

January 23, 2009

Khutbah

Title: [Is It Possible to Become What Allah Made Us To Be?](#)

DVD title: Allah's Vision for the Human Being is Greater than The Prediction of the Angels  
Our Challenge is to Realize this Potential

Duas. Allah Swt says in Qur'an, in Suratu-l-Baqarah,

**“O Adam! Tell them their names.” And when he had told them their names, He said, “Did I not tell you that I alone know the unseen reality of the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?” (2:33)**

And Allah Swt also says in Suratu-l-Araf,

**So then Shaytan whispered to the two of them to make them conscious of their nakedness which they had hidden from them, “Your Lord has forbade you this tree lest you two become angels or lest you be among those who live forever.” (7:20)**

My dear brothers and sisters, it is as if Allah Swt is saying that the potential of the human being comes from its ability to name or give some kind of symbolic designation to the things in creation, an ability that makes human beings worthy to become God's deputies on earth. This human ability to symbolize the prophecy of Allah unfolds through humanity, even though humanity itself does not see the Divine vision fully. Indeed, our species, as we can tell from the world we live in, is still realizing the hopes, expectations,

and predictions of the angels, instead of Allah's vision. Remember what the angels said, "Why are You creating another being who will bring only corruption and misery to this world?"

Shaytan is unwilling to accept Allah's conferring of authority upon human beings.

**We said, "O Adam, dwell you and your wife in the garden of Eden, and eat of the bountiful things therein as you will, but approach not this tree lest you become the unjust transgressors." (2:35)**

**He (Shaytan) made them slip from this garden and out of the state of felicity which they had been in. And We said, "Get down, all you people with enmity between yourselves on earth. It shall be your dwelling place and means of livelihood for a time." (2:36)**

But when Adam and Hawa (peace be upon them both) fall from Satan's trap, Allah Swt dresses them equally to signify that they are equally responsible. They confess the injustice they have committed and said, "**O Lord, we have been unjust to ourselves and wronged ourselves. If you forgive us not, and bestow not upon us your mercy, we certainly will be of those who are lost.**" (7:149)

This tells us something of the psyche of the religious faith communities of the day we live in today. I spoke to you about the *idhn* and the role of Tariqah. Today I want to continue to talk about religion in the real world we live in. Most religious communities reward themselves with a kind of monopoly over paradise, most of which are hopes and wishes of human beings that have been expressed over time. But Allah and the Qur'an does not distinguish between these different human beings. "**Nay, whoever submits his face** (his

self) to Allah while compassionate (meaning being a doer of good) has his reward with his Lord. On such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (2:112) Allah tells us this in Qur’an. He also says, “Nor your desires, nor the desires of the People of the Book will prevail. Whoever works evil will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find besides Allah any protector of helper.” (4:123) Suratu-n-Nisā.

The history of the world shows us that the attitude or warnings of the angels that human beings will spill blood on the earth and spread corruption have been accurate up to this point. The question that faces us today and tomorrow, and I suspect for at least a month or two, is it possible for us to come out from under the angel’s insight or judgment into the light of the knowledge or prescription of Allah Swt—the knowledge of Allah’s knowledge of us, of His creation? Can we accomplish this transformation in a way that is of this world, scientifically, politically, methodologically, organized way? Because that’s the way of the world we live in; it’s the potential of the world and the way it has been constructed.

How can we return to the covenant made by Allah with the *anbiyā*, the covenant that each of the *anbiyā* pledged to Allah Swt to enter into a world of love, a world of compassion and mercy, a world of knowledge, a world of humility, understanding that there is life beyond this world. Though it seems that our human species is still fulfilling the predictions of the angels, Allah saw something else in the capacity He bestowed upon humanity. He says in Suratu-l-Balad,

**Have We not made for him a pair of eyes, a tongue, and a pair of lips, and shown him the two paths? (90:8-10)**

In a way, when we look at science and say, “The stronger of the species prevails,” we can

also say how the mind and nervous system interact and how it affirms what is good, pleasant and peaceful over what is difficult and destructive. It has also a very important reality in how we look at our human progress. We can't just say, "I have authority because I'm stronger," or as it says in Proverbs, "*I am understanding and I have strength,*" as some kind of proof of dominance. But this biological evolution in our ability and authority to embrace and to take the promise of Allah and make it a living reality is our true challenge. I think, hopefully, we can say that humanity will come out of this age of deception and delusion and ego, just as it has come through ages of enslavement or human sacrifices and headhunting. Just like we have progressively eliminated at least certain forms of slavery, and made the shedding of blood distasteful to the majority of human beings (whereas in previous ages, this was a way of tribal interaction), we are hoping that we can end this age of deception and self-deception and illusion. After all, isn't that what we work for and affirm? Isn't that why we have hope for the future today?

