

June 2, 2010

Wednesday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Hilm, Gentleness](#)

DVD title: A Virtue Desired by the Prophet (saws):  
Hilm – Gentleness, Calmness in the Face of Ignorance

Dinner blessing: We thank You, O Allah, for the blessing of this food, for the love with which it was prepared, and the gusto with which it will be eaten. Our neighbor Lou Wright and his wife have pneumonia. We pray for Your Shifat. We ask You, Allah (swt), to give your protection to Musa who is driving to Philadelphia, and that it is not too much of a shock when he sees his classmates. We pray for the ability to remember You by so many challenges each day, and all the blessings we have each day to be humble before You. We ask You, Allah (swt), to increase our *iman* and deepen our *muhabbat*, our love for You, for your Prophet (sal), and all the Ahl al-Bayt. *Amin*.

Suhbat: *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm*. (Reads) Hazrat Ali (ra) related that the Prophet (sal) said, “**There are three things, that if a person lacks them, he is not from me or from Allah.**” This is a pretty strong statement. The Prophet (sal) states the three things, and then says, if a person has them there is no problem; but if you lack them, you won’t be a good Muslim or a good ‘*abdallah*/servant of Allah, and that person is rejected by Rasulallah (sal). The Prophet (sal) strongly desires that these three qualities are present, so we all must seek to acquire them if we want to be *shi’a*/artisans of the Prophet (sal). What are these virtues?

One is a gentleness/*hilm* that faces ignorance in the ignorant person. For that we have to have a gentility and gentle treatment toward the ignorant person, despite their misconduct or their lack of *adab*, or their hostility toward us. It means we have to be even and not hot-tempered, defensive or nervous. A person could be very smart about things so you

can't call him or her ignorant, so this means ignorant about the truth, about good intentions, and about what is right action. The nature of a person who is going to have that right attitude has to be calm when someone does something that is upsetting, disturbing or ignorant. I, for one, personally, know that this is not easy: not to get angry easily, to try not to react, to control our reaction and anger, to control how we distribute our knowledge.

One of the worst situations is when a person is ignorant about some important truth, whether you are saying some spiritual, human or Islamic truth, you know they are ignorant, and yet they are a really intelligent person in other ways, like having the mastery of argument. The second worst thing is when you have a history with them, and they have seen you upset and angry. You have given them countless excuses to discount what you say. They may especially discount spiritual things, because spiritual things are hard to accept, because they demand that we act in a certain way. They demand that we repent, and make *muhasabat*. Most really intelligent people academically, socially, and intellectually also have an ego, and they don't want to make *muhasabat*. Simple people make *muhasabat*, no problem at all. Why do you think the Catholic Church got spread so fast and so far among uneducated people? Educated people are a threat to the Church.

You can easily say you shouldn't get angry easily, you shouldn't get frustrated, and you shouldn't react. As I said, I'm no stranger to that. Maybe one or two people here might have the same experience. To be quiet, calm and to keep a smiling face is not easy in the face of ignorance, especially *when* you try to make your point and try to say what is right. We are enjoined, *maruf* and *munkar*, to say what is true or to change a situation, even with our *niyyat*, which is where you wind up if you can't do it with your hands, your mouth, or your words. Then you have to do it with your intention. To keep a smiling face in front of ignorance is very, very difficult; yet the Prophet (sal) said this is one of the three things you have to have.

If an ignorant person does something wrong to you, you have to remain calm and quiet. You don't say, "Because you are ignorant, I'm remaining calm and quiet." You have to face the person and respond to them gently and calmly. (I'm saying this wondering when I will be tested on this one!) If you don't [respond gently], then the ignorance becomes further exaggerated and hyperbolized. Then it becomes set, if for no other reason than a person who is ignorant doesn't realize that they are, especially an educated person. The idea is to put the fire out. The fire sometimes is a smoldering fire, not just raging fire. "The fire's out." Then you go put your hands on it and there are hot coals underneath it. "Oh, oh, I thought you were over that." "I'm not over that until I finish telling you what I have to tell you. You said something I don't want to hear."

