

Khutbah

April 16, 2010



Title: [Removing Rancor from the Heart](#)
DVD title: Cleansing Rancor from our Heart and our Society

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) in Suratu-l-Hashr:

And those who came after them say, “Oh our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who came before us in faith, and place not in our hearts any rancor towards those who securely believe. Our Lord, truly You are Gentle, Merciful. (59:10)

It is obvious that we live in a time when there is a lot of rancor, a lot of anger in the hearts of human beings; unfortunately, we can find some of that rancor in our own hearts. There are few of us that can say that there are no seeds or soil for that kind of upset and anger or rancor.

Alhamdulillah, we are on a path where we are conscious of that and we are on a path where we want to remove that or weed the garden, if you will, of such things. But all around us we find such anger and rancor, and with it such ignorance and misunderstanding, such ideological politicization and distortion of truth that wherever we look in the world, we see it. We do not see the proper reaction against it, as if the Truth has been suppressed, and the courage has been suppressed, and repressed in people.

Just before I came down here, I got an e-mail from Elvira thanking me and us for our sincere prayers for her deceased brother. She said that just before the revolution took place, they let the thugs out on the streets and from the prisons. They are still looting and she does not know what is happening. They didn't have confidence in the last administration and they don't have confidence in this administration and she said, “Maybe it is time for those of us who are part of the younger generation to step forward and take responsibility.” I wrote back and said, “Yes. It is certainly time to make yourself available, but to base it on a true understanding of your *dīn*, of Islam, of universal values, and with a true commitment, as professionals and citizens of your

country—especially people like you who have had experience in other parts of the world—to come forward and begin to take responsibility in your nations.”

Before that, I was on an hour and a half meeting with the Middle East Peace Civic Forum Round Table where there was a former ambassadors, film-makers, NGO people, State Department officials, Palestinian refugees, Israeli, Jewish members of the Jewish community. We were all sitting in the round table in Washington. I was on there for an hour and a half of their two hour meeting, listening and listening and listening, and speaking a few things and reminding them about basic little things, like, “I haven’t heard you talk about the faith community and the power of the faith community. I haven’t heard you talk about youth and the education of youth. Instead of looking at the problem of the fear and the anger in the hearts of the Palestinians and the fear and the anger in the hearts of the Jews, I have not heard you talk about the youth, and thinking about a 10 to 30, year timeline and investing in youth and professionals, and professional development and mutual work together in order to...” and I decided to stop because I was not going to talk social media and all of the rest of it.

They appreciated my comments, *alhamdulillah*. There were many stories and many sincere people. Then I reminded them that there are people who do not want to have peace in this world. “I don’t need to tell you who they are. I don’t think I need to tell you about the politics of fear, about the investment in fear—keeping people in fear, keeping people involved in the endless war or the endless revolution.” I said, “Don’t be naïve. Unless there is a populist movement, unless people want to abide by universal values, unless there is a popular movement about those values....” And I drew their attention to the Tea Party Movement. “You see this is a populist movement, albeit based on lies, deceit and people being led around by ideologues. But you see the power of a populist movement and the kind of press it gets. You talk about wanting to get press for peace, then you have to have a populist movement to do that.” I made three contributions to that.

What drives people to politics today is anger, rancor. Not only do we have to cleanse it from ourselves, we have to cleanse it from our society. I don’t know how to do that unless we have a movement. [In a Legacy meeting], I showed the video piece that was done on Harold Robles

and Schweitzer. I said, “We should start a Legacy movement, ‘Reverence for Life,’ using Schweitzer’s phrase.” Tell the stories of many people but ask them to speak about their reverence for life. Look at that subject alone. You can start a popular movement on that alone, Reverence for Life. You can. We have to end this rancor in our hearts. We have to think and pray and plead with our own conscience. We have to think of ourselves second, but we have to think of others by thinking of Allah and thinking of what we have to cleanse inside of ourselves. When Allah commands us to do something, we should do it. We should inspire ourselves. We should cajole ourselves. We should plead with ourselves to do what is right and what is good, and we should take it very, very seriously and sincerely. We should try to act as He would have us act, and be as He would have us be (excuse the term He).

