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Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Responsibility](#)

DVD title: The Inseparable Concepts of Freedom and Personal Responsibility

Opening duas. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) reveals to us in Suratu Tawbah:

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

Allah also reveals in Suratu-l-Fusilat:

And We saved those who believed, and those who, conscious of Allah, warded off evil from within and from without, and warned of the day when all the enemies of Allah will be gathered together in ranks and driven into the fire until when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skin will testify against them about what they used to do in this world. (41:18-20)

And also,

We have revealed scriptures unto you that you may explain it to them when they differ. This is a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe. (16:64)

When we talk about the subject of these ‘*āyāt*, there is behind here a principle or a topic, which is the topic of freedom and personal responsibility. Certainly, it is something one

finds throughout the Qur'an. When we talk about love, which is manifest in the protecting of one another, and we talk about freedom and responsibility, these are inseparable concepts. They are unconditional in the eyes of Allah (swt). In Islam, responsibility is probably the major factor in the whole concept of freedom. We can see that in social and political terms. How is there freedom unless individuals take responsibility for preserving it and one another? Why would people do that if there wasn't any sense of protecting one another? By protecting others, you are protecting yourself. By caring for others, you are creating the atmosphere to care for yourself.

As human beings, we sometimes think our responsibility lies more with others than ourselves, and we don't necessarily see that our responsibility for others is also a way of manifesting our responsibility for ourselves. We also don't see the opposite. We don't see easily that if we take proper responsibility for ourselves and protect our own personal freedom, we are protecting the freedom of others. We realize that our primary responsibility cannot be effective or dispatched until we are acting responsibly to our own self. Our responsibility for others should never, ever be a trespass; but at the same time, it should be an enjoinder for the doing of good, and a means of hopefully helping to restrain or admonishing people not to do wrong.

It's also important for us to understand that if we speak of our own personal freedoms and the love behind it, it is an upliftment for others. Just as the Messenger of Allah (sal) carried a positive message for humanity, we should carry a positive message to each other. In Islam, the time and the attitude of responsibility implies something very important. First we have to realize that although it appears to initiate with us or by circumstances, it is really initiated by Allah (swt). Even though it comes through individual members of society as they act with responsibility for that society at large or to one another, it doesn't exist longer than the individual or society unless there are institutions that are created, unless there are enjoiners, warnings, rewards, and obvious

moral and ethical principles behind it that society and individuals support that carry out that responsibility.

Institutions are created by Allah (swt), for example the giving of *zakat*. Or it can be an actual institution, like the value of having schools, hospitals, and public service.

These are not just for the comfort of human beings; they support the infrastructure of society. It means it allows people to act responsibly according to their good human nature/*fitrah* in a way that is not harmful, as opposed to marauding around, just trying to catch enough food for yourself and maybe your family, and then fighting with others over the food. Human beings, by accessing their sense of community and personal responsibility, one for the other, find that the freedom they are affirming is not only healthy for themselves, but also for the well-being of society. For that freedom to continue in our lives in a responsible way, a deeper concept of *tawhid* underlies it.

Understanding *tawhid* / unity is not something that comes over night. If you think about it, much of your life is spent thinking about what's happening to you, or what's going on in your life, what you need to do to have this, protect that, or sustain that. Not very much is about what is happening to someone else, unless it directly affects us. When we think that way, at some point you should realize that you are in a state of thinking in dualities. Unity or unicity thinking lies in understanding that Allah (swt) not only is present in every situation, but that presence is the binding factor between all the people and all the circumstances. They are not just present in my life and not in your life, in my society and not in yours; in my religion and not in yours. Divine Presence is for everyone. We have to be patient and persevere in every situation.

In some situations we question, "Where is Allah?" given X, Y, or Z circumstance. But we have to realize that Allah is present. Where most of our problems come from is when we initiate something separate as opposed to when we put what we do in the context of something more deeply and profoundly spiritual. When we think we know best what has

to be done, when it is in the context of our spiritual knowledge, that is one thing. When it is only in the context of our own selfishness, that's something else. So we say in shortspeak, "Allah knows what we need and what needs to be done, and I turn it over to Allah." To do that, we have to accept that Allah is present in the moment, not that Allah is off somewhere: "I have this situation. By the way, Allah, I'm turning over this situation to You. Are you paying attention? I am turning it over to You."

