

May 7, 2010

Khutbah



Title: [Reciprocal Responsibility](#)

DVD title: Reciprocal Responsibility (Takāfur):  
Interdependence and Accountability to Others

Opening duas.

Allah says in Holy Qur'an in an 'āyat we are very familiar with and spoken many times:

**Hold fast to the rope of Allah altogether 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 Blessings, you became as brothers and you are on a brink of an abyss of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear His signs to you that you may be guided. (3:103-104)**

To whom is He referring?

**And the believing men and the believing women are protectors of each other. They enjoin the right and forbid the evil and they stand for *salah* and they pay their *zakat*. They obey Allah and His messenger. For these, Allah will have mercy on them. Truly Allah is mighty and wise. (9:71)**

This concept, dear brothers and sisters, of reciprocal responsibility and mutual responsibility is very important to us in these days, in our community and in our world where there is a great deal of interdependency economically, in terms of our work, our life and our future.

Notwithstanding the fact that the world financial markets are threatened and all the pundits are trying to explain what happened yesterday in the stock market. In a matter of a half an hour, it went down 1,000 points. The Greek government is about to fail, which will have a domino effect on the rest of Europe, and therefore an effect on the United States. It just shows you the interdependency of the world we live in, which is just a manifestation of the interdependency that we have been talking about for the past 40 years—spiritually.

We should not separate these aspects of our lives, our community. Truly, the only way, I think, there is going to be any survival in the future is when people are going to live in a situation like we live in. In that situation, they take very serious account of themselves and account of others and responsibility. Oh sure, you might for the next 25 years, 50 years be able to get away with living by yourself and on your own with your own selfish needs and desires and all the rest of it; but believe me, the chances are that it will come to an abrupt end, and it will certainly come to an abrupt end. It has already started for many people—like the man who barricaded himself in his house because of his mortgage foreclosure. You know there are countless stories that I do not have to get into, as this is not an economic *khutbah* today.

The fact is that there could be more interdependency and reciprocity and responsibility throughout the community, especially in the work areas, especially in responsibility for others. You have taken on with, I think, hope in our hearts and blessings from Allah (swt) for many years, decades, the care of each other and elderly members of our family, the education and care of our young people. We have also taken on new programs and new businesses. It has been very important that we search out the means for the future, and we keep a deep commitment to the future of this community, and we need to be sure to refurbish our ship of state, if you will, in this case, *hal*, and set it to sea again on the ocean/*bahr*, on the *hizb ul bahr*. Again, [it is done] with a good crew, making sure we do good work, spreading a good message around the world, serving the world because

serving the world is serving our own self and Allah, of course. This is accomplished by doing certain things that are very basic. I wish the children were here today, but they are getting a lesson in civics and I don't think we reinforce the spiritual lessons enough or put them in high enough priority. I don't think that anyone should treat these things superficially or lightheartedly and they are the following. I am going to remind you of them, and here they are:

Doing favors and helping others. This is very important. Seize every opportunity, every moment to do favors and to assist others without hesitation, without complaint. We have in our community good examples of this. We have in our community our own personal evaluation of ourselves, and we should make that *muhasabat*.

Another thing is sponsoring, supporting, caring and sharing with others for their needs and in their needs, not hesitating to ask or to give support. I want to make a caveat with that. I want to say to begin with, help others with their hopes and their ideals and their aspirations and their spiritual life. Begin there. Give your sponsorship to them. Give your name, your effort behind each other's efforts spiritually, communally, intellectually and then physically, and then, of course, if you need to, financially and other means. That means putting your efforts and your name behind it. That implies that you value your name, that you value your identity, and you value your culture.

Third is to support the ideas and the efforts of each other. To support does not mean to blindly give support. Support means to give your advice, to know when to speak and when not to speak, and to not judge yourself to be vulnerable before you give your advice. In other words, do not hesitate to say something that should be said, because you are afraid that someone is going to think ill of you. Support the ideas and efforts in what way you can, with good advice or good partnership or with help in any way. [Give support] not just because a person lives in this community, or just because a person who

asks is a Muslim or something like that, but bring your knowledge and skill to that support. Check yourself for your ego.

