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1. **What the Qur'ân says about the Purpose of Life!**
2. **The sin that Adam committed according to the Qur'ân!**

Edited- A speech given by Prof. Lang

Salaamu-alaikum! I come from the University of Kansas; we're playing in the final four this very instant. So I want to let you know that you've asked a lot of me today (laughs), no I'm just joking. Alright, very briefly I just wanted to talk a little bit about 'What the Qur'ân has to say about the purpose of Life'.

I think this is an extremely important subject especially for Muslims living in America because we're sort of a minority and new religion here and many people are interested in what we believe and I think the primary question that people want answered when they first consider another religion is how that religion views the purpose of life; the purpose of human- of our existence here. And so, I'm going to begin by talking from an Atheist point of view. Because I want to talk about what sort of answers the Qur'ân might have for an Atheist. To begin, I need to talk about 5 or 10 minutes about, 'What made me or what I believe attributed to my becoming an Atheist cause I grew up in a Christian family- and then I'll talk for about 45 minutes or so about what I experienced in the Qur'ân and how that sort of changed my perception. My wife always says that I should summarize what I'm going to do before I talk this because it's easy to get lost in my speeches. (jokes) - You know my wife doesn't have a lot of confidence in my speaking ability.

Okay, so we start out by mentioning that my mother certainly played no role in me becoming an atheist. My mother was a wonderful woman, a beautiful lady; she had tremendous dignity and class. The neighbors loved her, she was a registered nurse and she put in many extra hours at the hospital. She worked in the ward that dealt with dying patients. And when I would come and pick her up late from work at night many of the patients would drag me over and talk to me and tell me what a wonderful woman my mother was. When she died, her funeral was packed and person after person that came up to me had a story to tell about my mother and her goodness. Time and time again, people described her as - 'Jeff you know your mother is a true saint'. She was a deeply religious woman, a great mother, a great teacher, a gentle person. She never cursed; I never heard her curse or swore, ever in her whole life. I never heard her speak to anybody rudely or speak about anyone rudely. She was a tremendous example of a truly religious person and she didn't wear it on her sleeve, and one could surely see it just in her day to day interactions with people.

My father on the other hand was a difficult man, um; my father for some strange reason had this tremendous rage inside. I don't know where he got it- but he had this terrible violence inside him and every night he would try to quell that violence with hard, hard drinking. And his drinking though only made him all the more volatile because my father could be laughing and joking one minute then he could fly into an angry rampage the next, for some unexpected reason. You never know what would trigger it and once he flew into that angry rampage, he would just go wild in the house. The house would be in havoc and he would rage on and on, and on and on and it would take an awful lot of liquor and several hours before he would finally go to sleep. And this would happen night after night after night. And so my four brothers and I- I was the fourth in line- my four brothers and I lived a frightening and precarious childhood but I have to say the worst of it was watching my father regularly taunt and threaten and abuse my mother. And it

would happen day in, day in, day in, day out, night in and night out and it was a never ending nightmare. You see, it's really not so bad when you're the target of your father's violence. You might think it's bad when a child is the target of his fathers' violence but it really isn't all that bad. At the moment of attack, you're really not thinking about anything other than your own survival. When he's firing punches at you or kicking you on the ground or chasing you throughout the house and when he's threatening you on going to 'hurt you bad boy' -you are not thinking about anything at that moment except escape. While all that is going on, you're not thinking about the aftermath or the consequences or the psychological repercussions or anything like that, and when it's all over you might even excuse the onslaught because you figure maybe you somehow deserved it. If not for what you did this time maybe, for something you did in the past. *You could always put the blame on yourself.*

