if our *niyyat* to renew. That renewal is to offer solutions that can be implemented, practical solutions, not theory, not philosophy. In a

way we have gone somewhat past the world of philosophy, because everybody has a say now. The simplest person with the least education who can use a computer can be a philosopher today. The lines are blurred. In a way, that's good. It gives a voice to anyone, but it doesn't take away the necessity for discrimination. You still have to be able to discriminate the truth from the false. Allah Swt tells us, not only shouldn't we coerce people to believe anything, but the truth will stand out from the false. It will be obvious, because inside each one of us, we have the sense that we want to renew our understanding. We want to stay strong physically, and stay alert mentally. We want to increase or renew our faith. Sometimes life takes us down, and sometimes up. We have to make hard decisions in life.

We all want to trust in Allah, but for how long, under what circumstances? If I don't have a job, how do I put food on my table? If I don't put food on my table, I'm not taking care of my family. Then what kind of a person am I? Etc. etc. We have decisions. Where in this is the trusting in Allah? It's not that it takes so much knowledge, but a kind of *hikma* that comes from *iman*/faith, *taslim*/surrender and trust. *Tajdīd* is a natural inclination in the human being. It's not there was a time for *ijtihad* and it's over, and the doors of *ijtihad* are closed, finished. This is a very Salafi mentality. It's not true. We are making *ijtihad* every single day. Everyone is: Muslim and non-Muslim. They are making *ijtihad* based on the need for certain things. But this is *ijtihad* made for the purpose of constructive reasoning, for helping society evolve in higher and higher ways.

That's why I said last night that people don't understand, even Muslims, why the Prophet (sal) was the final prophet. Non-Muslims say, "Oh, they just say that because they want their prophet to be the final prophet so they can be better than anyone else." That's not the reason. The reason is because of *tajdīd*. The Prophet (sal) brings the message of renewal. If, inherent in Islam is renewal, you don't need to have another prophet. The message is

being renewed at every period along the way, in every time, place and circumstance. You don't need anyone to bring another message. With this Prophet, Allah sent *tajdīd*. You don't need another prophet because people are stupid, will fall down and forget, and corruption and entropy will come to the world. This is no big surprise. You think Allah didn't know what would happen? This is the way the system works. We always think Allah is a person sitting up there creating things. That's not the way it works. It's just good math. Allah is good math: the whole is greater than the sum total of its parts. The parts are, ar-Rahmān, ar-Rahīm, al-Malik, al-Quddus, as-Salaam, etc. When you put it all together, it's something more. That's Allah. Nothing can exist outside that system. That includes corruption, and it includes success.

If, in this iteration of this system that comes with Nebi Mohammed (sal) there is *tajdīd*, then it will keep renewing and keep renewing until the Yawmi Qiyama. Why? Because everything comes to its cyclical end. Then it begins again. Remember the story of the man making *tawaf* around the Ka'ba. When asked how long he had been doing it, he said, "Twenty-seven creations ago I began this." Not twenty-seven years, twenty-seven cycles of creation. What is the message in that, whether it's 27 or 22 or 47 or 10? It doesn't matter. The message is the system creates and collapses, expands and collapses. It's good astrophysics. We have to play our part, each one of us. We have to seek renewal every single day. Five times a day in prayer; we all do that. Some people do their *sunnah* prayer, their *nafle* prayer, then some people do extra *du'ā*, and some people make *muraqabah*. They are in Tariqah, and they make more *dhikr* and *muraqabah*. Some people serve humanity. This is the way they renew society and renew themselves.

We have to realize that the[re] are many messages in the Qur'an. You [can] read Qur'an to hear its dynamism. You can read it from the point of view of *tajdīd*. You [can] read Qur'an to understand the message to men or women.... there are many ways to read

Qur'an. If you read it in terms of *tajdīd*, then you realize some interesting things. For example, when Allah Swt says, **"...if anyone takes the life of one person, it will be as if he took the life of all humanity..."** (5:32) From the point of view of renewal, it makes perfect sense, because you are disrupting the system. You are causing something that could be renewed not to be renewed. Then He says, **"...if you save the life of one person, it is like saving the lives of all humanity..."** because everything is interconnected. The essence of *tajdīd* is it does not affect the core of Islam. It does not affect in any negative way, accepting that this is not only a personal, social, spiritual, and religious renewal. It doesn't affect it. We still find its basis in Qur'an and the Sunnah of Rasūlallah (sal). That remains untouched. You start to extract from that the meaning.

That's why the Prophet (sal) told Mu'azz when he went to Yemen as ambassador about *ijtihad*. Mu'azz said, "When I'm far away from you, how do I know I'm making the right decision?" He (sal) said, "You make the decision based on what you know, and if later on you find it is wrong, you change it." (That's the message in American language.) You make it based on Qur'an and Hadith. That doesn't just apply to then; it applies to now. One has to learn how to listen to the Qur'an and see and understand the Qur'an. In this context, I quote this which I have quoted many times: **"O man, you have ears which do not hear and eyes which do not see. Do you not understand?"** In *tajdīd*, it means a lot. You have eyes, and you have to look. You have to go to Qur'an and look at it. Don't just put it on the bookshelf. Memorize it, *alhamdulillah*; but there are many ignorant people who can recite Qur'an. That's not what makes you intelligent. What makes you a good Muslim is that you live it.

