

January 22, 2010

Khutbah



Title: [Our Obligation to Community; Our Obligation to Allah](#)

DVD title: Our Mutual Reciprocal Responsibility: Enjoining the Right, Forbidding the Wrong

*Asalām aleikum, Rahmatu-Llāhi Barakatū. Opening du'ās*

Allah says in the most famous 'āyat of Qur'an:

**And hold fast to the Rope of Allah all together and do not be divided, and remember the Favor of Allah upon you – how you were enemies and He brought your hearts together, so that through His Blessing you became as brothers. And you were on the brink of an abyss of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear His Signs to you so that you may be guided. (3:103)**

And the results of that, well:

**And there may grow out of you a community who invited [all] to goodness and enjoin doing of the right and forbid the doing of what is wrong. And it is these who are the successful. (3:104)**

Obviously, my dear brothers and sisters, the Qur'an is not talking about the politics in the world today. Obviously, not talking about Congress in the United States today, or what is happening in Haiti, or in Iraq or in Afghanistan. It is commentary on the possibilities of

people. The probabilities of it we are not going to invest any time into today, because it all begins with the efforts human beings have to make. Allah is telling us that there is a responsibility we all have if this were to happen. This can happen: the enemies can become brothers and people can enjoin people to do good and forbid people to do wrong, which means legislation, obviously, legislation which can be overridden by the Supreme Court. Not to make political statements, but it is good to realize that when there is greed, it should be in full view of the public; and when there is corruption, it should be in the full view of the public and should not be hidden. Perhaps, that is the journey that we are on in the world today, where it is obvious how corrupt people are and how injurious their corruption can be to human beings.

On the other hand, **“Enjoin doing of the right and forbid the doing of what is wrong”** is a possibility. It is a possibility. There is a mutual and a reciprocal responsibility in all of this. I think it is very important for us in the world, for us who live in this world part of the time (the rest of the time we live in our own world), and those of us who live in this community part of the time (and the opposite of that is those who live in their own mind only without sense of our reciprocal responsibilities), for those of us who understand that there is an interdependency as well as an intra-dependency, both economically and in terms of our spirituality, *suhbat*, and in terms of our social duties and responsibilities, we can work towards more understanding, more interdependency, more reciprocity. [We do not have to] be afraid of responsibility that has been bestowed upon us by Allah, in our community, especially in the work areas and responsibilities that we have toward one another.

We have taken on, I hope, with happiness in our hearts and with the blessing of Allah (swt), the care of one another. We have seen [this] over the years with the care of the elderly and also, hopefully, with the care of the young people and how we educate them. They are not laboratories to experiment on, especially after 30 years of education, training and knowledge here. We have to bring to them the very, very, very best; and

everyone should participate who can participate in some way with their knowledge and their experience.

Of course, we have taken on new programs. We have opened up new areas, and every day there seem to be new opportunities for us in our work. It is very important that we, as we search out the means of our future—whether individually, as the young people are doing, or collectively, as some of our old folks are doing—have a deep commitment to a future, not just our own personal future, but the future of our community, the future of our brothers and sisters. We need to be sure to refurbish our ship of state/*hal*, and set it out to sea again and again, with a good crew, making sure we bring good work around the world (and don't sail too close to the coast of Somalia).

To accomplish this, there are some very basic things that we have to remember. I think no one should treat any of these things that I am about to say as superficial or light-heartedly or just as obvious so we don't think about them. Let me list them:

We should ceaselessly do favors for others and help them. Seize every moment to bestow the favor that we have upon others as Allah bestows His Favors upon us, to assist others in every way that we can. I am referring to here, in this community first, but also others outside. But you cannot replace one with the other. We should sponsor, we should support, we should care, we should share with those among us whatever we have to fulfill their needs, whether their needs are academic, or for work, or for places to live, or for food on their table, or medicines when they are ill, or assistance in picking up something, or dropping it off by the truck, or helping in their yard, or cleaning the kitchen, or whatever it may be.