It's easy to understand why it was difficult to change the point of view over time, [with] errors upon errors, from the people with the strongest power [up to] the time of Prophet Isa. Even at the time of Pharaoh the strongest dominated. But the Prophet Isa came and talked about love, refocuses us on love. Prophet Mohammed (sal) not only builds on this question of love, but talks about the dissolution of the differences between human beings, and the Medinan mentality and hopeful society. Still we live in a world where authority and the status of minorities, diversity, the status of women, the inability to understand how we should perceive life, the old ways of looking, the generational differences, the biases, prejudices, and bigotry still exists. So we have to address corruption in the world today. We have to address bloodshed and genocide and oppression. We, who are attuned to this, are hearing, listening to, and hoping for this. We grab on to them and say, "Insh'allah." But a lifetime of seeing it fail, of seeing the pendulum swing from right to

left, of power-hungry madness swinging to affirmations of change leaves us skeptical.

Still, we grab for that hope. It's part of *fitra*. It's part of our commitment, our covenant with Allah Swt. The shame of that bloodshed and oppressiveness, genocide and poverty weighs heavily on some of us. We see that we want to change the institutions and make those institutions of power-hungriness and oppression obsolete. Some of us in this room have dedicated a large part of our lives to that process. We understand that it's really scandalous that 1/5 of the world's population consumes 4/5 of the world's resources. We understand that is a terrible thing. We understand that millions of people die in tribal wars under the oppressor's hand, of ignorance and corruption. We understand how terrible it is that species after species become extinct under our watch. This is very corrupt management of the system.

Most human beings turn a blind eye, or worse than that, nourish that kind of mentality. We become accomplices in the evil, undisturbed by the moral condemnation that is due for those deeds. Because we don't really understand the morality, we don't understand another form of moral economy. The violation of the universal moral and ethical values leads to loss and sacrifice in humanity. We need to revise our attitudes, and account for reality, and get over this greed which is plaguing our country in an economic way, and weakening humanity. It takes knowledge and skills to develop new social forms in our species. This growth was implied in Allah's answer to the angels who didn't believe in the possibilities for humanity, and condemned humanity.

We have to understand that Allah Swt created a sacred bond and a sacred space for good action to take place, and learn to realize what it means and promote what it means. Just like we look at a newborn baby and we look at possibilities. Then we worry about the

environment, and will those possibilities come about: “I worry about what the world will be like when my child grows up,” or “What will the world be like for our grandchildren.” We are spending now and giving the debt to our grandchildren. We have to respond as humane human beings, with [the same] care and attention that we would give to that small infant, born into the community of human beings—born into our community.

We have to discover a trust that has been placed in us by Allah Swt, Who talks about the human soul as the ultimate evolution in the cosmos. First He tells us about the wonders: the sun, moon, ocean, heavens, skies, the animals and the ships that ply the waters in commerce. Allah says in Suratu-sh-Shams, **“By the soul and the proportion and order given to it, He inspired it as to its wrong and its right. Surely he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that vilifies it.”** (91:7-10) This potential perfected self (*insan i kamil*) sits at the nadir of creation and has the potential to grow in any direction, to choose either path, right or wrong, good or bad, evil or good.

Allah Swt reminds us in the very beautiful and brief *sūrah* which we love, Sūratu-l-Tīn, **“Truly We created the human being in the best form, then We reduce him to the lowest of the low, except for those who faithfully believe and do righteous deeds. Theirs shall be a reward unailing.”** (95:4-6) There He gives us the formula for that change. We have been created biologically, and its derivative intellectually, with the unique capability to interface with the rest of the system of creation, with a capability for transformation and change. We see in the history of humanity that even evil is subject to change in form. The transformation of humanity is the most important concern we can have, just like we every day are concerned about the transformation of our economy and our political policies, of our social injustices or justices. This is all part of it.

Allah tells us, “You cannot change a people until they change themselves.” Every

teaching tells us to turn to ourselves. **Truly, God will never change a condition of a people until they change themselves.** (13:11) Qur'an expresses a very profound orientation toward the world as God's creation, a source of hope, of knowledge, of reflection, a model for us. It tells us in Sūratu Yunus, **"Behold, observe all that is in the heavens and the earth. But neither signs or warners profit those who do not believe."** (10:101) All this has been set up for us as a model, an inspiration. We are asked to actually trace our own history to understand what our capability to act is, and how our knowledge works.

Allah says, **"So let man consider from what he is created."** (86:5) Then He tells us about the physical creation, but there is another implication here—that we are created for a purpose, and with certain capabilities. Understanding how creation started should enable humanity to claim and utilize this world, to fine tune (*taskhīr*) ourselves in this world, and differentiate the good from the evil, the harmful from the beneficial. Understanding creation should propel humanity into creativity and inventiveness, but we have to move away from those evil tendencies because we see. We can harness the atom and use it for good and not good. All these capabilities that science gives us: how are we going to use them? Humanity has to claim and utilize the good of this world. With the gift that Allah has given us of our mind, we can become a species different than others. We can evolve.

