

August 26, 2010

Thursday



Title: [Ramadan: An Opportunity to End Attachment](#)

Ramadan: An Opportunity to Change
Using Events of the World to Renounce the World

Obviously Ramadan is a time for breaking patterns and changing patterns. If you find yourself struggling to keep the same pattern of your life during Ramadan that you have not during Ramadan, you're missing a good opportunity. You can see your conditioning. Conditioning does exactly what it says it does: conditions our behavior and attitudes.

I ended somewhere around the quote by Bayazid Bistami when he said,

First I renounced the world. The next day I renounced the Hereafter, then the day after I renounced everything but Allah. The fourth day I was asked what I wanted, and I replied that I want that I do not want.

Every day we see in the news more and more about the story that is before us now about Imam Feisal's *masjid* [in New York]. More than that, it is a story about bigotry, bias, anti-semitism and racism. It's a total distortion of the foundations and principles of this nation and the Constitution and Bill of Rights, which for many generations allowed us to go out into the world and to preach something better to people. In the political realm it was called democracy. We saw in recent years how the neo-conservative political movements which believed in continual war [take root]. The Marxist-Trotsky-ist idea that the war on terrorism is an endless war has corrupted the mentality of people. We saw the darkness that came from that, and we see it every day. It has formed the foundation or allowed people to build once again their racism, their anti-Semitism, and their lack of respect for one another.

For those of you who have studied with me many years and heard me speak about “the system” in most recent years, you will see that this is very indicative of that perspective. What the system is allowing now is this. In a way it is good; you see the truth about people. You see how racist they are and how anti-Semitic they are, and anti-Islamic they are. It’s more than just fear; it is a deep-seated racism. You could say, “That’s not me; so I don’t have to concern myself about it.” But believe me, you do. Each one of us has the analog within us. We have so many people walk around with elements of self-hate that they didn’t know, until something released it, or disliking the culture or attitude of someone else. That being allowed by our own self corrupts us and lessens us, and makes us barely human. We have Ramadan to remind us.

The man who is committed to burning Qur’ans on September 11 was interviewed. Chris Mathews said to him, “Who do you respect? Do you respect anybody? Is there anybody who could call you on the phone that you respect, and tell you that you really shouldn’t do this? Do you think good can really come out of this?” And he said, “No, no one could talk me out of it.” He has declared it, the ‘day of Qur’an burning.’ “Why are you doing it?” “To tell radical Islamists that they have to respect our Constitution.” How is it that a mind could be so twisted? “Well, who do you respect?” “George Bush.” “If President Bush called you on the phone and said, ‘Pastor so and so, please don’t do this. It’s the wrong thing to do. It sends the wrong message.’ Would you still do it?” He said, “I would.” “And have you thought about what will be in the press all over the world the next day? Do you think good will come of it?” “Yes, good will come from it.”

What I propose to you is there is a little of that pastor in everybody. You see what you resist, and you see how much you believe in your word over the word of Allah, or your word over the word of the Constitution of this country, and how you abridge the freedom of your own soul to worship and the freedom of your own heart out of fears and doubts. It grows from somewhere. It doesn’t grow out of nowhere. “No, I’m not like him.”

inshā'a-llāh, we are not like him. But there something of him in us that this month, these practices, and this Dīn allows us to look at.

It doesn't surprise me that Islam is the next target. If you understand Islam, you understand why people have a visceral fear of it: because it tells you the truth, if you care to listen to it (which most people don't). It tells you the truth about yourself. I'm not talking about politicized Islam. There is no difference between the politicized jihadis (or whatever they call themselves) and the political hacks up in Washington. One is in the name of the Constitution, and we laugh thinking it is ridiculous. There is freedom of religion in this country; how can this act (of burning Qur'ans) be protecting the Constitution? How can he mention 'Bill of Rights' or 'Constitution' and talk of this act in the same breath? There is no difference between the people who say that, whether it is the majority leader of the House of Representatives and the Senate or the jihadis. There is no difference between them. They claim their religion is democracy, and their holy book is the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These other people claim their holy book is the Qur'an, and this is what they are doing it in the name of. What's the difference? Religion is religion—and actions follow intentions.

If we are not examining our actions every day – and part of our actions are our words and attitudes – then we don't understand our intentions. If we don't submit, whether it is to the Bill of Rights and Constitution of the US as a citizen of the great country of America (and it is), there is no law. He says, “We want them to know there will be know ‘sharEEa’ law in the United States! We don't want to happen in the US what has happened in Europe where they want shareea courts and shareea this and that.” You want to shake him and say to him, “How dare you use the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights. How dare you sully the names of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Franklin and John Adams.” With one hand shake him; and with the other hand, shake Palin. How dare they? We want to say the same thing to the jihadis. How dare you take the Qur'an! How dare you use the name of the Prophet Muhammed (sal)! How dare you!

