

Khutbah

March 26, 2010



Title: The Need for Honor and Justice Today

DVD title: Meeting Human Needs in a Balanced Way
The Need for Honor and Dignity

Opening du'ās.

Allah (swt) says in Holy Qur'an in Surah Ta Ha:

So be patient with them and what they say and glorify your Lord before the rising of the sun and before the setting, and in the watches of the night and at the end of the day in order that you may be content. And do not strain your eyes with longing towards the flowers of this worldly life that I have given to other couples in order to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more enduring. (20:130-131)

He continues:

Order your family to the *salah* and persevere in it. We do not ask you for provision. We provide for you and the best outcome will be those who guard themselves. (20:132)

Then Allah, in Qur'an also reveals in Suratu-l-Munāfiqūn:

Surely, if we return to the city (al-Madinah) the mightier will expel the lowly. Yet the might belongs to Allah and the Messenger and the faithful believers. But the hypocrites do not know. O you who faithfully believe! Do not let your

wealth or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. Those who do so – they are the losers. (63:8-9)

Besides the obvious physical needs we all have, we have many emotional and psychological needs. Those needs are very powerful and they put a lot of decisive pressure on us for satisfaction in many ways. It is obvious and evident, and I don't think anyone questions that. If any one of these needs is not met in a balanced way, in a proper way, or in a timely manner, and if we leave the path of moderation, they take over and they become unbalanced in their demands on us. They distract us and refocus us away from the things that would cause us balance. They cause unfortunate disruption in our life, and they reach out and cause disruption in the community, whether it is our community or the greater community or the global community.

You see what happens politically when people have ideological desires that come from a strong emotional base. You see what is happening in our country today. People who are totally ignorant of the truth are led by their emotions and revved up by their emotions. They leave their state of even relative balance or quiescence that they may have been in. They find themselves in a very disruptive modality and disrupting the whole community. Their anger spills out. I don't know if any of you have been watching the news, they are cursing and threatening people's lives; they are destroying public property. Now one can make a case that this is intentional. One could make a case that this is not some unknown factor, that people are manipulating the emotions and attitudes of other human beings. Certainly their lives are disruptive, they allow their lives to be disrupted, and they disrupt the life of the community. It gives rise to these very painful disorders that are difficult to remedy—very difficult to remedy, because this acute situation can become quickly chronic. Then you get overreactions. People then plan on that, because they planned that in an overreaction, someone will take control. And they are poised, ready to take control. This is what happened in Iran.

This is what happened in other countries around the world and you see it happening in his country, perhaps, unfortunately. This is totally against Islam. The “terrorists,” whether they are Jewish, Muslim or Christian, political terrorists, or whatever you want to call these people who terrorize people’s lives, by whatever means they use—government, religion or whatever—their belief has nothing to do with Islam. We know that. But your voice sounds like a squeak, a little tweet of a bird, when the public forum is filled with screaming and yelling.

The scope of our spiritual needs, contrary to our material needs, is very extensive and unlimited. That is why these urges cannot be confined. Although scientific research concerning psychological needs is well, shall I say, investigated, especially in the times that we live in the last hundred years or so, these needs are not new. They are as ancient as human beings themselves. All individuals are not at the same level, and all individuals don’t demand the same level of emotional and psychological satisfaction, but everyone needs balance.

It is the lack of uniformity in the makeup of human beings that makes us different from one another in respect to our ways of thinking, our culture, our feelings and our beliefs. That, in a general sense, is good. There is no doubt that the role of these factors in the success and failure of an individual’s life plays a big role. A person who is emotionally unstable is probably not going to be extremely successful or respected in life. A person with psychological disorders is probably not going to be successful in social life or in leadership, etc. The successes and failures of individuals in *dunya* are much greater than the differences that are occasioned by the mere social conventions and behavior. But one of the most basic psychological needs, which is a consequence of our human yearning for perfection, to return to that state of tranquility and near perfection, the perfection of the *rūh*, is the urge to seek honor and to be respected. To be recognized as a good person often gets replaced by just to be recognized.

Many of the activities in human life are really directed to achieving this goal, because human beings really cherish honor and dignity to the degree that one resents and avoids indignities and dishonors. At times, when one's honor and dignity and position in society are threatened, a human being tends to employ every effort, all their power to avert dangers, and to do their utmost to avoid the kind of criticism and crisis that comes along with that criticism. The sense of failure and anguish at the possibility of dishonor are perhaps even more unpleasant than the dishonor and defeat themselves, the inadequacies themselves, which can turn life into either a dilemma and a frightening nightmare, or can release one in some way from that cycle that they are in and give the person a new opportunity to change.