Care for the results of not only the work, but care for a state of mind, a state of health and a state of well-being of one another. (I am glad you are memorizing this.) Share what you have in such a way that you have faith that Allah (swt) will replenish you—true faith. Don't think of your health, your tiredness, how your back hurts, how your backside hurts, your feet hurt, or your nose hurt, or whatever. Allah will refresh you and Allah will replenish you. That means to also keep your self in good health. How can you help others unless you are in good health? Keep yourself in a good state of mind. How can you help others with their state of mind unless you are in a good state of mind?

Nurture each other in times of need. Like the mother with a baby, or the friend with a friend, or the father with the child, or the brother with the sister or brother. It also means that in work that we do, add very carefully more and more encouragement or, using the Spring metaphor, more fertilizer to the seed, in our case, manure—good bacteria. All these things have to be thought of not in a personal sense, but in a collective sense. All these activities would be meaningless if they were done for the wrong reasons. If we help others for our own sake, if we give our names to one another because we want to have the glory of it, if we support something or care for someone because you will get some merit for it, bad intentions lead to bad actions and exploitation. To earn a reward and blessing of Allah, one has to do good for the sake of good, for the sake of those for whom the good is being done, not for one's own sake.

Allah (swt) informs us in Sūratu Tawba 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, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually protect each other by the goodness of our actions and intentions. We protect each other by the quality of our prayer, the quality of our *wudu*, the quality of our diet, the quality of our caring (that is, using the right

methodology), the quality of our education, the quality of our *du'ā*, the quality of our reading and studying, the quality of our personal service to worship Allah (swt). It is not to use external things as an excuse to not do the things that make the external things acceptable and meaningful.

This is explained in the concept of Muslims helping each other in society, and in a *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (sal), “***The similitude of believers in that they have compassion, mercy and feelings towards one another is like a body. When an organ ails, all the body comes forward 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 is to the believer like a building reinforcing one another.***” None of us would want to go into a building with a bad foundation and poor reinforcement like they had in Haiti or in Turkey or other places. None of us want to go on transportation that has not been well cared for. Everything will go well and we will arrive safely if we care for our vehicle.

We have the responsibility to care for the technology that serves us, and to care for the mentality that runs it. The highest meaning then of *tawwakul*/trust can be understood by another *hadith*: “***He is not a believer until he wants for his brother (or sister) what he wants (likes) for himself.***” What does that mean? It is to understand the reciprocity, the reciprocal responsibility. We have to present the different faces of this kind of relationship. We have to see that the first face is some kind of an ethic. We should enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong beginning with ourselves, but we cannot always just deal with ourselves. The truth of the matter is that we are all making errors while we are all taking care of others. You can't expect to be perfect and then begin this process. That is the truth.

It would be wonderful, in one way, if we could all be born and raised in little confines and cells of perfection, and then move on in that state of perfection to help others to raise

the children to serve others. But that is not the way it is. Allah (swt) must know that as we are learning and growing, we are also doing and performing and setting the way for the future. He must know it, but what does He do? He provides an example, the example: the Prophet (sal). He provides little groups of examples for people we can look to. He says, "I'm saying this to you. I am inviting you to this way of thinking. I am commanding you. Do this." Then it is clarified. A command to invite people to do good and to forbid the evil is also saying there will arise out of you a band of people that will strive to enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is evil. These are the ones who will receive the felicity. The Prophet (sal) explained also this in another way. The greatest *tafsir* of Qur'an is the *hadith* of Nebi Muhammad (sal), "***He who sees wrong should change it with his hands; if not, he should change it with his tongue; if not, he should change it with his heart, and this is the weakest of faith.***" We have responsibility for the ethic.

The second part of *takāful* (mutual responsibility) is that very material aspect, the economic aspect. Allah (swt) provides us *zakat*, a pillar of Islam, so that the rich can help those who are in need, or so that those who have more will take care of those who have less. Those will take care of the needs of those who do not have. At the same time, Allah forbade that they could make any money off of that. There should not be any interest, so that one group would not be exploited by another group. On the other hand, Allah encouraged to give charity in addition, *sadqa*, as well as the *zakat al-fitr* in Ramadan. Giving is a very important aspect of fulfilling one's responsibilities. That means to us that we do this naturally. We take care of what is at home before you take care of anything else. This is the way it works.