I remember having a talk with Hazrat. At the end, he gave me pause to think about some things I was doing for you at the time. I think it was for a retreat. I remember thinking about it, and said to him the next day, "I have a question." I said, "As you know, when I sit down to prepare a booklet, I do research. But I wind up abandoning that book, because I'm wondering, 'Who is the audience? What is the use of doing it?' It's not that it hasn't been written before, and there are many good classical writings written by so many good people. What is the purpose of me doing it again?" I said to him, "So I am thinking of abandoning the idea of writing completely. The only thing that concerns me about that position is that I see you are writing the book on Mohammed Sayed Khan (ra), (which was published by Fons Vitae, published in India, having carefully removed any reference to you, me, or any of us here in the community. May Allah reward Hamid Hasan for doing that in the proper way)." "We worked for years on the '40 Questions' book." I said to him, "You think it is important to do that book, so I have to think it must be important to write books."

He said to me what was obvious: "If your book is being written because you want to write it and it is being written from the nafs, don't write it. If the book is being written because Allah is telling you to write the book, and you feel compelled by Allah to write the book, then *alhamdulillah*, write it." He said, "It has been six to 10 years since I wanted to write anything, so maybe I should do the book," and he laughed. I said, "I don't have any desire to do it, other than it may be useful to someone, and I'm feeling more and more compelled to write these things." He said, "Then you should do it." In

the same way, understanding *tawhid* lies in understanding that it is Allah who is in charge of everything. The compelling has to come from that Divine Presence. Divine Presence means what? One of the names of Allah is The Compeller. If you are being compelled by Allah to do something, it has to have certain characteristics to it. Allah is not going to compel you to do something bad. It has to be good, useful, timely. It has to be coming from the heart, coming with a sense of wanting to expand and not contract, unless it is to contract something that is bad.

If we don't take it from that point of view, it is very dangerous for us to justify our existence, even, or that we are in charge of our life, or that we have an abundance of knowledge and information, unless there is a responsibility that is attached to it. Just having knowledge doesn't mean anything. There are millions of scholars in the world who have knowledge, but they don't know how to use it. Maybe they are just repository archives for knowledge. It has to yield something. Our responsibility has to yield some level of spiritual perfecting, of social perfecting. We say in order to be a responsible member of society, you have to contribute to society. We try to raise our children, *inshā'a-llāh*, to be contributing members of society. That's responsibility.

When we step back and look at the world we live in today, [we see] a world of tremendous opinions, with people trying to push their agendas into everyone else's minds, not just domestically but internationally. There is so much disruption, chaos, and complexity. At the same time there is so much simplicity, in the negative sense—simple-mindedness. We wonder how we have wandered away from the basic teachings of goodness. If people followed the basic teachings of goodness, there wouldn't be bombs going off in Sufi shrines in Pakistan. There wouldn't be crazy people running for office in this country, bringing the minds of people down.

I don't know if you have seen any of these ads or the interviews. There is a whole new attitude now. Any question from the press to a right-wing candidate is challenged as

being biased, and they won't answer them. There is no sense of being compelled to give an honest answer to anything; you just accuse and attack. So what is right and safe and good? What are the basic teachings of Jesus, Prophet Mohammed (sal) or the great *shuyukh*? Is it just to play it safe? What is safe? No, it is to be responsible and apply the admonitions, prescriptions, and prohibitions one finds in the sacred texts to your day to day life. In a spiritual context, we should encourage people to understand and be humble and submit to what they believe in.

If you are humble and submit to what you believe in, then you can come to both inner and outer peace. In this case today, I'm talking about the belief in Allah in terms of being responsible, and to look around and see the manifestations of Allah as the Force of life that controls everything in creation. Allah (swt) is the source of that unity, the goal of unity, and the means to that unity to help us as individuals realize our own potential as an individual and as collective beings. It is to unify ourselves as believing men and believing women to worship, to turn our lives into worship. There is a spiritual alternative to what we normally see as just social, psychological, and material alternatives that we have been conditioned to use. Consequently, another goal of Islam is to unify the society through not just the common belief but through a common trust.

It's a tremendous step of progress to be able to promote the belief in Allah instead of just offering opinions. To be able to sincerely say and encourage people to believe in the Divine Presence and Attributes, without making it complex and having lots of explanations and opinions is a high state. It's as if you collect all knowledge, condense it, make it powerful, and put it into the Name of Allah (swt), into the name of *iman*/faith. Belief is not theoretical. It is not abstruse. It comes from the heart. (All you children look up "abstruse" today. I will quiz you tonight!) When we offer our belief to Allah, we encourage others to believe in Allah. It increases our *iman*, our trust/*tawakkul*. It's a means through which the lives of other individuals will be affected and set in straight paths and organized.