I remember in the earliest days of my journey, and you have heard me say this, if I did not know how to act, or know what to do, or did not have the ability in myself to act in ways that I thought I should act, or say what I should speak, I would have my teacher in my mind and I would say, “What would he have me do. How would he have me act? What would he have me say in a circumstance like this?” Well, I was not always able to follow it, but at least I asked the question. Because we have the Prophet Muhammed (sal), and other great examples in the *awliyā*, the Sahabah and the *shuyukh*, we can pretty well get an answer to that question whenever we ask it. If we would take the time to ask it, we would get answers. What would be a better way then giving comfort to the hearts and the minds of others and ourselves by removing sorrow, and by learning to live our lives with a healthy, peaceful and calm state of mind, with a deep commitment to this path, to the practices, to Islam, to humanity and to Allah? Our heart is designed for this process—to be able to exist and be free of all disturbances of rancor, jealousy, doubt, and ill-feelings towards one another, no matter what, no matter what. Yet we can accommodate those feelings to such a high degree, that it can twist life into those other negative feelings. It twists life to be something it never was intended to be. Allah gave us the choice to make.

A lot of that discussion at the Round Table was about history and the narrative. That is the new big word: the narrative of people’s lives, the narrative of history. How do you get beyond that? How do you get people to be positive, and what can you do to get them to sit at the table? One

man who was speaking, who I thought was sort of on the right track, said, “You have to look at your own assumptions as individuals and as an organization. What are you assuming?” That is when I jumped in and I said, “Yeah. And the first assumption is that people want peace. The second assumption is that you know the way to get to that peace.”

We have to look at our own self and our own life circumstance and see that whatever we are dealing with in our own life, there is, that same question is being dealt with in another form, in the community and in the nation and in the world. Believe me, it is. No matter what it is you are dealing with in your own personal life. I don't care if it is on a level of relationships. I don't care if it is on the level of money. I don't care if it is a question of power. I don't care if it is a question of will or patience or tolerance or health or illness, it is being dealt with, next step in the community, next step the larger community and the world. If you are dealing with a health issue here, there is health care in the United States. Then there is life and death issues in the world based on poverty and health issues.

We are connected to everything. We have to remember that. As they were saying at the Table, people are so fixated on their fears and their angers, they don't see the greater picture. Well, that is the exact same thing with you and me and anybody else—exactly the same thing. How you solve it in yourself is how you solve it in the world. You have confidence in Allah. That is the ultimate answer. The ultimate answer is that you have confidence, compassion, mercy, trust, justice, understanding, patience, divine kinship, lordship, forgiveness, protection, perseverance. You have confidence in that and you bring that confidence into yourself to whatever your major problem is. Maybe you have two problems. Maybe you are sick and tired of someone, and maybe you are sick and tired. You bring it into your real life. The answer really is with Allah, not as a religious answer, but as a very practical answer.

I came up with an idea: why not take this theme of Reverence for Life, interview all these people we know in the Middle East forum, and create a series called “Reverence for Life”? [Why not] get it distributed all around the world, and have different people come and talk about reverence for life from their perspective? I could have the ulema from Bosnia speak about it. Who do you know? At the end of the Forum meeting, they were saying, “Who do you know in the White

House, in the Administration?” I reminded them, “Take it to one degree of separation. Who do you know who knows somebody that could give you access?” We don’t have to know someone, Michelle Obama, or President Obama or their children. Know somebody who knows. There has to be a movement for peace. The movement for peace has to be around something that people can empathize with, like reverence for life.

So you see, it is a possibility. It is not soft. It is somebody’s life story. The lady who grew up in Lebanon in one of the Palestinian refugee camps (in Shatila I think it was), she has story to tell, not of her life, but of reverence for life. Why not stand on the shoulder of giants, like Schweitzer? We should bring comfort to the hearts and minds of others and to ourselves, and we should live our life in a very peaceful and calm state of mind as much as is possible. We should be glad and happy, and show that gladness and happiness to others. What we have learned over these years as Muslims, as Sufis, as members of this community is not to bury it in the ground when they bury us, but to let it live on. When we see others enjoying the comforts of life, we should be happy for that. When we see others making peace, we should be happy for that. We should understand that all the good fortune that comes to human beings is not just for us. These are the Favours of Allah (swt). For the gifts that Allah has bestowed on us, we should remember and say, “Ya Allah, You have bestowed these gifts on me, and on other creatures too—so many provisions, so much *rizq*. Some of these gifts are bestowed upon us by Your Favor, not by anything we have done—by Your love. Not that we deserve it. None of it is associated with You except what You give. All praise and thanks to You, Allah.”