Very few sane people go around putting food on somebody else's table before they put it on their own table. Even those who did it, when they got home had to account for it. Those *walis* are wonderful people, but I don't think we are quite there. For the rest of us, we have to see to it that there is sufficient [food] left in the walk-out, so that the next

person who comes gets some. Then the next person has to care for the next person, and the next person has to care for the next person. Of course, there are times when we put things aside for a reason. Our community meals are coming up, but we have to do that with an understanding that there be a sufficient amount for the rest of the week, the rest of the people. We take care of what is in our homes. We don't want our children to go home and feel there is no food there. We didn't start our buying club for no reason. Each one of us could go out and buy food independently (and we do for things that we don't have), but we started the club for a reason other than just food. We have to take care of our responsibilities here just as we do anywhere else.

We have to pay our bills here, just as we do everywhere else. We have to care for our guests just as we would like to be cared for ourselves. We have to provide for the future. Islam even dictates that we should have an idea of preserving some wealth after death. The idea of inheritance is made sure that wealth is shared with the family and they are cared for. The idea of reciprocal responsibility is an effect; otherwise, a small minority of people would concentrate their wealth in their own hands. They would be spoiled and the rest of the people would go without. Those people are called banks—selfish banks, investment houses. Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (sal) legislated, suggested and cajoled, implored and gave living examples for many opportunities. In many places in Qur'an there is emphasis on taking care of orphans, not just physically but socially, morally, spiritually, ethically. One is not to treat the orphan with harshness, for example. We are encouraged time and time again to feed those who are in need. Prophet Muhammad (sal) said that the one who fosters the orphan is like the one who lives in paradise. He held out his two fingers and pressed them together. This is the relationship.

In the meaning of this concept of reciprocal responsibility, even from a biological view, Islam encourages fostering. It forbids adoption as a way to protect the biological make up of the individuals in society; but at the same time, you have to take care of orphans. You can all talk to Saara about that—and should—about what she learned in Morocco.

We live in a world now where it is necessary. Think of those poor children in Haiti with no one to adopt them. Think of what happens to them. There are organizations that we can work through and we have to think about this.

There is also the fostering of good ideas, the fostering of care and concern, the fostering of love, the fostering of service. [We must] take it upon ourselves. These are forms of *tarbiyya*, of education. The highest form of *‘ilm*/knowledge and *yaqin*/certainty is the knowledge and certainty about Allah, and our duty and obligation to our Creator. There is no greater knowledge than that. The best textbook is the one I read from at the beginning of the *khutbah*, the Qur’an. Prophet Muhammad (sal) said that the best among you is the one who learns Qur’an and teaches it to others. He also said that teachers and students are partners in the reward. The rest of the people are good for nothing. That is what he said. It means that if they are not involved in *tarbiyya*, they are good for nothing. As important as relationships are, and the education is, and the seeking of this path is, and the seeking of Truth is, there is a reward in taking responsibility. The greatest reward is knowledge itself, [as well as] certainty about that knowledge and certainty about Allah. No doubt and no disbelief have room to live in that kind of certainty.

It is very important as Muslims that we have the maximum kind of education, that we use this education in the service of Allah and His creation, and support our students financially, ethically, morally and encourage them. There is nothing more valuable for children than education. If you want things even in the material world, it is education that will give you the money to buy it. One should think about the contribution to society and of the service to humanity, not dollars and cents: “I will be a doctor so I can have a quarter million dollars a year.”

There are many aspects to this concept [of *takāfur*]. There is responsibility for the political. There are responsibilities that are judicial, social responsibilities, familial

responsibilities, just helping individuals. We have to admit that Allah ultimately is the One Who is helping us. The best way that Allah (swt) helps us is with those who we love and who love us—those who stand beside us and those who stand with us, people who are patient, who are tolerant, whose love is great. So let us live our lives with this concept of reciprocal responsibility. *Salaam Aleikum.*

Closing duas.