Many things elicit that dishonor and indignity. But when we look at the world today, we see people don't care about dishonor. They speak for the purpose of destroying or disrupting or blocking. We realize in today's world, this is a tool that is used, like genocide, to humiliate people and to weaken them. The feeling of humiliation creates a terrible crisis, a terrible storm inside sensitive souls of human beings. The world assumes a very menacing face in the eyes of people who are humiliated. In order to escape the terror and the torment, people may even be led to take refuge in very dark places, psychopathological places and may take their own life. They may revert back to or turn to very anti-social behavior in order to avoid set-backs, and may surrender to what might be actually the truth.

People act today as if they are fighting for their life over things which they should be accepting as the natural course of things. When we look at the just the political interface with social *adab* today, we see that the social *adab* is lacking. The people who have this *adab* now realize how far the world has come. If you watch the news, if you watch the reaction of the representatives of Congress today who are being threatened, whose offices are being broken into, whose families are being threatened, you probably see in their face

an anxiety about going home to their home districts. I am using this political example, but I ask you to think of it in a spiritual way too.

There is also spiritual anarchy. There is the idea that “we just destroy, we take control, we are against the system, we make no positive contribution.” It is anarchic. This is a disease running through our society. It is a disease that, unfortunately and interestingly enough, because it has been focused on so much, is really a minor element in Islam today. But it could grow very rapidly. When you compare it to what is happening in the country on a secular level, or among people in this country today, domestic terrorists far outweigh the small minority of extremists in the Muslim religion.

We should be playing a very positive role in our society in America. We should be playing an extremely positive role in explicating and manifesting values. We should support the people who are good and sincere human beings. We should support the principles of goodness and rightness. They are simple words, but now all of a sudden take on a very important significance. There are many setbacks that reduce us as human beings into very fearful and despondent creatures who are very aggressive, unthinking individuals.

I was talking to one of our people who is living and working in Washington now. She was telling me about the calls they were getting at the Congressional office of a conservative Democrat that she works in. There is a kind of language that is being used, and there are threats that are being made in that office every day now. People are anxious about going to work. They are anxious about what could happen. But that is the whole point of terrorism, isn't it. That is the whole point. Without trying to be political, I want to draw a parallel. The voice has been whipped up by people who have a political agenda, and people are afraid to walk the halls of Congress. When the courageous ones did walk through the halls, it was said, “They are asking to be shot!” The victims are being blamed for their courage.

This is how courageous the Prophet Muhammad (sal) was in Mecca. He handled the issue of the fifth column in Medina. Though you might not have liked how it was handled, it was handled by the people themselves. Everybody says he killed the Jewish tribes. What happened was that the first group was banished. The second group of fifth columnists were tried, in effect, by their own people and condemned by their own people. There are many analogies today. Tyranny is tyranny. Being a traitor is being a traitor.

It was the uncle of the Prophet (sal) who saved him even though he was vilified, even though his people were tortured. It was because of the existence of his uncle that they stopped. But what is the barrier today? If you don't respect the President, if you don't respect the representative, then who do you respect? If you don't do in the name of "Democracy" or "Truth" or "Religion," pick one, how do you say, in that name, that you are doing everything that is undemocratic, un-Islamic, socially unacceptable, spiritually unacceptable. How? You can't—but they do. Hypocrites are hypocrites/*munāfiqūn*. That is what they are, whether you wrap them in religion or you wrap them in the flag. They are hypocrites.

At times when the honor and the dignity and position in society are jeopardized, a human being tends to employ all their efforts and their powers to avert danger, and does the utmost to avoid that kind of crisis that comes along with the situation, because the sense of failure and the sense of anguish at the possibility of dishonor are very unpleasant. But we see in today's society, everything goes very fast that dishonor only lasts a few minutes. Many things elicit this dishonor and this indignity. We realize in the world today that this is a tool that is used like anything. These setbacks reduce human beings into very despondent creatures. They need to be counted. We have a very pathological, very psychologically diseased and distorted population and country today. We have to find proper ways, wholesome ways of confronting these situations.

The rational way is, of course, to channel one's capacities in good direction to affirm personal values and worth, by pursuing actions that each human being has a special talent and ability to pursue. In this way, a person can restore their emotional, spiritual and mental balance, and recover their lost sense of status by doing good deeds, good acts and working together. Let's all join together and build houses for Habitat for Humanity. It would be great. Except you turn your back and somebody hits you in the head with a hammer. Let's not talk politics. Fine. Let's not talk religion. Fine. Let's not talk.