In other words we have to support others in practical ways, but also support others with their hopes, with their dreams, with their aspirations, their ideals, to wish them a good, a safe journey, like we are today for Saara—God Speed. We have to give sponsorship to them and put our name behind it, like I did today in three phone calls to help certain

people and to promote our work and to ask the help of other people. Three times this morning, already. Musa sent me an e-mail that can help in another thing. Immediately it went out. Support the ideas and the efforts of one another. Win over their trust and their respect so that when we give our comment, our comment is for their good and it is received in that way. Care for the results, not only of the work that person does, but for their state of mind, their state of health, their state of well-being. Not to think what our needs are or what would benefit us or our family only, but what would benefit the others. Maybe we have to speak to someone in some way to help them understand our needs better, or to point out something to them, but always with their well-being in mind.

Share what we have in such a way that your faith in Allah is seen, and that your faith in Allah is felt and that you share in such a way so as you give out, you are replenished many times over. Again, help each other in times of need, like a mother feeds the baby or the friend assists the friend, or the father and the mother with the children, and the brother or the sister with the brother or the sister. But it also means, in the work that we do, to add very carefully more and more of our spirituality to it, more and more of the things that will make that work grow and be strong.

We will call this the Hassouna doctrine, to put a growing adjuvant at the root of everything that we do for someone. We don't want to call it a nitrogen bomb. We want to call it a nitrogen factory. All of these things have to be thought of not just in a personal way but in a collective sense. All these good activities would be meaningless if they were done for the wrong reasons or for selfish reasons, if we help others for our own sake, if we give our names to one another because we want to give glory to our name, if we lend our name to something because it lifts our image up, or if we care for someone because there is some merit in it, that is not the best of intentions, though the action may be good. It may be good. Let us not forget that wrong intentions lead to wrong actions or exploitation.

To earn a reward and the blessings of Allah (swt), one has to not seek the reward or even the blessings of Allah (swt). We want to do good for its own sake, good for the sake of good, good for the sake of those to whom the good is being done or for whom it is being done. One cannot do good for one's own sake. It makes you an oxygenated moron. Allah (swt) informs us in Suratu-t-Tawbah that the believers, men and women, are protectors of one another. We can take it very literally in the physical sense. We also have to take it emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. We protect each other by the goodness of our actions, and by the goodness of our intentions, and by thinking about the other person's needs, and their sensitivities, their fears and their anxieties, their worries and their strengths. We should also err to the side of being conservative.

We protect each other by the quality of our prayer. We protect each other by the quality of our intentions, the quality of our *wudu*, the quality of diet, and the quality of our caring, the quality of the methodologies that we use. The quality of our education is a protection for our children, the qualities of our *du'ā* is the means by which the people can receive what Allah has for them. The qualities of the way we read Qur'an is a way of reaching our prayers higher and higher, if you will, metaphorically, deeper and deeper in the quality of our service too. The worship of Allah (swt) is a means for others to be inspired. This is explained in the concept of Muslims helping each other in society.

In a *hadith* of Prophet Mohammed (sal), he said, “***The similitude of believers is that they have compassion, mercy and their feelings for one another is like a body. When the organ ails, all the body comes forward to help, by not sleeping, by having a fever, by fighting the enemy.***” The Prophet (sal) explained this idea of helping one another by also saying, “***The believer to the believer is like the bricks in a building reinforcing one another.***” When there is greed and pecuniary, and a reluctance to spend money on something for its good, well, the earth shakes and the buildings collapse. Haiti. Haiti. Malheureusement. Terrible! Terrible! Crimes against humanity, not earth against humanity, not nature against humanity, but human beings against humanity: bad decision

making, bad building, bad materials, not caring, going out there and converting them to religion but not converting their society to something that is sustainable, protected, well-informed and supported by infrastructure. This is the crime against humanity.

It is terrible when someone performs a personal crime against someone, but this kind of collective criminality is horrible. None of us want to go into a building with a bad foundation or reinforcement. None of us want to go on transportation that has not been well cared for. “How was your trip?” “Fine. But the plane were dirty, the bathrooms were horrible.” No one wants to hear that. We have the responsibility to care for a lot of things. We have to care for the technology, the service and the mentality that runs it. We have to care for our own selves in order that we can care for others. The highest meaning of *at-tazkiyya*/purification can be understood by another *hadith* from Nebi Mohammed (sal).

