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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Jam: To Gather Together](#)

DVD title: Jam and Tafraq:
Witnessing this Creation while Discerning its Creator

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. To the Sufi, the word “*jam*” means to gather, or togetherness. We say togetherness, but it’s ‘to-gather-ness.’ It connotes something more like the elimination of the things that are not the *shuhud*, the witnessed presence of al-Latīfu, the Sublime and Subtle Truth/Haqq/ Reality. It’s not just a gathering of people; although, we say *jamat* for a gathering of people such as in prayer. What is the purpose of that gathering? The purpose is to divest yourself of any distraction other than seeing the Divine Presence by your own eye, *shuhudi*.

In the word of gathering there is the purpose of gathering. There is also the word “*tafraq*,” to partition. That’s when the truth or the reality is discerned vis a vis *firāsa* from the creation by means of the physical world, and the emphasis is put on the Divine. You are partitioning the perceptions of the physical world from the reality of the Presence of the Divine in that creation. The idea of *jam* without the essence of *tafraq* is really disbelief. To not accept that you can see with the eye of singular perception the division between the apparent and the real is what the atheist believes. There is no separation, no difference. I guess you could say that *tafraq* without *jam* is to discern creation by the means of the physical world, without the idea of Divine Presence. It is a very undeveloped perception.

Perhaps a better way to say it is to perceive the Creator of this creation by means of His creation, and to realize that Single Divinity is present. This is the combination of discernment, seeing with one’s eye and seeing everything in creation as a means provided

by Allah, to be aware of that Divine Presence. *Jam* and *tafraq* are really at the root of Sufic/Islamic understanding of “**Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah.**” It is not a philosophical statement, but an actual statement that you are seeing through the creation that Divine Presence, and you are gathering to yourself from wherever you look that realization. This *jam* belongs to the *rūh*. The *rūh* itself can recognize its own essence and source, and is free from distractions. When one looks through the *latā’if* of *rūh*, your soul is a direct perceiver of its own Divine Origin. Yet, at the same time, this *tafraq* (partitioning) belongs to the heart.

The realm of the physical heart, the biological realm where that combination of elements and structures that form our existence, the matrix that forms our physical reality and shapes our existence is shaped with very distinct elements and components: earth, air, fire, and water. As long as the togetherness and partition are inexorably linked, and we understand the relationship, this is *wujūd*/beingness. Keeping in touch with the soul, reminding oneself of one’s origins, being attentive not just to the physical yearnings or the worldly attractions, the knower/*arif* very actively and sincerely allows their *rūh* to guide them. And we call them *mushahadah*, *shahid*.

Mushahadah is perceiving the Divine Perception, a voracious striving to search out the Divine Meaning or Presence, the Truth /Haqq in every circumstance. This keeps the human being attentive to their soul. The soul is always seeking the track of the Haqq / Truth, not being distracted like the heart can be distracted. So one can live in this essence of *jam*, or what some Sufis call “*jami jam*,” and arrive at this *maqam* where the heart and soul is patient and not strained. [One can use] the physical world and our attachments to the physical world, this biological matrix or form that defines our physical existence, as an instrument for the *jihad al-akbar*, the great struggle to be focused on the Divine Presence and the purpose of our life. Junayd wrote a quatrain:

For sure I found You within the secrets upon my tongue.

Togetherness (jam) for some meaning and tafraq (partition) for some other meaning.

*If due to majestic grandeur (jamal) You are absent from my eyes (tafraq),
That is, there is a partition.*

Yet with yearning and consciousness, Your nearness (jam) is inside.

One Sufi named Wasiti said,

If you glance at your nafs, then you are in a state of tafraq. If you glance at your Lord, then you are in a state of jam (togetherness). If you are in a state of subsisting upon other than yourself, indeed you are evanescent (fana) without jam (togetherness) and without tafraq (partition). Therefore, whoever during the worship looks down at his own self, desiring rewards or self-admiration, then he is in a state of partition. But whoever during the worship or obeisance looks at the virtues and generosity of their Lord and is humbled by that, he is in a state of jam, (togetherness). Whoever is completely evanescent from his own self and his own deeds, he is in the state of jami jam.

He's talking here about during worship. *Ibāda* can be many things, but take the example of prayer. If you are, during prayer, thinking of your own self, your own circumstance, not realizing either the *jamat* or the purpose of togetherness, then you are in a state of partition, separation. But if in prayer you are grateful, and you look at the generosity of Allah and what position you are in, then you are in the state of *jam*. If you are totally absent to your own self and your own actions, and you are abstracted to the degree there is only Allah, that is *jami jam*. Another way of understanding is, Abul Ali Daqaq said, "All things related to You cause partition. Whatsoever is taken away from you causes togetherness." Like in the loss of this young man, what you pray for is that the people think not just of their own self in the relationship, but what has been taken for them has brought them near to Allah and increased their faith.