I am just talking about spiritual ignorance. I'm not talking about somebody who you are trying to impress with your knowledge of physics, chemistry or computer technology. There is a greater purpose in all of this, of course. Go back to the ship experience [we talked of] yesterday. Again, back around 1982, we were at Mubarak Awad's house somewhere outside of Ramala. That was when the first Intifada happened. Anyway, we had this discussion and I told him, "They can't throw stones." And he replied, "But it is against rifles and bullets and rubber bullets and tear gas." "You can't throw stones."

So now you have this real philosophical problem. Your ship is boarded by armed people. You should just lie down and passively resist. Well, the reason you don't is because it does not make the news. The whole point of passive resistance is to have it make the news. If you lie down in front of a truck and if it runs you over, it makes the news. I don't want to get into the politics of it, but be calm because it is a benefit to society at large. All you have to do is step back a half step, and you realize that war is the most ridiculous thing in the world. It is absurd. Who gains what? We can all imagine there can be disagreements between Muslims and non-Muslims. That is on the big picture.

But look at all the problems that are among people who attend the same *masjid*, or in a community of believers in the same *tariqah*, there might be a flare up of hostility, accusation and frustration. There may be people in this room who haven't talked to each other in the past week, or the last two weeks, or the last month, or visited each other in a year or two, or have had each other over for dinner—for years. It is a very strange situation, I think. Where does it come from? Let's just say for the sake of argument that everyone is a good Muslim, but it does not necessarily mean you have the proper Islamic training. You may be a "Sufi," because you gave *bai'at*, but it does not necessarily mean that you have absorbed or that I have even given you the proper Sufic training. Yet *bai'at* goes all the way back to the Prophet (sal). If we say that the Prophet (sal) made Sunnah prayer, then we should make Sunnah prayer. If we say that the Prophet (sal) made *wudu*, then we should make *wudu*. We don't question that. If we say that the Prophet (sal) didn't eat ham, pig or didn't drink, or whatever, we should do that. Then we pick and choose about things, like *bai'at*. He accepted *bai'at*, and everyone who followed him did.

Here is what Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) said. He writes in a letter to one of his trusted *murīds*. He is the Mujaddid al-alf ath-thānī Shaykh. You all know what that means (thousand year renewer):

*I am both the seeker of Allah (murīdallah) and Allah's desire (murādallah). The chain of my discipleship is connected with Allah the Most Exalted without any mediation. My hand is the substitute for the hand of Allah the Most Exalted. My discipleship is connected with Muhammed (sal), the Messenger of Allah (praise and blessings be upon him), through many intermediaries in the Naqshbandi brotherhood. Between me and him are 21 intermediaries. In the Qadriyya, between him and me are 25 intermediaries. In the Chishtiyya, there are 27 intermediaries. Hence, I am both a disciple of Muhammed (sal) and share with him the same preceptor."*

So I am 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> in that same line, and 35<sup>th</sup> in another line. There are people who didn't like him, either, so I am in good company. Either we have not assimilated the spiritual training very well or we have. We have to absorb it. We have to absorb it; therefore, it has to be given in different doses. We were at the dentist yesterday and I mentioned something to the dentist about lidocaine. Samah had to have a tooth removed, and the ambusol worked better than the lidocaine. He explained that the ambusol probably had smaller molecules and so it absorbed faster. The lidocaine has larger molecules and is not absorbed as easily. That applies to many other things. Think of it that way. That is why these teachings are given in different kinds of doses. Sometimes you get a [powerful] dose, and sometimes you get a very subtle dose. Sometimes I talk to her because I really want to talk to her, or I talk to him because I really want to talk to him. Sometimes it is subtle and sometimes it is what you might call grosser, because it depends on how it is used.

The idea of the lidocaine was that if you happened to swallow it, it won't be absorbed in the other tissues, because those tissues need smaller molecules to absorb something that will pass through the body. How brilliant Allah is, even in allopathic science! So if you saw it, it is not going to harm you. You are not going to numb your liver or something, because that molecule is too big for you to absorb in your system. (There is still a question about the ambusol.) But isn't that amazing? Well, it is the same thing in the spiritual teachings. That is why people interpret things in different ways, but there is something for everyone in the way it is presented.