Allah put the desire for self-respect in each human being—the yearning for honor, the yearning for success, the sense of justice. These are all names of Allah. Allah put compassion into His Creation and into His Creatures. Allah put love in the heart of His Creatures. So the question becomes is what? Ready or not, here I come. Where are you? We are playing hide and seek with these qualities. People are dumbed down, paralyzed, anaesthetized. Some people in the media today express evil things. I am not talking about politics, but about character. I don't care about the politics...dialogue between opposites!

I was watching yesterday on Link TV a section on this Palestinian journalist interviewing people, Israelis. He went to the home of the former mayor of Jerusalem to interview him. They were talking the normal things and the mayor, at one point says, about good and evil and said something about human missiles, about people blowing themselves up. Then of course, the interviewee said, "What about dropping bombs where there are only civilians? You know, collateral damage?" He said, "Well, of course, these terrorists go and they bomb and then they go and surround themselves with children. So what do you expect us to do?" The interviewee said, "What about the moral and ethical..." The mayor replied, "That's the problem with you Palestinians! That's the problem with you Palestinians. You are in my home and you speak nicely to me while you are in my home. You always speak about the moral and the ethical and then you do what you do." He got very, very angry.

So the Palestinian said, “But you are talking about master/slave relationship.” The mayor replied, “No we are not talking about master/slave relationship! No we are not.” And the next sentence was what? “We have the power! I am the one who can tell what can be done and what cannot be done.” The Palestinian says, “See?”

The next scene is the man walking with his friend down the street and he says, “Do you think we should talk to him again?” “Yes.” “Do you think he will talk to us again?” “Yes. But I don’t want to do it in his home. I want to do it in a neutral place.” The next scene is they are talking again in a much nicer way. That is okay. That is politics. That kind of anger is okay. It tells you the truth of things. People are in dialogue. Each one wants honor. Each one wants dignity. Each one wants recognition. Each one wants justice. Each one uses the same terminology. That is okay. That is very spiritual. That is very religious. That is very democratic. It is very human: understanding. Everyone wants dignity.

By nature a child expects to receive a lot of attention from those around them. Sometimes they can’t bear to share it with somebody else. One baby is born and another one comes along. The older one cannot bear to share. The older one wants all the attention. So what do you do? You give responsibility to the older one, to the younger one, you prepare them for it. Sabreen used to take a lot of good care of Samah when she was born—loved it. We see that in our community. [When you have another child, you think,] “Will I love the second one as much as I did the first one? Oh, is it possible?” Of course, it is like mitosis. No matter how many, you love them. Your heart expands. Look how hate grows: like a cancer. It also undergoes cell division. Cancer does the same thing, and you have to control it. One of the best things to control it, as our wonderful Iman will tell you, is by attitude. You may or may not be controlling the cells, but you are controlling your life, your dignity, your honor, your relationship with God, Allah.

The rise and fall of human character is the rise and fall of community and nations. The honor and the humiliation of those depend on their spiritual state and their quality. These personal qualities of spiritual merit and sentiments are not comparable to other things we might gather in the rest of our lives. You have to develop those spiritual qualities early and sustain them. It's not the same as gathering other abilities, like I am working on my new Mac laptop computer and becoming facile with it. I will gain capability and facility with that, but it is not comparable to the sense of mercy, compassion, or love, which has to be built early in life. We are obviously dealing with an extremely chronic disease. People were not brought up right, or they were brought up right and not left, or they were not brought up center, at least. Wealth, social status, is not important to them. Power is important to them. They have no honor; they have no sense of justice, no sense of responsibility. They have no sense of what is right and what is wrong. They define it by their emotions and by being misled.

We saw what happened in Iran after 1979. It has metastasized throughout the clerical society, but it has been contained so it can be treated. Most of the body is healthy; it's only part of the brain that is dead. You see what happened in Iraq. How many hundreds of thousands of people died from this mentality? Do we want to see this on the streets of our country? We have to be spiritual alive and awake human beings. Yes, we should honor things that should be honored, and we should point the finger at what is dishonorable. We should have the courage to counteract these acts of violence, and lies and threat, each one of us. Really, our future and our life depend on it. I'm not saying be political activists; be spiritual activists.