How long did it take me to say it? Eight or ten seconds. We are not willing to give eight or ten seconds to Allah a few times a day? I hate to think about how many eight or ten seconds I have wasted already today. What about you? When people find each other in difficulty, when people feel sorrow on their hearts, they should sympathize and empathize with one another and pray to Allah, “Oh Allah, remove these people’s difficulties. Pardon their sins. Assist them in their needs.” How long did that take? Five seconds? We see people every day; we hear about people every day in situations like that and we should be praying for them in that way. Now I have asked you for twelve seconds. That is all—twelve seconds. How much good can you do in twelve seconds? Well, if you believe that everything is interconnected, if you believe that

intention is powerful, then that twelve seconds can do a lot. We have to remember that the Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, “***Oh Allah, if You are a Forgiver, then forgive all the sins of all the creatures. No slave of Yours will be in difficulty.***” That is another four seconds. Now we are up to 16 seconds. How much good can we do in those seconds—a lot.

Of course there are a lot of shoulds and a lot of coulds in this world. Muslims should live in such a way that they are sympathizers and empathizers with individuals and with humanity as a whole. We should live as if we share the woes of all humanity, not just Muslims. We should be content with and thankful for our life. We should be happy with achievements that Allah (swt) has given us, for the opportunities to do things. We should be free from jealousy, free from rancor, free from corruption, free from fear, for anger and jealousy is a fatal disease. There is no known cure for it. It creates the walking dead. Do you know how many people walk around this world with anger based on jealousy, fear in their history? It causes our faith to dissipate immediately. It causes our happiness to dissipate immediately, if we come into contact with those people. It is like liquid that runs through the fingers.

There is a cure. It is not an external cure, but an internal cure that is called paying attention to the heart, as I spoke last night. It is not just something we do in meditation, paying attention to the heart. It is something we should do at all times, because we know that ‘*āqil* comes from that. That is why Tasawwuf is so important. A black heart, a tarnished heart, a rusty heart tarnishes even more and more at times of anger and jealousy and fear. If hearts are glowing and filled with light, then Allah bestows prosperity and happiness on those hearts, because they shine light on that prosperity and they share it. It does not matter if that person is a high level person or a low level person, an educated person or an uneducated person, even the smallest act of righteousness, the smallest act of good, the smallest intention rushes directly into the repository of the heart and makes a difference. From there, the light glows.

Abdul ibn Amr said, in a narration of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), “***The Messenger was asked, ‘Which people are great in virtue?’ and the Prophet replied, ‘One whose heart is neat, whose heart is clean, whose tongue is truthful.’ He was then asked, ‘We are aware of the truthful tongue, but what is the meaning of a neat and clean heart?’ His answer was, ‘One who fears***

Allah and is free from evil. His heart is clean. There is no sin, and knows neither insubordination nor jealousy, nor rancor.’’

Islamic society has to be based on something that is totally removed from our selfishness. It has to be based on mutual love and affection. It has to be based on friendship and brotherhood, sisterhood and cooperation, and dealing honestly with one another. There is no room for an ungrateful person or for a jealous heart or for that kind of rancor and anger. Any Muslim who says there is does not understand Islam. When one wants things to happen **now**, that is a cultural attitude. There is no patience. [One strives] to be able to say, “The last moment I was rancorous, the last moment I showed anger, I was outside of Islam. In that moment I was not a Muslim. In that moment I wasn’t even a proper human being. I was outside of my true Islam.” If it does not matter, well, then it does not matter.

But I should understand what it is: submission to Allah. Islam is peace. Islam is service and understanding. Islam is compassion and mercy. Now I can understand that I was outside of Islam and that means that I was not protected. I was vulnerable in that moment. Not only did the person who was the object of my anger suffer, I also suffered. We know that at a cellular level you suffer. It means that in that moment, I could not ask for his safety; I could not ask for security; I could not ask for peace. There is no place in Islam for a person who nurtures that kind of attitude, jealousy, fear, anger or lack of empathy. There is no place for a person who is judgmental, for a person who is a hypocrite. There is no room for a person who has envy in his or her heart. A lot of people say that what I am saying is heretical: who am I to say who is inside or outside of Islam? But the Prophet (als) is telling us this.

I don’t want to go on for a long time today. I will continue it later, if you like. But I want you to remember it, *inshā’a-Llāh*, especially when we look at the news today, and the crazed people. They are dangerous people. President Clinton came out today and said, “People need to watch what they say. Their words have power.” He knows. *Asalaam aleikum*.

Closing duas.