That is why we have to listen from many different sides to what our *shaykh* has to say. That is why the *shaykh* doesn't just give 25 lectures, and that is it for the whole life all of the information. That is also the reason why there is repetition in the Qur'an, and why they are presented in different ways. It is also true because the different language in Qur'an has a different molecular structure, if you will, metaphorically, and it is absorbed

differently in the different contexts. Allah speaks over 100 times about *qalb* in the Qur'an, but each way it is slightly different. In fact we say that every time *Bismi-Llāh* is said in the Qur'an, it has a different meaning to it, given the context. If you just say "I am going to spend a week, a month, or a year, or two years with the *shaykh*," it might not be enough, although one day might be enough, or thirty years might not be enough. But you have to absorb.

In another way, one could say that you develop a spiritual awareness and it has different ways of absorbing knowledge, information. You absorb many different levels of the same information. The longer time you spend in the study and in the practice, it is not just information that you are absorbing; it transforms you. Then we are down at the cellular genome level of things—or up. When we fail to absorb things, we get angry for insignificant situations that lead to unpleasant circumstances. If we get angry at the ignorance, it means that we are angry at the fact that the person cannot absorb what we know is true. How we know it is true is because we have tested it ourselves. We have been entrusted with the truth, and we are sure of that Truth, but we are not necessarily sure about how to present it.

Sometimes people do wrong things in the name of Islam. I don't know if you have noticed that. The Messenger of Allah (sal) was a very calm person, a very compassionate person. He was a very forgiving person, a very tolerant person, a very persevering person, but he wouldn't tolerate if a *fard* of Allah was violated or a prohibition was committed. He could be like an *asadi*, an *asad*/lion. He would get angry. When he delivered *khutbah*, it was like he was giving the command to an army to attack the enemy. If he was talking about Shaytan, or ignorance, or wrong actions, it was like commanding the army. And he would get upset when the Order of Allah (swt) was not fulfilled.

But we understand that overall that we have to have this *hilm*, gentleness, kindness. That applies to the people who you are serving, the people who you are doing business with,

the people you are healing, if you are a doctor, the people in the neighborhood, and the family alike. Our neighbor is sick. He is such a good man. He is a good man. He always gives us a little something. So I sent some food over to him today. This is the way it should be. It is not: "I'm not going to send something over because he is not a Muslim." "He is not a *murīd*. Why should I care for him?" Or should I say, "I am going to send it because he is a human being"? Do I have to justify it? No. You act from your heart to do what is right and what is good. At the same time we have to be gentle in everything. But we cannot be gentle with ourselves if we violate the guidelines and rules of Allah (swt). We shouldn't tolerate our own disobedience toward Allah and we should try to express the right way to other people.

(Recites in Arabic): "*The prayer is an obligation upon believers to be performed in pre-determined time.*" So the *fajr* prayer should be prayed within the time range of *fajr*, the *dhuhr* within the time frame of *dhuhr*, the *asr* within the time frame of *asr*, *maghrib*, *isha* the same way. The Messenger of Allah (swt) said: "***If there are five houses in a locality, there should be a call for Adhan and congregational prayer established.***" If there are five houses, the call to prayer should be called. If that does not happen, then Shaytan comes in and becomes the mayor of the locality. I like the idea of a mayor. Who can live a good life under the domination of Shaytan? That *fitna* is everywhere and you have to pay attention to little things like that.

If we understand this *hadith*, we have to be calm and try to struggle with our own anger. It is an important characteristic that Muhammed (sal) asked us to have. We have to protect our rights. We have to uphold the orders of Allah (swt), to ordain the good and forbid the evil. And still you have to be calm. How do you do that? How do you stay calm in the light of ordain what is good and forbid what is evil. It is very difficult. It sounds great on paper, but it is very difficult.