But a far worse fear is the terror that overcomes you when you watch your father go after your mother. Because she's the only source of warmth and kindness, of love and protection that you know and if he would have taken that away from a little boy's standpoint, you would have lost everything, -but far worse than the fear is the guilt and it comes over you from several directions. First of all there's the guilt that comes upon you from the growing antipathy you have towards your father. Because we're taught to love and respect our parents and we are born with this natural bonding attachment to them. But when you watch something like this happen night after night after night, with this rage growing inside you, you're being pulled in opposite directions. And then there is also of course the guilt that comes when you think that you might be the cause of this night's violence. Maybe something *you* said or did that you didn't even realize that triggered it. Maybe just your father's dislike of *you* triggered an argument between your mom and him that is now raging on downstairs. *But the worst guilt of all and it is by far the very worst is knowing that you did nothing to stop your father from hurting your mother because when he raged on against your mother downstairs you hid in your bed and you trembled underneath the covers.* Maybe you whimpered and you cried and you put the pillow on your head and thus you traded personal respect for personal safety. And with each such incident you come to realize with even greater and greater clarity -you come to realize your own weakness, your own impotence, your own incompetence, your own worthlessness, your own cowardice. And the hate grows and festers inside of you- Not only for the man that you call father but for yourself as well. It is a terrible, terrible thing to make a young boy choose between his mother and himself, it is extremely unfair.

When I was little, I use to daydream of about life without my father, I just wanted the violence to go away. I wanted to not be afraid anymore, I felt like I was trapped in a bad dream and that there was no way out until I prayed to God again and again and again to take, to remove my father from our lives but he was always there and very soon I began to wonder if God really was. I could not fathom why God would subject my mom to such lifelong punishment. I could not imagine what great sin she must have committed or that we, her children must have committed to deserve my father. I did not have the maturity to sort out such questions but I had enough fear and anger to provoke them. I was too young to see the wisdom in allowing my mom to suffer the violence and abuse of my father. I was too young to understand why God would let innocent children tremble night after night after night in their beds fearing that they might not see their mother the next morning. I was too young to see how the mercy of God could even extend to my father with all this terrible failings. All I could see in my world was chaos and violence and fear and so it became easy for me to question the existence of God. I began to do that at a very early age. I think, I'll even say that the turmoil of the 60's and 70's, that's the age when I was a teenager you know, late 60's early 70's only reinforced my skepticism. When John and Robert F

Kennedy was assassinated or Martin Luther King was gunned down, when vice president Agner was kicked out of office and Richard Nixon soon after him; when the race riots erupted in city streets like mine and gang fights erupted in our cities, many of those which I was involved in;- I saw the bizarre and senseless carnage of Vietnam, they all confirmed the lesson that was already ingrained in me that my father had taught me so well, that the world is dominated by random, consuming, indiscriminating violence.

And very soon I began to ask why. Why would God make it that way? Why wouldn't He just pop us in the heaven from the first and spare us all the suffering? Why does He let little children in Vietnam get napalmed and run down the street on fire when they have done nothing to deserve it, and why does He let the race riots go on? Why does He let believers be assassinated? Why does He just let the violence go on and on and on for people who had nothing to do with it, -it wasn't of their own making. Why didn't He just make us all angels and pop us into heaven if He could make us angels because that's what I was always taught He could do. Why did He make us all so susceptible to sin? Why didn't He make us impervious to it, like He made the angels? Is this the best world He could create, I thought; is this the most perfect world He could create for our existence? I just couldn't figure it and all the explanations I received from the priests and doctors and law you know, from whoever spoke to me or taught me, they just didn't make sense to me. In any case, so I became an Atheist when I was sixteen even though I was going to Catholic school at the time. I declared myself an Atheist in one class,- it was confrontation between me and a priest and we were talking about God and the purpose of life- and I expressed my views and he said 'well then you don't believe in God' and I said 'well I guess I don't'. And then through my junior and senior year of high school I got an F in religion even though I continued to do well in the tests.

