# 06/24/1985

# IWDM Study Library

# MOREHOUSE COLLEGE ATLANTA GA

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

IWDM: Praise be to Allah. Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Praise be to Allah. Thank you. Praise be to Allah. Dear Muslims, Imams, Imam Abdul Raheem. Imam Plemon El Amin who's just been elected the Imam of the other masjid of Atlanta---the other masjids in Atlanta-- and all of the representatives of the community, and to the students of Spellman College, of Morehouse and Spellman Colleges. To all of you, we say we wish you peace. In the Muslim greetings, we say As Salaam Alaikum. I'm happy and honored to be again here on the campus of Morehouse as a speaker in this facility here to the gathering of Muslims and friends, and I imagine some who have curiosity. We hope that we can satisfy all of you.

 I would like to begin by saying that I came here to pay my respects to the observance of Black History Month. I am aware that the theme for this month, for this year, is the family. I would like to begin by saying that there are laws operating all the time in the life of man, or society, as they are operating all the time in the physical world, or universe. And those who respect rules, laws, order, they will always fare better than those who don't. At times there comes a mood over the society. Certain trends take us away from the respect for the things that govern us. We as believers in G-d, we believe that we are constantly under him, responsible to him, and our life depends on us pleasing him; whether it is good, or whether it is bad.

 I wonder if people really believe in G-d who says they believe in G-d. In America there are many people, who say they believe in G-d, but we see a life and society disrespect for order, for discipline in the life, for what is intelligence, for common sense, disrespect for each other, and disrespect for family. It makes us wonder if the people who are saying they believe in G-d all are really serious and really believe in G-d. If we really believe in G-d, and that belief in G-d will establish for us the special kind of attitude, life, and respect that we should have for other things. Family has always been a great motivation in the life of man to motivate him to greater responsibility when you have a wife, have children they are influences in your life. If you respect that responsibility to move you and motivate you to greater things ... Many men and women, they are not idle. They are lawfully employed. It's because they believe that their families deserve their loyalty, their devotion, their support.

 Many men, I'm sure you perhaps have met some---I have---they say that their families were what kept them going. They are the reason why have we worked so hard for all these many years? Many of them say, "I like to see my family in a good situation. I want to see my wife, my children in a good situation." If it was not for them having that kind of respect for the family, for their family obligations, they most likely would be giving themselves to self-destruction. They would not be working; they would be idle and perhaps ruined.

Our prophet, the peace and blessings be upon him, and the model for all people, as G-d says in his book, the Qur’aan, the book for Muslims, that “he is the model for anyone who hopes to meet G-d and believe in the hereafter and hope to meet G-d”. This prophet said, peace and blessings be on him, marriage is half the religion”, that marriage is half the religion. Also G-d says in the holy book, the Qur’aan. Family rights have a priority before G-d.

 Again, it is given in our holy book that the charity, the help of assistance is due first to your relatives before you give it to anybody else. Now in church life I have heard it said that charity starts at home and spreads abroad. We've come to a time when families are not valued like they used to be. In fact, people are not valued like they used to be. I remember as a child in Chicago, a northern city and it still is; it’s a little bigger, but the same city. If someone got sick on our block, everybody knew it. If anybody died and had to be taken out of the house, the whole neighborhood looked like it was mourning. The whole block, the whole street would be watching and wondering, “Who is that? Well, that's Mr. So and So or that Mrs. So and So” and everybody would be feeling bad. Those times have changed. Family can't be a motivation life of people who don't value family.

 We must understand that the masses of people have little to help them other than faith and something outside of themselves. That why when bad times come, we give up. That is, the masses of people seem to give up. Either they find new leaders to follow. If there is not a new leader or somebody that they have faith in, they give up. The life is gone. Life is wasted. The masses of people depend always on something outside of themselves because they are not established within themselves. They don't have the knowledge of themselves that they should have. They don't have the knowledge of the external world that they should have. So they can't appreciate themselves as they should. They can't respect the external world and external forces as they should. So they are victims of trends and fads and changing times.

 When we think about ourselves as people, we should not think---if we are Muslims---we should not think in the terms and language of the ordinary common folk. We should think in terms of Qur’aan, in terms of the language of our religion. We should think of ourselves; we should see ourselves as ourselves are defined or presented in our religion. G-d says of every one of us that he has made noble all of us. Qad karamna bani Adam; we have indeed made honorable noble, deserving of respect every child of Adam.