*A person came to the Prophet Mohamed (sal) and said, “O Prophet, give me some advice.” And the Prophet said, “La tadh dab” “Don’t get angry.” The person said to the Prophet, “Give me another piece of advice.” What do you think he said? The person says, “O Messenger of Allah. Give me a third piece of advice?” What do you think he said? Three times he said, “Don’t get angry.” I think that I should remember that. I think I need to borrow a wrench from Abu Bakr and Allaudin to tighten these bolts and nuts.*

The second characteristic that Prophet Muhammed (sal) wants us to have is “*a good code of conduct to live among the people.*” There are a lot of good characteristics in many people. But to have really, really good refinement and refinement should be important: not to be sloppy, to dress nicely, to look nice, to speak nicely, to have command of the language. It is not just have good *adab*, but to have refinement. It might have been cool when you were 16, 17, 25, maybe even up to 30 to be sloppy or laid back. But as you age, you should have refinement. If you don’t have refinement, you have missed a very important thing. The method to acquire such good character, *akhlaq*, is Tasawwuf and *tarīqah*. How do we know? Because you can look at the people of *tarīqah*. You can look all the way back to the Prophet Muhammed (sal) and you will see from the Prophet to Omar, to Osman, to Ali, to Imam Jafar Sadiq, to Bistami, etc., all these are refined people—not just intelligent, but refined people.

Tasawwuf trains the *nafs*. You look all over the Islamic world, you don’t necessarily find refined people, you find all kinds of people. But if you look in *tariqah*, you find refined people. It’s a very small percentage of the Muslims though in the history of Islam. It trains the *nafs*, enlightens the heart. The process develops good character in the individuals who practice it. That is how so many of the prophets and great mystics were raised. What a refined individual Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi was, and look what it did for his intellect. He had intellect; he was a scholar. Imam al Ghazāli was also. You can tell

the same story about both of them. They threw their books in the well when they met their *shaykhs* in *tariqah*.

The people we love and respect, the people who have given us the most interesting and deepest teachings on Islam were Sufis. Abul Hasan ash-Shadhilī (ra), Ibn Araby (ra), Shaykh al-Akbar (ra), Shāh Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra), Moinuddin Chishti (ra), Askandari (ra). We love them and respect them, and they were raised through Tasawwuf. Of course, many good people were. In my books, you will see lists of 500, 600, 700, or a thousand of those people. What kind of people were they? They were generous. They were merciful. They were forgiving, tolerant, patient. They were just and equitable. They were loving, kind, persevering and patient. They accepted abuse. Go study the lives of the prophets and the saints, the *awliyā*. What do you find? The ones who are most well known, who brought Islam around the world, and not by the sword, to Indonesia, Malaysia, China and other countries were all of *tarīqah*. Then you have to look at the Sahabah and the *taba'ain* and the *taba-taba'ain*. What do you see? They have extraordinary tolerance, patience and abilities, and they were good Muslims.

There was one Turkish *shaykh*. His name was Hajj Bayram Velli. He would plant wheat in the lowlands and make a living with the wheat. He wouldn't want to burden anyone, so he would harvest it himself. He worked so much under the sun that he became very dark-complected. He would harvest the wheat with his own scythe. He would never say he was a *shaykh*, but worked like anyone. He was also a scholar and a professor in the *madrassa*, and he became a Sufi.

One great *mullah*, Shamsuddin, heard about him and came to him to receive training from him, because he wanted to improve his own self. He came to him because he wanted to become a good servant of Allah. He arrived on the day when there was a big feast in that area, and in the meadow there were big cauldrons of food. Shamsuddin himself was a professor in a *madrassa* and a

scholar, and he had *ijāzad* and wore a big turban that indicated he was a *mullah*. But Hajji Bayram didn't pay any attention to him, or even welcome him. He didn't have a special place at the table for him. Shamsuddin realized that no one had any special treatment for him, or even asked who he was.

You can imagine what you would think if you were in his place. You might get angry that no one respected you. I remember having feelings like that, many years ago. He might think, "I came from this very far off place, and this man doesn't even greet me! They just keep eating food as if they have never seen food! Look how hungry they are, and they don't even ask me to join them. Where is the place for this in Islam? I'm leaving this place." But Shamsuddin did not do perhaps what we would have done. He went to the place where the bones and leftovers were dumped for the dogs, and as he was getting ready to eat something, because he was very hungry and had traveled a long way, Hajji Bayram came to him and said, "Come here. You have lit a flame in my heart, and have passed a great test." He had watched him the whole time, and put him in a very difficult circumstance.