Prophet Mohammed (sal) says: “***He is not a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself***” or “*wants for his brother what he wants for himself*” or “*likes for his brother what he likes for himself*” or “*desires for his brother what he desires for himself.*” (Sorry, sisters, you are not included.) What does it mean? To understand the reciprocal responsibility, we have to present different faces of this *taqaful*.

We have to see the first face as almost a tribal, a family face. That is the first face: family, the responsibility that you have for your family. Extend what you feel for your brother and your child and your sister and your husband. Extend it to others, whether they want it or not. Sometimes your children don’t want it. So why should you get put off if your neighbor doesn’t want it. Your own child may not want the hug, the kiss, the smile, the enjoiner, the request.

One day they realize that this is a means, not just of expressing affection or love. This is a means of being part of a tradition and a society. When you give, you get. We should enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong beginning with our own selves, of course,

because we have our own executive branch, legislation, legislative body, and judiciary within our own selves. At least in this case we can appoint them, but we cannot just always deal with ourselves, by ourselves. We need others. We need reflection. We need wiser people. We need people who, sometimes, love us more than we love ourselves, know us, sometimes better than we know ourselves, or at least see part of us that we don't see our self.

Humility and receptivity become very important. The truth of the matter is that we are always making errors while we are also taking care of others. It is not a black and white situation. That is the truth. It would be wonderful, I guess, in one way, if we could all be born and raised like little cells that get perfect and that move onto a state of perfection to help others to be perfect people. You are perfect, I am perfect, and we are all perfect. Isn't that wonderful? Everything is perfect. But that is not how it works. We learn. We grow. We make mistakes. Forgiveness is important. We should not avoid contributing to the well-being of each other's lives.

Like it or not, we are all raising each other's children to some degree. Like it or not, we are all responding to each other's conditioning to some degree. Like it or not, we are all part of each other's history and tradition. That is a beautiful thing, not a terrible thing. And we should learn to like it and embrace it—not abuse it, not trespass with it. Allah (swt) knows in the greater scheme of the system of interrelationships that while we are learning and growing we are also doing and performing and we are setting away for the future. Allah provides the example of prophets, especially Prophet Mohammed (sal), for us. [He gives us] little groups of examples that we can look to: the *ambiyā*, the *awliyā*, and those wise people in our families.

[In Qur'an, Allah invites us.] In some ways He is saying, "I command you," but mostly it is an invitation: I invite you. **"There will rise out from among you a group of people who...."** He is inviting us, **"to do the good and enjoin what is right and forbid what is**

**wrong. And they are the ones who take for the felicity.”** And the Prophet (sal) explained this idea. The greatest *tafsir* of Qur’an is the Hadith of Nebi Mohammed (sal). The greatest *tafsir* of Qur’an is the *sīrah* of Prophet Mohammed (sal). He says: **“He who sees wrong should change it with his hands. If he cannot, he should change it with his tongue. And if he cannot, change it with his heart.”** Of course, this is the weakest of faith. We have responsibility, moral ethical responsibility. Sometimes we rise. Sometimes we fall. But those who love us will support us.

Another aspect of *taqaful* is that the very material aspect, the financial aspect. Allah prescribes *zakat* as a pillar for Islam so that the rich will take care of the poor, and so that those who have more will take care of those who have less. But how? How? There are guidelines on how? It is not just that you give money to the poor. It makes you examine your own wealth. Examine your own property. Examine your own attachments to it. Once you examine it, then you understand how evanescent it is and how it is to be moved around society. It is good economic principle: move the wealth around through society and everybody benefits. There should be no interest, so that one group cannot be exploited by another group.

On one hand, Allah encouraged Muslims to give in charity in addition to *zakat*, *sadaqa*. That brings out the goodness in human beings. It is a very important aspect of fulfilling responsibility. That means to us that we do this naturally. You take care of others at home before you take care of anything else. It works that way. Very few saintly people go around putting food on somebody else’s table before putting it on their own. But some people do that. Of course, even those who do it, when they get home, believe me, they hear, “You took the last morsel of food out of your children’s mouth and put it on a neighbor’s plate? What is the matter with you? Are you crazy or are you a prophet?” You know who said that, right?