The evolution of humanity into not just a thinking species, which happened, but the evolution of humanity into high-thinking, high-acting, ethical and moral individuals, understanding our place in the universe and the potential of Allah Swt—that is the challenge that has been with us from the very beginning, and that's the challenge which hopefully we are beginning to look at again in the world today. Allah Swt knew when He created us something the angels did not know, that we could evolve beyond being people

who just spill blood and use our muscles, our fangs, our nails, our grasp to do evil, into something good. That dialogue between Allah and the angels captures His vision of humanity as we are told in the story of [the two sons of ] Hazrat Adam.

**Behold, the each presented an offering to God. It was accepted from one but not from the other. Said the latter, “Be sure that I will kill you.” Said the former, “Surely, Allah does accept only from those who are righteous. If you do stretch your hand to kill me, I surely will not stretch my hands to kill you, for I fear Allah the Cherisher of the worlds. I intend to let you draw upon yourself my sin as well as yours, for you will be among the companions of the fire, and that is the reward for those who are unjust.” The selfishness of the other led him to the murder of his brother, and he murdered him and then became himself one of the losers. Allah sent a raven who scratched the ground to show him how to hide the shame of his brother. “Woe is me!” said he, “Am I not even able to be as this crow to hide the shame of my brother?” Then he became full of regret. (5:27-31)**

Whether this is actual or symbolic, what is important in this story is it signifies the elevation of humanity to the level of understanding of ethic over force, and to shift the authority from one that is based on violence to one that is voluntary, from one that is based on greed to one that is based on sharing, from one based on selfishness to one based on selflessness. I think we stand, *insh'allah*, at that crossroads of Cain and Abel. We stand at the crossroads where we should not hesitate to work for what is good in this world. I think that we could, *insh'allah*, hope for and pray for that what we are seeing is the beginning of a new era, *insh'allah*. The Qur'an recites the determination of all the *anbiyā* to share the attitudes and understand the attitudes of the sons of Adam; to

understand from this story that we have to move away from harm, and exercise patience and understanding; to move away from persecution, no matter what the justifications some people think there are for persecutions we inflict upon our own people. I mean our own people, humanity—not the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Iraqis, the Taliban, but humanity.

If we refuse to respond with harm against those who commit harm, and continuously call people to understanding, dialogue, and a better world, and better life; and remain strong in our knowledge and abilities, and not compromise the best of our values; defend what Allah clearly tells us in Qur'an can be defended; endure the consequences sometimes, but be determined not to regress back to a way of violence or a lower state, then we can understand that real *shirk*, real blasphemy lies in turning away from these values as with Abel. Allah asked the Prophet Mohammed (sal) to tell the world about Nūh (Noah), who said to his son: **“Oh my people, if it be hard on you that I should stay with you and remind you of Allah’s signs, then to Allah I commend my trust. Get you, then, an agreement about your plan and among your partners so your plan be not to your dark and dubious self. So pass your sentence on me and give me no respite.”** (10:71)

In other words, Sidna Nūh is addressing the understanding of humanity, determined to withstand harm. He insists on performing, [because] he is called to, no matter what the people do to him. He wants to address their goodness. He wants to warn them. He wants to tell them the stories that are told over and over again, like the story of Shuyeb and others. So we have to affirm that people turn away from their arrogance and people turn away from their fearful nature, and support the means, the guidance, the laws, the social justice that allows human beings to transform themselves and live within the vision of Allah (Swt) creation of humanity, not just the warnings of the angels, who said that all we [human beings] would do is bring bloodshed and corruption to the world.

That freedom that we seek can be secured by preventing conflict or ending it, by disinfecting the room where this very delicate surgery of change is going on in the brains of human beings, by having intellectual and social integrity, and by practicing dialogue and understanding, being willing to bear consequences without engaging in violence, and by affirming intellectual freedom, social openness and tolerance. *Insh'allah*. I hope that this is a useful message at this transition time, *insh'allah*, in our world.

SECOND KHUTBAH (*du'ās*) O Allah, there have been those among us who have been sick. We want to thank You for their healing. And there is one who has passed from our community and we want to ask You for her happiness and fulfillment in the hereafter, O Allah (SwT), under Your sweet protection. And it reminds us that we are all gathered together as the living ones, respectful of those who have passed and in need of Your sustenance, O Allah (SwT) that we may continue to serve You. *Amin*.

Allah (SwT) has given us a taste of new life today. I am sure, if the weather reports are correct, it will remind us that it is not quite here yet. Anticipation is a great thing, as it makes it even sweeter when it arrives. Then we start to think about the change of season again. Closing *du'ās*.