As this man approached the food for the dogs, then he got the right respect. He became humbled, and didn't get angry. He would have gotten angry, screamed and yelled, and complained, and said everything that was on his mind. But there is a difference between having it on your mind, and having it pass by your lips. That is a hard thing for me to learn; I don't know about you. He was a college professor, and could have criticized from Qur'an and Hadith. He could have stated all these *hadiths* on how to treat a guest, and how the Prophet's recommendations and guidelines had been violated. He would have been right, but he would have missed the point. He could have left right away; but instead he walked over to where the dogs were going to eat. And so because he was patient and humble, he qualified.

What about Sidna Ibrahim (as), and the tests he was put through – the fire, and Ismail. We have to remember that the good characteristics of being patient, generous and tolerant have to be practiced. You have to learn what they are, and live among people in order to practice them. Living in a cave doesn't work. You have to get along with people with your good character, no matter what their character is. The good character you have will bring good character into the people. You will see the best in people. Sometimes I say, "This person is very nice," and people say, "O Shaykh, you think everyone is nice." I don't, but I think I see more nice things in people than most people do, and I've had my own share of disappointments. I wouldn't say the people weren't nice, just that they might be ignorant, missing the point, or not strong enough to see their own goodness.

We have to remember that good character regulates your relationships and the actions between yourself and others. Allah created these good characteristics and gave them to people so that your life would be good and pleasant. When everyone has good characteristics and manners around you, life is very beautiful. If all the people in the community have good character, then life is pleasant in the community. That is why, for the most part, we have a good life in this community. Not everyone is perfect; not everyone is happy all the time, but overall, we have good character. So life in the village is good. These characteristics are important for living in society. They are required for a good life, a good social life, and we have to treat each other, our families, one another, and strangers with good *adab*. How do you do that unless you strive to have good character? It's easier sometimes to treat strangers well than people close to you. People close to you know your faults and weaknesses, and in the moment they can be brought out.

You have to ask yourself, how can people do what they do? How can they invade a village and kill people? How can they fly planes into buildings? How do people do this? What is the gain in it? What religion would do anything like this? No real religion. You don't find it in Judaism and Christianity. It's not right in Islam. It's not right for

anyone to commit those kinds of crimes. How did people become so twisted? Part of it has to do with our distractions, and our education or lack of it. Part of it has to do with what is acceptable in society. I said it to our fellows from the Gulf: it's not so bad to have a sultan. You can still have a democracy, but it's not so bad to have a supreme person in control, IF the person is a good person. If you want to see where it is bad, go look at Iran. Understand that freedom doesn't mean just do whatever you want all the time. *Alhamdulillah*, [democracy] works for the most part, and at the end of the day, is probably the best way to do things.

The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Be gentle and be calm. If you are not gentle and not calm, you are not from my nation and you are not a good servant of Allah.”*** He advises us to have good *adab* and good *akhlaq*. Did anybody in this room ever suffer from having good manners? Someone should say, “Yes, I did!” Then I will point out to you, you didn't suffer from having good manners. It was the reaction to your good manners that made you suffer. We should carry this on tomorrow. (The Shaykh reads in Arabic). You have to have *wara'a* (*wa, ra, ain*). You have to be cautious and careful. .

QUESTION: Reads a letter.

I realized the pain I was having over the last few weeks was due to people close to me being ill... how to balance and channel the energy... I was shocked to realize that my pain was due to my compassion. You may tease me when I tell you to drive carefully because it reminds you of a Jewish mother, but it is the same concern. How do I channel all energy coming to me in the form of stress and anxiety from within myself into compassion, so that I am not a weathervane? I want to be able to travel for the work, and stay balanced so I don't get upset in meetings. I am working on this all the time. You said the Qur'an says that no one can take on another's burden. This is comforting as it makes one's destiny clear and individual. When one is younger, the body can take much abuse. But when it

screams, change one's behavior or else, when one is stuck with... the person one might be dealing with... it's really an abuse of the gift that God has given us... we don't understand the body but believe we can abuse it.