When that crazy man Meir Kahane was alive, we wanted to say, “How dare you use the Torah and the *mishna* in that way!” What’s the difference between this man and the people he hates? He sullies the name of Christianity and the Prophet Isa (as).

But what do we do every day? Do you want to go through life without any worries, fears, and doubts? You are not going to do that by rejecting, but by embracing. This man has no fear of God, no *taqwa*, no *khawf*. None. He is so sure he is right. How many of us have been so sure we were right? You and I have been given an incredible gift, but will we remember that it is? We are in the companionship of incredible *shuyukh*. We change the world again and again, generation after generation. Do we appreciate that, really? I said to Musa earlier today, “If, at the end of the day the only reason we exist is to be some of the last vestiges of what Sufism really is supposed to be, then I’m it’s my honor. If all the rest is corrupted, and we are one of the few who are left who still respect the classical teachings, and still try to apply in our daily life, as poorly as we may, what Tasawwuf and Islam really is, then I’m honored that I spent my life doing that.” You may not feel that way. If you don’t, I pity you.

You think this is a local train? This is an express train, and the only way to get off is to jump off the train while it’s moving. If you want to take a clue from what Bayazid Bistami (ra) said, where he seems to be renouncing the world as it is, understand what it means to renounce the world. It means renouncing that the world has ultimate value, renouncing the idea that anything in this world has ultimate value other than the service of Allah and the refinement of yourself. Renouncing the world means renouncing the idea that the world controls you. That renunciation is the ultimate goal. He renounced the Hereafter because you renounce the I-centeredness. Then he went on to renounce the idea of separation and of Lordship. Then he renounced renunciation itself.

We have to really think about this: what does it mean to renounce renunciation? When you understand it, you will see that the one who is on this *sayr ul suluk* finds they have

given up most desires in the way he or she identifies those desires in themselves, and has progressively achieved something very, very difficult. That is the uncovering of the jewel of love, the jewel of the heart. Of course, the heart is not free of its desires and intentions, but at least when one discovers that, we have the hope of being free of the imperfections. You can live more transparently when your intentions are all good, and the results of those intentions are good. We should embrace the idea of repenting and of apologizing, and obviously of forgiving. We should embrace the idea that we should cause no harm, no upset; and if we do, we should run to that *istighfar*.

We know from the Prophet Muhammed (sal) that actions follow intentions. We say it all the time, “We belong to Allah, and to Allah we return.” We say it sometimes in our meditation before we do our *niyyat*. Anyone who really contemplates that simple sentence and phrase, you find very, very quick results. Wondering what to do? Just say that. It’s one of those little phrases like, “What would my Shaykh have me do,” or “What would Allah have me do.” If you spend a good portion of your day contemplating or anticipating that you are going to begin and end your day with prayer and *muraqabah*, saying that you belong to Allah, and to Him you will return, you realize that everything counts as meditation.

You understand what Hazrat tried to teach me, and what Muhammed Sayed Khan tried to teach him, and what Hamid Hasan al-Alawi tried to teach him, and what Abdul Bari Shah tried to teach him: that everything counts as *muraqabah* and meditation when you are sincere, when you keep yourself in a state of ritual purity, which is symbolized by the *wudu*. But it is really remembrance of who you are, what you are, what you have committed to, what you have been chosen for, and you embrace it and accept it. When we no longer identify anything just for ourselves, then everything counts because we are not excluding anything. Something wrong reminds us; something right affirms. Something difficult tells us which is the direction to ease; and something of ease tells us to be careful of difficulty. Everything becomes meditation. Everything becomes worship.

Even when things are difficult, when we see these calamities like in Pakistan, or people dying in the wars that are being fought today, we see it all as an opportunity to end attachment to worldly things that people fight wars over, or that they de-humanize other human beings for, or that they usurp their land, their territory, their resources, their religion over. When you cease to just make comments about it, or become obsessed and depressed about it – although it is pretty easy to become depressed these days – you find that there is really inside of you something you have been sitting on a long time, which is your craving to have knowledge, to understand. It's an opportunity to contemplate death, and the transiency of human life, and to affirm what one has. It's an opportunity to affirm your gratitude, and ,as I began, to look at things from a different perspective, especially this month. Not so much the "I" perspective.

Even the gratitude towards Allah (swt), though it has to be worked at, unlike the ego which doesn't take any effort to express itself, will end that depression and selfishness, the narcissistic behavior. It will allow us to change very rapidly if we are anchored in what is unchanging, in *tawhid*. Another element which is important for spiritual travel on the path is silence. *Asalaamu aleikum*. So I'll be silent. Talking about silence is sort of oxymoronic.