[When the weekly food supply has arrived,] we go [to the walkout and] look. There is a big box of mushrooms. It is Tuesday, and nobody says that you can only take twelve mushrooms. There are no signs there saying you can only take two quarts of milk. There is no sign there saying, “Please eat the celery! Nobody is telling you to take only one piece of cheese, not two pieces of cheese. Is there anyone telling that? Naturally, we understand. We are thinking, “There are other people. I don’t want to take too much.” Mostly it works. Why not do that in other aspects of our life? Strangers come. You know one of the things I do when I take strangers around? I take them to the walkout. I explain to them how it works. They cannot grasp it. “You mean..... Really? Wow! That is fantastic!” I don’t tell them about the complaints.

Islam and the Prophet Mohammed (sal) have suggested and cajoled and enjoined and legislated and have been examples of *taqaful*. In many places in Qur’an there is emphasis on taking care of the orphans. Saara is going to be taking care of orphans, who are adoptable, not just physically, but socially, morally and ethically, I hope. Not just feeding them and giving them meals and saying, “Oh what a cute little orphan you are!” Prophet (sal) says, “***Treat not the orphan with harshness.***” We are encouraged to feed the poor. Prophet Mohammed (sal) said: “***I and the one who fosters the orphan are like this in Paradise.***” And he held his fingers like this (with the index and middle fingers together). If you do your work well, you will be with Prophet Mohammed (sal) in Jannah. He said. It is a promise.

[Regarding] this whole concept of reciprocal responsibility from a biological point of view, Allah encourages fostering. Though adoption is forbidden in a certain way because of the biological make up of society, it is also provided for among the larger family. That is why you have to have a family, a Muslim family, if there is no one left. It is not just being a good person. There is a larger context in all of this. When we look at Haiti [after the earthquake devastation], adoption is necessary. What is going to happen to these children? Talk about radicalization of young people. Talk about human trafficking. On

a personal level, laws require that we adopt. There is *ijtihad* to be made on this. But we have to foster the well-being of everyone among us. We have to care for those among us.

The last thing I will speak about, because this is a large subject and maybe I will come back to it, is the highest degree of *'ilm*, which comes through education/*tarbiya*. It is knowledge about Allah (swt) and our obligations as Muslims. That is the highest knowledge. The highest knowledge is not nuclear physics. It is not engineering. It is not medical knowledge. It is not microbiology. It is not business management. It is not organizational development. It is not any of those things. The highest knowledge and use of our intellect is to understand our obligations to Allah (swt) as Muslims and as Sufis. There is no greater knowledge. That will inform everything and enable everything else. The best textbook is this one (Shaykh picks up the Qur'an). Prophet informed us that, "***The best among you is the one who learns Qur'an and teaches it to others.***"

Some people thought that meant memorizing Qur'an and learning, and then teaching it. That is not teaching Qur'an. That is teaching words in the Qur'an. Teaching Qur'an is a whole other story. He also said, "***Students and teachers are partners in that reward. The rest of the people are good for nothing.***" That is what he said. If you are not involved in *tarbiya*, you are good for nothing. If you are not involved in trying to understand the meaning of this and teaching it to others, while trying to live it yourself, [your life is good for nothing.] It also provides for if you fail. It also provides for your ego. It also talks about how the successes are measured. It also talks about the length of time. It talks about everything. If you are not involved in that, your life is good for nothing. Good for nothing... nothing. You may help a thousand people or a hundred thousand people, but your life is good for nothing, though their life may have been enhanced.

This is not the kind of statement you normally hear come from me. But it is not about religion, it is about Haqq, the Truth. It is a good book (Qur'an). It has been peer

reviewed. It has been *pir* reviewed. Hasn't it? Many *pirs* have reviewed this book, and it has been revised, daily. It has even been abrogated in some cases. It is living. Sometimes you open it up and it bites you, and sometimes you open it up and it kisses you. I know my mother-in-law never gets tired of reading it. Everyday she finds something new in it. Amazing. So no doubt... no doubt. It is good not to have doubt. But if you do have doubt, even that is dealt with. All you have to do is make the effort. *Asalām Aleikum Rahmatu-Llāhi Barakatu.*

Closing duas