So what's the question? You said the answer. It's not a good idea to think that you are being affected by other people's illnesses. I'm sorry to tell you that this was a very common idea in the 60's and 70's; but believe it or not, it's not a common idea around the world. It's almost like a way to try to understand what I just talked about, the linkage between people. Yes, we are linked together and are all part of a greater whole and we are all an expression of the Divine *tawhid*/unity. But at the same time, there is a very strong ego underlying the idea that "I'm affected by all these external forces." It may get to the point where you become obsessed with your health; you become obsessed with your well being, which moves you away from your ability to serve others and a greater community of people. It certainly works counter to your submission and trust in Allah. It always puts you in a point-counterpoint with Allah.

If Allah gives you illness – and I'm saying that in shortspeak. I don't believe that Allah is a being who gives you illness. But if there is illness, then there is possibility for health up to a point, relatively. Of course you get older and certain things happen; you get rheumatism, arthritis or osteoporosis, or if you haven't taken care of yourself in your youth, then that is limiting. But there's wellness within that limit also. It could be mental wellness, emotional wellness, acceptance, exemplary behavior. When there is absorption in your own self, it moves you away from a foundation of trust in Allah and your *iman*. It increases your illness, to the point where when you get better, you worry about being better so you make yourself ill again, because that is your struggle.

You've made that your *jihad*. It's what we call in reintegrative therapy, the sweetness of the pain. You get yourself sick over and over again. You say, "Oh, I'm getting better. I went to this doctor and that doctor. I'm getting better." Then, "Oh, well I had a setback.

What am I going to do?” It doesn’t mean you don’t concern yourself about yourself, or don’t take care of yourself. It doesn’t mean you don’t have days when you are up and days when you are down. I tell myself every day what I am going to do differently. Like today, I told myself that every time I got up from my desk I was going to work with my exercise bands. I showed my daughter. I got up from my chair and I did it about 5 times today. Every day we are doing things like that. But the idea that “I’m taking on something” elevates you, and shows you what a sacrifice/*qurban* you are. None of it has to do with being a sacrifice. It all has to do with ego, *nafs ammāra*. You are dancing with Shaytan.

You say, “Oh, but Shaykh; if you are in a place with a person with a bad vibration, you pick up on that vibration.” Yes, sure. If you are locked in a penitentiary with a bunch of murderers, you definitely pick up on the vibration. No question. But I don’t think that’s anyone’s situation. “Oh, so and so has this, and it’s weakened my immune system.” YOU weaken your immune system with your mentality. If you do that, then of course whatever is going around you are going to get. But it’s not because you are so supersensitive you are picking up on everyone’s vibration. That’s just an ego trip. It really is. I really disdain that kind of attitude. I’ve listened to it for 35 years from people in this community, and I have learned to keep my mouth shut most of the time because people will not listen to me. It just sends them off in other directions to doctors and books and remedies and all kinds of things.

It’s not that you don’t get sick; of course you do. It’s not that you don’t have tests. Allah said, **“What? Did you think I would test you only one time?”** But you are not picking up on someone else’s. You have to look to your own *nafs ammāra*, to your own self. You have to rise above it and deal with what Allah gave you, and stop blaming other people or your circumstances for it. This is a collective “you” I’m saying here. And that’s the truth. A person who has a bad attitude, you don’t want to be around them. A person who is grumpy might make you grumpy. To some degree that may be true,

because you are frustrated or you can't communicate. Or it may bring out some things in your own self that you may have to see. But that's the point of what I said today: It brings out something in yourself that you have to see.

By the same token, if you are with someone who is very calm, peaceful, settled, and very *saf*/pure, who is the epitome of *sakina*, how are you going to feel? Are you going to leave there angry? I don't think so. "I'm angry at that person because they are so calm and peaceful. I'm really jealous of that person." I never once left my *shaykh* angry. Never. He might have gotten angry later, but I never left him angry. I left him when I was confused; and probably left him confused, too, but never angry, which is more than you can say! But everyone has their own way, and after all, he had me for a student and I have you. Does that answer your question?