This is very hard to contemplate, how any of us would react in this situation. It's been on my mind all day. People are dying every day, but I'm often talking to Elvira. She is very devoted and works at all these places to get money for her family, who are farmers and village people. I've said to her often, in many different ways without be harsh, "Instead of feeling guilty about not doing your prayer or sittings, why not be grateful that you know what you know, and you have the opportunity? You should take the opportunity." You've heard that yourselves many times. The joy that one gets in *jamat*, the benefit, the pleasure, the community, the upliftment, the sharing of responsibilities, and service to one another one gets in *jamat* is a metaphor for being gathered in the Divine Presence.

The selfishness and ego, jealousies and fears, the ideas of one's own indispensability creates this partition/*tafraq*. Even in *jamat*, if we talk about the gathering of people, there are these partitions set up. I was at the main mosque in Washington DC for the *khutbah* the other day. At one time, you feel the vastness of the Muslim community because so many faces are seen there—all the embassies, the rich people, and the poor people. It's a very interesting culmination that pours out into the street. Yet you could see afterwards, in the greeting of the *imam* and other things, the partitions between the people among that group. During the *khutbah* and the prayer, there was really a *jamat* (or it appeared to be) that dominated. Afterwards, what dominated was *tafraq*, partitions.

You can see that this is what happens inside your own self. How do we keep ourselves in the gathering mode? Junayd said, "*Qurb (nearness to God) is caused by wajd (divine awareness or consciousness, and that is jam (togetherness). Its absence is tafraq.*" If we allow ourselves to cloak or be distracted from what appears to be the hidden truth, but which constantly tries to manifest itself... if you look at the miserable things going on in the world today, and read the articles and papers and blogs, you see the hypocritical actions of people and the potential violence within people, and the threats being made in our own country. You see it and wonder, how can people not see the truth? How can

they be so ignorant, and herded like cattle or sheep? What is the underlying anger, resentment and bigotry that can be sparked by any spark into a fire? It tells you clearly the difference between *jam* and *tafraq*, even if you don't know those words. It points out clearly to you the truth from the untruth. You don't have to be a sociologist, a political theorist, or a political scientist to understand the elements of what is transpiring.

Clearly we see the hypocrisy, the lies, the deceptions, and we stand back from it and wonder: how can people buy into that? What state are they really in that allows them to buy into that? You realize that if they had any knowledge of ideology, there would be at least some discernment. It's humanity at one of its lowest dips, looking for any excuse to express their anger and frustration, and their bigotry and prejudice in the case of our country. This is the lower nature. They gather together, like the Tea Partiers. But it's not *jam*. *Jam* is not just the fact that you are gathering together. They are gathering for what purpose? They have very little in common except their anger and discontent.

If you juxtapose that with what is happening in Kyrgyzstan today, for example, the people there (like many places in the world) are fed up with corruption. It manifests itself in their society by incredible rises in prices of good and services. Five years ago, they rioted in the streets and the government fell. You ask yourself, why did it fall? There is an element there of honesty and nobility; otherwise, they would just crush it with violence like the Iranians did. They would just gather people up and execute them. They would put the army into the streets and kill the people. In other words, the partitions are not so great, despite so many years under Soviet rule and the experiments in quasi-democracy and nationalism. The elements of values and moral and ethical principles are still alive, otherwise the government wouldn't fall.

We can question whether they are alive in this country at this point, but we don't want to find out. You see the level of lies and hypocrisy; there is no *jamat*. If you extend that Islamically, you can say there is no *majlis*, either. You may have a parliament, but it

would not be true *majlis*. You would not have the value system strong enough underneath it. Where are we when you take that on a personal level. What do we do as Sufis? The meaning of *jam* is that Allah (swt) causes a feeling or an experience of consciousness of His Divine Presence—His names, attributes and value—as a conduit for the freedom of the soul and our own being to transcend the limitations of our *nafs* and re-form within ourselves a new being within this self. It is a new being that allows the Adamic nature within us to remanifest itself and reaffirm the essential values Allah (swt) placed in us that allowed us to exist and subsist upon the I-ness, it-ness or Hu of Allah, not upon our own self.