In any case when I was 28 - to make a long story short - some friends of mine gave me a copy of the Qur'ân and one night I was sitting in Diamond Heights, my apartment in Diamond Heights in San Francisco, I was working at that time at the University of San Francisco and I was 27, or 28 at that time I can't remember -and I ran out of stuff to read- and I took this gift that my friends gave me and I began to read it. I opened the Qur'ân, -read the first page and then the second and then very quickly in the second Surah, about 37 verses into the Qur'ân, I came upon the story of mankind, and I have to admit I read through it quickly, it was about nine, ten verses long. The story of the first man and woman, and I recognized some of the details as it was similar to what I have learnt when I was a child but I noticed that there was something wrong. It was apparent to me that whoever authored this Qur'ân -of course I wasn't a Muslim at the time so I didn't have any idea who that was- whoever authored this Qur'ân clearly did not understand the real meaning of the story because they obviously had gotten the story confused. They clearly did not understand the whole purpose of the story. And so, I just read through it once, and then I read through it again just to try to see what kind of point the author was making, and I read through it a **third time** and then a **fourth time** and then I realized there is something strange going on here. I thought- I'm going to read this much more carefully, I need to go through this line by line, verse by verse because it's obvious that the author is trying to bring out another point and I wasn't quite sure what it was, but definitely **he packs a lot of meaning into almost every word**, and I thought the writer here seems to have a great measure of brilliance.

I'll sort of take you through what my experiences was as quickly as I can. So I came to the 30th verse of the 2nd Surah, Surah-al-Bakarah and it began like this,- it said "Behold your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a vicegerent on earth, -the Arabic word is '*Ghaliefa*' -it means a representative or an emissary of mine; I'm going to place a vicegerent

on earth, and they, the angels said, -'will You place therein in one who would spread corruption and shed blood while we celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holiness' - and God said, - He said 'truly I know what you do not know'. See that's the verse that hooked me - that's the verse that caught my attention and that's the one that kept on making me read the story again and again and again.

Because listen to the way it begins, 'Behold the Lord said to the angels' "I am going to place a representative of mine on earth, a vicegerent of Mine, a emissary, one who acts on My behalf".

I thought that that is not the way it goes. You're not supposed to be placing man on the earth in some positive role, some elective office. You place man as on earth as a punishment for a sin. Clearly I knew the author didn't quite get the point, but still it's an amazing line, but then I come to the next line and it says, and the angels say- 'will You place on earth one who spread corruption and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praises and glorify You'? I looked at it again, I could not believe the question they,- said 'will You place one who will spread corruption and shed blood, while we, the angels celebrate Your praises and glorify You'? I looked at that and I said- **'Exactly! That would be my question'**. 'Why would You create this being, supposedly for some positive role when he's capable of doing tremendous wrongdoing, when he could spread corruption and shed much blood? Why would you create this violent and pernicious creature when You could create angels? As the angels clearly say while we, i.e. the angels celebrate Your praises and glorify You'.

They were asking one of the most fundamental questions in the entire history of religion. Why create man, this utterly fallible creature, this creature who could rebel against God's will, who could do such tremendous wrong doing, who could wreak havoc like no other creature on earth- when You could make them angels. Now look where the question is being asked,- it's being asked in heaven. It's almost like saying look why don't You just make them angels and they could be up here in heaven with us you know,- why don't You just make them angels and pop them into heaven it's fine. Why would You put them on earth where he could feel distant from You, were he could work out his worst criminal tendencies and act them out feeling somehow independent and apart from You and free to do whatever he wants when You could just make them angels and put them into heaven and make them perfectly submissive to Your will.

I looked at that question and said that's my question. I'm not even a single verse into the story of mankind and there before me I see my question. That whole question, everything that I ever thought, everything that I ever experienced, everything that I ever knew was in that question. It was as if the author took my life and wanted to pick out the exactly the right questions to humiliate me, to provoke me and to anger me. Why create man, the most destructive and violent creature when you could make them angels,- and look at the answer, and He said, God said, 'Truly I know what you do not know'. You know in modern parlance we would say, 'I know exactly what I am doing'. I read that and said what!, you know what you that is the angels do not know; you know exactly what You are doing? Well please inform me, tell me what You're doing because I, I'm 28 years old and I haven't figured out that yet and I have a lot of issues that I'm still dealing with that's connected to this question. You can't just get off that easy, - You can't just tell me You know exactly what you're doing. After what I've been through, after you made me this way- and then I realized of course I was arguing with a God I didn't even believe in, and this happened several times as I read through the Qur'ân. Sometimes I would get so agitated by what I read, I would start arguing with this voice that I'm reading before me that's calling to me.