 And G-d says also that he has rendered into service for man whatever is in the skies and whatever's in the earth. But G-d cautions us, He says “laisa lilinsaani illa maa sa’aa wa anna sa’yah sawfa yuraa”; there cannot be for the human being anything without him making an effort. And his effort shall produce or shall be seen. And G-d also says everyone will behave according to the mode that he gives himself to. You remember the old parent---it didn't have to be parents---sometimes it's an uncle or a grandmother, they pulled us back from wrong environment. Saying “Boy, you better watch out. You're keeping the wrong company now.” Because they knew that that environment would work against us. They would warn us against the company that they saw us keeping. Bad company, bad influences. Bad influences, if you give yourself to such an environment long enough, it's going to affect you. You're going to take on the character and the behavior of that bad company.

 We wonder how come as a people we are not better off. How come our family life is not stronger? How come we are not more successful as a people on this earth? Well there are many answers, many answers and some of the eye-opening verses from Qur’aan, as those that we've just quoted here today can save us if we were only hear and obey. There are many reasons. If you hold something in low esteem, you don't place very much value on it, you don't expect much from it. If you're working with a tool and the tool breaks---you knew it was cheap anyway---you don't call---you say it was a cheap tool anyway. Right?

 We expect something from something that we see value in. G-d wants us to see value in ourselves. That's why He has said such wonderful things about our worth as creatures, or created beings, His creatures. G-d wants us to have respect for ourselves and respect for each other. Respect for the wonderful things that he has created for our use and service. He wants us to have respect for our families. G-d says in our holy book, "Fear G-d." The word ittaqillah; the expression ittaqillah fear G-d it's a reverence, a sacred respect and a sacred fear. And G-d says “waal arhaam” and also the family relations. G-d has placed here a respect, a sacred respect for him, and he has put in that same context a similar respect for family relations.

 On my visit to China many years ago now, Communist China, with a group of Americans, friends of China, US-China people friendship tour group ... We toured Communist China. The guide was showing us some ruins that they were excavating, digging up. They were studying their past life, their past history from these ruins. And the guide pointed to a grave, and he said, "See this grave? The people here have objects which show that they were not poor, they were not slaves. They had some wealth." And he pointed out two or three other graves. He says, "Notice these graves? They were buried with some objects which mean that they had some wealth." He says, "You notice that they are husband and wife." A child was buried in one of the graves, too. So what he was telling us was that wealth seems to go with families. And we find that in Japan, one of the reasons why the Japanese have given America so much competition is because of their respect for family life, respect for family members and their working together as families. We find a new trend over here now; family people are working businesses. The more successful businesses now are businesses operated by families. That's the trend.

 The president of the United States said---I don't know if you heard it aloud but I heard him say it on television, that the minorities, Black and Hispanics and others, they won't have equality and power equal power until they have economic power. What kind of help is that? That's no help. It doesn't help to say that we need economic [Momentary pause in recording] times until something break for you, until something opens up for you. People with no respect for anything, with no values, they always are going to be inferior and under other people.

 So in this month or year while we are commemorating Black History, calling attention to the need to improve the state of the family, we must understand that can't much be done until we get some concept of ourselves and some concept of the family that stir us to take pride in being a human being; pride in being a member of a family. Inspire us to accept responsibility and motivate us to be supporters of our families and supporters of ourselves. That's what it's going to take.

 We have a situation as a people that is bad. We talk of ourselves as a people, but what bonds do we have? How are we tied together? We say we belong to the black race. Explain how. You know? Come back to value, the way you esteem something or estimate something's worth, expectations and performance---performance. Do we place any value on ourselves as a people? How do we value ourselves as a people? Race pride, race pride; how do we define race pride? Are we proud of being black? The expression "ethnic pride" carries more meaning, ethnic pride, than race pride. Race pride---well what is the race pride? What have that race done?

 Yes, when I hear somebody say "race pride," then I want to know---if I don't know anything about them, then the first thing I want to know why are they talking about race pride. What has that race done? But if you say "ethnic pride," then right away I say that race must have a good social life. It must have a good cultural life. They must celebrate their culture or something yearly because they have ethnic pride. What we celebrate yearly. Being black? Where are our ethnic bonds? If we have racial pride or ethnic pride, define it. What is the definition? Where is it located? Is it in just being black? We've lost the sense of contextual life; a unity of spirit. If a people are a people, then they share a common spirit. What common spirit do we share? There is an expression "ethos," cultural ethos, ethnic ethos. Where is the ethnic ethos of the black people? What principles have we established? What cherished virtues of our people have we established that we must all respect, that it all must support, that we all must salute that will keep us together, that will make us feel a part of each other? We don't have it.