What we see today, for example, in our own government and our own partisanship, this *shi'ism* in our own government, is an extremely high level (or low level) of selfishness. It is only for the perpetuation of one's own power or power base. Then it gets usurped or co-opted by the lower nature of the human being. We let our lower nature co-opt our beingness and control our belief and faith. It could be our laziness or greed, our jealousy or fear, our anger or just our desires and passions. These co-opt our truth, our beingness, and it manifests the way we see in our society today. When you look at the political “tea party” movement, what do these people have in common except ignorance and anger? When *jam* takes place, when we allow ourselves to be associated with the essential goodness, when we read the Washington Post on-line or send articles back and forth to each other, or point out the hypocrisy, or sign a petition that supports free speech in the physical realm, when we perceive the truth, then we understand that we are seeing and hearing with a higher nature.

How many times a day do we tell ourselves to follow that? By telling ourselves to follow that nature, we are affirming it and gathering around the truth. Am I being too obscure or metaphorical? How many times a day do we actually do that? We just sort of blasé go through the day and react and respond. Sometimes it comes back on you when you have a conversation with someone, a member of your family or the community, and there is

extreme frustration, because you are trying to act from a value of *jamat*, gathering. Then all you are hearing expressed is fear, not *khawf* fear, but fear of loss, fear of lack of recognition, or you hear arrogance, or you feel resistance to what you know is the truth. It can only be when we are in a state of *jam* that Allah can say, “*I will be his hearing, his sight, and his hand, and they will hear by Me and see by Me and strike by Me.*” If you are directed by your *nafs* toward your *nafs*, this can’t happen. When you are directed by the *jami jam*, by your self in your self, only then can it happen. Why is that important? In a *hadith qudsi*, the Messenger of Allah (sal) said:

Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with them. My servant draws not near to Me with anymore more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him. My servant continues to draw near to Me with superogatory works so that I shall love him. And when I love him, I am the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask something of Me, I would surely give it to him. Were he to ask of Me refuge, I would surely grant it to him. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate in seizing the soul of My faithful servant. He hates death and I hate hurting him.

This is *jam*. In this state of *jam*, the human being is not made into some sort of demigod; rather, the human being becomes what the human being was created to be in a state of togetherness and gatheredness, consciously working for a similar end that is good. [The state of *jam*] gathers human beings around value. [It] promotes the well being of all, and the sustainability of the community, of the values by which we gather in the first place, and hopefully, in every gathering. We actually walk into the gathering prepared and anxious to be in the *jamah* so that we can gather the knowledge, and gather from one another, from the discourse, from just the Divine Presence what directs our soul back or open to the awareness of that Divine Presence. The light/*tajalli* that comes from that

process, or that allows that process is like the sun exists within yourself but has been blocked in some way. You uncover the light of the sun within your own self. Then wherever you turn, you shine the light of that truth. I don't want to be terribly political, but you don't see much of that light these days.

When you hear what sounds to be the truth, and you overcome your initial doubt of it (just because it is uttered by a politician or reported on television), usually the second emotion (at least for me) is a kind of apprehension and almost remorsefulness, to know how it will be twisted, demeaned and emptied of its meaningfulness, only for the sake of political partisanship—with no sense of the future, and no *khawf*/fear of the retribution of Allah or the system responding to it. Whether it is the environment system or the political or social system, we see all around us the manifestation of partitions. If in our own personal life, even if we fail a hundred times a day, but we try a hundred and one times day to be in that state of jam; if we enter into our prayer, our work, and our gathering with a certain attitude, even if we just make that effort, we are potentially going to achieve that *maqam*.

I guess I should end by saying that the people who do achieve that *maqam*, unfortunately historically, stand out. Maybe in that there is something to say as to why people stop striving—out of fear. You do stand out. You're different. Then you have to deal with that difference. This *jam* or *jami jam* has a magnetic kind of attraction to it. You attract to yourself others like yourself, and you meet at a higher level. On the one hand, that's what makes any distraction even more apparent, but you meet at a higher level. Out of that comes some hope (hopefully), and some guidance; and this constant struggle with the angst and the frustration of change.

The soul will not change. The soul will only head back towards its source. But the environment in which the soul dwells, the beingness, can change. That's the *dhāhir*/outer aspect of it. It is often walking this line between hope and frustration, this vision of what

could be and the harsh reality of what is, the temporality of this life and its evanescence, and the permanence of the Hereafter and its sustainability; walking on that razor's edge. Just the fact that we see it, and make choices to act in certain ways, and to develop a certain attitude makes meaningful this life. At least, it should. I hope it was somewhat beneficial. *Asalaamu aleikum.*