So I turn to the next verse- as it turns out the Qur'ân just doesn't dismiss the question -it starts to answer it a little bit. And in the next verse it says, 'and He taught Adam,- God taught Adam the names of all things and then He placed them before the angels and said, tell me their names if you are right'. So this verse is clearly referring to the previous one but notice what it says now,- I from my own background remember Adam naming things but it wasn't connected to any answer to any philosophical question, but here notice what it says, 'and he taught Adam the names of all things' and *I realized already just from the first verse you got to read these verses very carefully cause it's packed with a lot of symbolism and meaning*,- and he taught Adam the names of all things,- so here we see Adam is not only just a creature who knows how to name things, but he's acquiring the gift of language,- but he's also a learning creature, God is teaching him. Now right here, right in this verse and it becomes even clear in the subsequent verses that the very first thing that the Qur'ân is going to emphasize here is man's intellect, he's a learning creature. He is taught, -and what is he taught is one of the great intellectual gifts he is given in response to the angels' question, -the gift of language. Because through language man can not only learn, but he can learn things not only through his own experience, but he can learn things that other people have experienced of times and places there are hundreds, or thousands of years else separated from him until all our knowledge becomes cumulative. Every generation learning from the generation before, I'm learning today from authors I read from other sides of the world that may have existed 2, 000 years ago. And so we all contribute to our collective learning and knowledge. And so when I see later in the Qur'ân -and the Qur'ân will emphasize this again and again and again- like in one verse it says 'Read, in the Name of your Lord who created, created man out of a tiny creature that clings', read it commands the reader,- 'for your Lord is most bountiful', why is He most bountiful? What great gift did He give him? 'For he taught man the use of the pen and through it, taught him what he otherwise could not know', and time and time and time again the Qur'ân will call upon man to use his intellectual faculties, and swear by his intellectual faculties and to use them correctly, because they play a fundamental role in guiding him to truth. ***I've never come across a scripture that puts so much emphasis on the correct use of our intellectual faculties and the harnessing of reason in helping us attain to faith.***

And He taught Adam the names of all things and then he placed them before the angels and said, (to paraphrase) -'Tell me their names if you are right. Okay, you have this objection- you have this natural question about this creation of mankind here, -this mankind is a human being- this human creature is also a learning creature. I think it has many intellectual gifts here, I'm going to place these things before you, - tell me their names if you are right about man'.

What did the angels say? In the next verse they say, 'glory to you, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us,- in truth it is You are Knowing the Wise'. They say this task, this intellectual test that's put before them is beyond their grasp, this is what they emphasize, we have no knowledge, this would take knowledge; this would take intellect that they don't possess. The angels said- 'In truth it is You, God who are Knowing, the Wise- God, it is easy for You, - You have the knowledge, You have Wisdom, this would take knowledge and wisdom that is beyond us (the angels). And so in the next verse we read, and He, God said 'Oh Adam, tell them their names- and when he had told them their names' - notice how it just like it is nothing for him, for mankind he has this phenomenal ability, it's just a triviality for man, he names them. 'Oh Adam, tell them their names' -and when he had told them their names, God said- 'did I not tell you that I know that is unseen in the heavens and the earth and I know what you (the angels) reveal and what you conceal' - and He was clearly going back to the angels' questions. 'Yes, you have these natural concerns about the creation of

mankind, yes they could do these evil things, but look at this tremendous intellect he has. This is something you have overlooked, that you haven't considered'. And that is clearly the point of these verses.