I was talking to a person today on the phone about that subject, and what their work is, and also about the spiritual subject. I said that you have to understand the power of your spiritual belief. You have to understand that your practices, your meditation, your prayer, your love for humanity, your service opens doors and eyes and changes people. You have

to believe it. My mother in law says, “Believe it!” – whatever it is in the moment. If you believe it, then you can really make change. We are dealing on a very critical issue of subtlety. Think about what *can't* be done with this attitude: you can't deal with energy issues; you can't deal with employment issues; you can't deal with health issues or financial issues. You can't deal with educational issues or even with military issues, because people won't listen. They are only emotional and so they shut down. So the good things don't get the press.

We live in this community. Our community is affected by what happens in the world. We have an effect on the world. We work all over the world, *inshā'a-llāh*. We try to do good for everyone; I don't care what their religion is, what their name is. We don't care what their color is, or if they are rich or poor. My dear brothers and sisters, what I am telling you is good Islam. It also happens to be good Christianity and good Judaism and everything else. But we are Muslims and it is good Islam. Islam has the answers for these things, but it depends on who you are around. If you bury yourself in your office or in your tiny little world, and you don't reach out and understand what else is going on... if you don't carry on the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (sal) in your life and your family, believe me, your life and family will suffer. It will. I'm not just saying that because “I'm a Muslim.” I'm saying that because it is a really good, true, balanced, honest, sincere, comprehensive, universal dynamic way that fits the world we live in. It really is. God knows, I have tasted a lot at that table.

God knows I started as a young man where I started, and went through Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and yoga. And where did I arrive? Did I just get tired and rested on the platform called Islam? I don't think so. Bring it to the house; bring it to the children and understand what it means. I was talking to someone; I'm quoting him. “A friend of mine is Pakistani. The dynamics in the family are such that the older siblings are pushed to take care of the younger ones, get married, and carry on the tradition and all this other stuff. You gotta do this and that in this way and that way.” I said, “That's not

bad.” “Yes, but there are all these cultural overlays to it and social implications.” I said, “Yes, that’s the problem.” “They are expected to get married and take care of the parents.” That’s okay; look at what Hafiza and her household did; look what happened in that family. Look at the beautiful things we are doing in our community. Do the math. They gave you 18 – 20 years? You give them 18 – 20 years. There is nothing wrong with it. Ah, the cultural overlays and expectations can be dealt with. How? With dignity and honor, respect and love—and you commit to it. That’s your commitment. What does it mean? It means you don’t marry someone who is not going to have the same commitment. It means you try to have a job that allows you to either bring them or come near them. That’s what you should do; that’s the responsibility. You have to bring it home.

This is honor and dignity. This is truth, like it or don’t like it. This is our responsibility as human beings. We can’t just not take that responsibility and take other ones and replace them. “Well, I’ll write every day. I’ll call three times a week. I’ll see them on vacation.” How grateful we are that my mother-in-law lives in my home. Whatever the circumstances are that brings you, how grateful you are! My children can get up and walk six steps and be with their grandmother. What a beautiful thing this is. *Bismi-Llāhi*. We have a lot of responsibility; like it or don’t like it; want it or not. Get to the point where you submit to it and accept it and embrace it and you love it fi sabiil Allah, because Allah is present. There is no other way. Those people who have lost that have lost everything. Those people who are political maniacs, they may have their parents next to them or not, but they are equally crazy. They have to be; there is something they missed in their development. *Bismi-Llāh. Asalaamu aleikum. DUAS.*

O Allah, many of us are ill in this world. Many brothers and sisters are suffering under tyranny and oppression. Many good people are being threatened today. People who have lost their way are beginning to find what has happened when they play the game of politics over the game of love and truth. People who have been given responsibility have

been acting irresponsibly, and just for their own political, social, and monetary gain. They take advantage of others. O Allah, heal us all of our physical, emotional and mental diseases. Among us in our community are those who have illnesses. Heal them, O Allah so they may serve you better. Heal those who have passed in the week since we prayed to You in Jumah prayer. Safeguard their souls, and give them the wings of Your Mercy and Compassion to embrace their souls in their journey. Greet them with the light of their faith and the faces of their beloveds; and give peace of heart to those who are left behind knowing that one day they will join for eternity the ones they love. *Amin.*

SECOND KHUTBAH. Generation after generation, the birds sing. These values we have to have back in our life and in our society. We want the birds to love it here, and the animals to love it here (but stay away from our gardens). We want people to love one another and we want the people who come down the driveway to feel that love and that light. That can only be if you feel it yourself. If you sustain that, you sustain it. DUAS.