As we organize ourselves, we are organizing the whole system. Everyone is influenced and encouraged by the life of someone who is pious, not by someone who is pompous (look up ‘pompous’); who is calm, and not overly excited; who is not just preaching, but striving to exemplify what they say. All of us are trying to do that, of course. Many of us, like me, fail every day. The failures are a reminder. If we accomplish this sense of personal and collective responsibility, great changes come about. If we look at the cup as half full, instead of half empty; if we take a positive viewpoint instead of a negative one; not only do we affirm the best in ourselves, we are also on this journey to understanding *tawhid*. By doing that, and having that attitude, by having the strength of *iman*, when asked for an opinion, we may give an opinion, but first we say, “Well, I’ll pray for it.” Or we say, “If we trust in Allah in this way...” If we take that positive approach first, then we are affirming and utilizing our sense of being responsible.

What does the word ‘responsible’ mean? How many times have you heard me say, it is being able to respond, able to respond appropriately. That is constructive encouragement. It’s a good term and a good idea: constructive encouragement builds freedom, patience, love, and trust. As we heard from Qur’anic ‘*āyat*, it also means we are positive human beings. If each individual can achieve a profound level of belief within themselves, in the moment, then our direction becomes very clear for ourselves. Our efforts are guided toward using the environment in a way that is good. We use our knowledge in a way that is constructive. We use our experience in a way that is beneficial. We use our language and our capability to speak and convince and assist others in a positive way. Then we are affirming and utilizing elements of what comprises the meaningfulness of *tawhid*.

In other words, Allah is present in all those positive situations. To use the environment we are in for what it is designed for is very important; not to re-design it for our own desires. (Shaykh relates a news interview, where a scientist aggressively defends himself

with a good argument, but at the same times uses knowledge in an incorrect way). People will misuse knowledge, and then they will find the tool of aggressiveness. (Shaykh explains how the scientist was correct in his defense of the interviewer bringing up his opinions from 15 years ago, but wrong in using aggression and attacking the interviewer's weakness.) This mentality causes division. Why am I bringing it up? The interviewer was right in that the scientist wouldn't answer questions and wouldn't say what he believed in now, and that there is a right to be able to ask questions and to get answers from people, but the rules have changed.

If you look at the political framework today, the rules have all changed. All of these separate people. They are only about winning, not about truth. It is about power, and not about goodness. It's all about control, not about working together. All of these things are separating forces. In this *āyat* I read Allah says, "**the believing men and women,**" but it could be "the responsible men and women." Do you understand? "Believing men and women are protectors of each other." That's not the world we live in today. If people are not protecting one another, we might make the assumption that they are not believing. "**They enjoin the right and forbid evil.**" What do they do? They stand for *salat*, make *zakat*.

The forms that we do are necessary for us to develop the *iman* and to develop the understanding of our roles and duties, and to humble us. That is why I gave the news example. It was an example to use the environment for what it is designed for, meaning life. To use it for what it is designed for is a lot different than imposing your will without concern for what it is designed for. We have seen that. Go to the eastern shore of the United States: houses are built right up against the ocean. What happens? They get destroyed when there is a hurricane. What do people do? They rebuild again right at the ocean. There are parts of the world where people build their houses on the sides of volcanoes because they have no place else to go. It's not the same as building a million

and a half dollar house against the ocean in New Jersey, Florida, or South Carolina. It's a gross example, but a good one, of mentality.

If we are motivated out of love, and out of personal commitment to do good, and out of a sense of responsibility to others, then good will come from it. We have a clear direction in life. We can spend our time in the best possible ways. We don't have to waste our time and efforts. If we look for changes and decisions in our life that need to be made, you can count on the fact that if you have good *iman*, trust, humility and try to understand yourself and others inwardly, good things will come to you. It may not be what you expect, but good things will come to you. To understand oneself and the purpose of one's existence is to find a clear path. That's why we try to make a distinction between the intellectual and the actual.

I hope that we understand that as a community of individuals that form a society, we have not only personal responsibility for our own self; but if we fulfill that responsibility – I don't mean just the social responsibility, but also the religious and spiritual responsibility (the prayers, *zakat*, fasting, and meditation that has been given to us) – then there is a reciprocal relief that comes into society. Each one of the things we do gives us a sense of *tawhid*, *inshā'a-Llāh*. *Asalaamu aleikum*. *Du'ās*.

SECOND KHUTBAH