 Soul food is not even popular. It's not. How many eat it? You can tell by the looks of the neighborhood. How many soul restaurants you see? Soul food is not even popular. We don't have a good hot dog or a bowl of chili to hold us together. So we have a lot of work to do. That's what I'm trying to tell you. We have a lot of work to do. We need leaders to lead us into a sense of cultural unity so that all these fares that take us in all kinds of directions break up our families and take our loyalties away from our homes. We have got a lot of work to do.

 I told a gentleman in Chicago. I said, "Well, I'm going to Kalamazoo " They said, "Why are you going to Kalamazoo?" I said, "I'm going out of my respect for Black History Month, but, I said to tell you the truth, until Blacks start making their own history, I don't see much sense in it." Do we make our own history? No, we don't make our own history. We just react to the white man. If the white man treats us bad, we react to it. If the white man treats us nice, we react to it, but do we have any independent goal? Do we have any separate idea of where we should go? Do we have any plan for motivating our race? Do we have any plan for getting our race out of the situation of economic instability? No, we don't have a plan.

 Other ethnic groups, they have a stronger ethnic life. They have some common bonds that give them a sense of belonging, a sense of importance that makes them loyal to the life of their people. We don't have that. We think it's enough just to be in America. “America is a good situation; it's enough just to be in America.” Only time we cry out is when they want to put us out of America. “Oh, they're putting us out.” It's no good. We have to have a friend, a lover in Washington. Do you like to take our problems to the White House steps? The answer is in our hearts, not on the White House steps. The answers are in our hearts. The answer's are at home or on your own door steps. That's right.

 Another thing the president said I thought that was worth nothing, well worth nothing; in fact, it took courage for him to say it, or he's just a good man. I don't know. He said “there can be no economic revival for ghettos while criminals are permitted to run loose freely.” He's right. He’s right. Many of us would be better off financially if it wasn't for that strong presence of crime and freedom for criminals in our neighborhoods. The average individual is afraid to open up a business fearing the consequences that somebody will take his money, rob him, shoot him, kill him or make him pay for protection. If you get by all of that, then your least worry which is a big worry for a small man or woman going in business is that you won't find an honest worker. They'll be going into your money and robbing you blind. Mistreating your customers when you're not around and giving their boyfriends all your goods. Right?

 So before we start pointing the finger at outside factors, say that's because the black man being down, let us look at what's happening at home. If you do the right thing, you'll go back to G-d, and you'll demand of people, of leaders, of ministers, or Imams or whatever who claim to represent religion or represent G-d, you'll demand of them that they be truthful. And when they prove to be liars and hypocrites, you'll drive them away from around here. Tell them, "Get out of this church. Get out of this mosque. Get on out there with your no-good bunch. You belong out there with the filth or with the criminals." That's what you would do. Then you'll become a strong people, and G’d will be with you.

 I would like to see a time when we would commemorate the great virtues of some of our great leaders of the past and the people, sincere ones, that is, who followed those people. Not to commemorate being black, but more than that, commemorate the virtues, the fine principles that men of our race stood up for and died for. That kind of celebration would help the spirit of the whole people. It would be a healing in the life of the people and would keep us with a sense of respect for things of value. But to just have a February commemoration of Black History, to me it's nothing. It's nothing. It saddens me and how did it come about anyway? Who chose February? How come February, it maybe because it's dark and gloomy, huh? You can hear “wary” in the end of it, February. I don't know who chose it in the first place.

 We have a long ways to go. But if you're Muslims, you should be strong. You shouldn't be looking for blackness in yourself in order to appreciate or to love yourself. You should look for human qualities in yourself. A beast can be black or white, can't they? Yes, a beast can be black or white, so look for the human qualities in you. G-d has said that he's made the human being, made you, and made your form excellent. And He said that he has honored, made dignified, or made honorable all the descendants of Adam. One scholar recently writing in a book called "Qur’aanic Sciences" Abdurrahmanhe, Dr. Rahman he says that when G-d says in the Qur’aan that he taught Adam the names, he said “It means that he gave Adam knowledge; knowledge of himself and knowledge of the external world.”

 I want to conclude this by saying that the late leader of the Temple of Islam, called the Lost found Nation of Islam, too, he said to his people, "You will not be equal with the white man until you get equal knowledge." I think that's a better thing to listen to than what the president said, because, if you go out there trying to get some economic power with no sense, you're going to be in big trouble. As Salaam Alaikum.