We have to understand that we are all, in away, on another kind of Hajj. We want to go on the Hajj to Mecca; but we are also on a Hajj to the core of our being. We are all marching to find the essence of that Divine presence within ourselves. We are all

marching toward our *qalb* in some way. We are all trying to divest ourselves of what is impure, what is dark, what is deceptive, what is distraction. Some people do it by sacrifice, and are very pious people. Other people do it by keeping themselves busy doing good. There are many ways to do it. But for a Muslim, the Muslim, the Sufi, the believer of any religion, has to do it through very sincere, good intentions and actions *fi sabīlillah*. We have to also understand that some of the people who are perpetrators of terrible crimes are victims. Look at the soldiers in Iraq today. Aren't they victims of public policy that is misguided, victims of a political ideology that is self-centered and ego-centric and nationalistic? Of course. They are doing their jobs, but they are perpetrators of crime also. If you take the concept of refinement, of bringing society toward justice, toward kindness and goodness, toward compassion – beginning with your own self, your own family, your own neighbor – then you don't send people into situations that fragment society. You send people into situations that build a stronger civil society. You don't send people into situations where there is inequality or inequity. You send people to help build equality and equity.

In the same way, when we look at the world and see all the disease and misery, we still are at a very strange place in human understanding. We still throw the equivalent of nuclear bombs at disease. We don't look for the subtle ways to heal the body's immune system. Now, slowly, we begin to hear doctors saying that you have to build a strong immune system, and you have to eat correctly. Slowly. People have known this for thousands of years. The Prophet (sal) knew this. All the *hakims* taught this. Practitioners of natural village medicine knew this. But we are going to bomb the disease. Throw chemicals at it. We are going to destroy the tissues with radiation in order to save the person. Perhaps sometimes that is necessary. But the philosophy is the same: waging war on the body is the same as waging war on many bodies in many societies. Renewal is the same thing as telling people to practice preventative medicine. It's the same thing.

Renew your strength. Eat well. Eat healthily. Do exercise. Now we have to exercise, because we do not till the fields with our hands. How long ago was that? My grandmother had to till potatoes in the fields with her hands. It wasn't that long ago. If I had said to my grandmother, "get some exercise," she would have laughed at me. She carried the children to school in winter because it was too cold to walk. They lived in a place that had no heat in the winter. Fulfilling her duty was her exercise. To understand the goodness in that, and the good evolution that can come from that is *tajdīd*. It's not just some philosophical thought that comes into Islam about *ijtihād* and *tajdīd*.

The Salafis say that we have to return to the time of the Prophet (sal) and live exactly in that way. How is that possible? And how do you know how he lived really? His time in Medina was not long, yet it was part of an evolutionary process. Islam spread around the world, and not by the sword but by the love and the service. And here we are in some strange county in Virginia with former Jews and Christian, Indonesians, Senegalese, and Moroccans. How does that happen except by the will of Allah Swt? That's part of the evolution and renewal of Islam. You have to have that, because we live in a global world. We have a global religion in a globalized world with people who have the capability of understanding this who are Sufis. We have a big responsibility.

We have to work very hard to keep ourselves well and to create a just society, to create equity for human beings, and to take our responsibility for this planet. Moreover, we have to inform our fellow Muslims what this *tajdīd* really means. It is part of a system Allah Swt has created. Just like Allah Swt created us to have all these systems operating inside of us—respiratory, circulatory, reproductive, digestive—operating differently, but in concert with each other. That's the sign. This is an *āyatullah*. The system renews itself. Your skin replaces itself every seven years. New cells are coming into your organs all the time. This is the system; it is renewal. There is renewal in nature: every year the

plants come again. If there is renewal in the physical system, do you think He forgot to put renewal in Islam? No. Everything is internally consistent in any field you go to: economics, international relations, environment and development, computer science, medicine.

If you follow that internal consistency, and find the essential laws in that, you can't go wrong. You are creating harmony in the system. If you create harmony in the system, there will be prosperity and healing and happiness and contentment. Of course, sometimes it goes down and sometimes it goes up. Those are reminders. We are always afraid to lose what we have, because we fear we will not get it back. In that inner space, between those two things, that's where we have to live with faith. That's where our faith is. It's easy to have faith when you have everything. "See? God rewards me!" It's easy to have faith when you have nothing, because you say, "Look, I'm surviving." The hardest place to have faith is when you go between these two things. Some people would disagree with that, saying it's very hard to have faith when you have nothing.

But look at the politicians: when they get caught doing something bad, all of a sudden they have faith. The governor of South Carolina suddenly has faith. *Alhamdulillah!* That's what it took for him: public disclosure and embarrassment. But it's better to have faith when things are just moving along in the normal up and down way. *Insh'allah*, I won't have to talk much more on the subject again, if Allah gives me life. *Asalaamu aleikum.*