Even though I felt that the author didn't quite misunderstand the story, he was taking one of the great stories in the history of human kind, one of the fundamental greatest stories in the history of mankind, and molding it and using it for a vehicle for an entirely original message. 'And God said, 'Did I not tell you that I know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal'. In other words didn't I tell you that 'I know exactly what I'm doing'- and then the next, 'did I not tell you that I know what you reveal and conceal?' I looked at that, -what question did they pose, what did their question reveal and what did it conceal. I thought about it for a minute and oh, it's obvious, what did the question reveal, - just go back and look at the question. It revealed the sinful and sinister propensities of man. I mean it's obvious, right?

Okay, -so they revealed the sinister and evil propensities of man, but what could the question conceal?, -all you have to do is think about it for a minute, - the human beings, yes they could do evil, yes they could do wrong, yes they could create misery, but they could also do the exact opposite. They could choose to do evil, they could choose to do tremendous good, they could choose to do tremendous violence or they could choose to show tremendous compassion, they could choose to live by falsely, they could choose to live by the greatest truths, they could be terribly ugly or they could be terribly beautiful, and up unto that point of my life, I like the angels had only saw one half of one side of the coin, and for the first time I read that verse believe it or not, it was a eye opener for me. I have always been obsessed with the evil potentials of human beings. When I read that verse I realized that I had great example in front of me with my own mom, I realized that I have been blinded by only one side of human nature.

So we go on to the next verse. 'And behold we said to the angels, bow down to Adam and they bowed down, but not so ibles'- , ibles is like the father of Satan, satanic beings, forces, creatures. 'He refused and was arrogant; he was of those who reject faith' - an interesting statement. And behold, we said to the angels bow down to Adam and they bowed down. Bowing down could symbolize two things, bowing down could symbolize the superiority or the potential superiority of one being over another so to bow down to them. Bowing down could also mean that they serve that creature in some respect, cause the Qur'an says that all beings serve God, all creative beings serve God but this verse seems to be indicating and the rest of the Qur'an will make it clear that these angelic beings, these angelic entities will serve the development of mankind. We even see later that the satanic beings serve the developments of mankind. Both forces, angelic and satanic will serve the development of mankind because one will present mankind with a choice to do the most altruistic things the other will simultaneously try to influence man in the opposite direction, and so human beings will be moral creatures and are allowed to make moral decisions. ***It's in those moral decisions that they will grow spiritually and morally as human beings, and they'll take that to the next life.*** And the angelic and the satanic forces will be catalysts for those moral choices that they make. They will heighten the human being's awareness of the rightfulness and the wrongfulness of the choices they're about to make and the self, the soul, the *nafs* (the essence) as they say in Arabic -will have to make the ultimate choice between good and evil. And that choice -that test will come again and again and again and human beings either grow or decline, and those tests will come again and again and again to try and help him towards a spiritual evolution to bring him back, but that choice is ultimately ours.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, - 'and so We (Allah) said to the angels, bow down to Adam, and they bowed down but not so iblees, - iblees is Satan, this rebellious force, this evil prompter, the one who whispers into a human heart, he comes into being. And with the introduction of Satan we have at the introduction of evil -we have evil influences on human beings and notice why iblees does not bow down, he refuses because he was *arrogant*. You know we often hear that the root of all evil in the west- it's always money, greed, etc. Here the Qur'ân says that the root of all evil is not always material wants, it's not always money, it's not always greed but at the heart of evil is arrogance. Putting yourself above all others, of assigning to yourself special priority and neglecting the rights of others, of pride and arrogance, and all sorts of evil. He- iblees- was of those who reject faith. I looked at that verse and I said okay, I mean I get why you would create angels to sort of influence man in a positive direction, but why in this story now are you introducing Satan?

What sort of role does this Satan play - and then of course you just think about it for a minute and you say yes!, the story is telling us that on the one hand we have this magnanimous urgings that come from the one hand, on the other hand we have these satanic urgings coming from another direction, and the Qur'ân is telling us that man is not only a learning creature but he's a moral creature. He has understanding of right and wrong. And God infuses those, allows those influences to come to them. ***Man is not only an intelligent being but a moral being***. And so, you know the Qur'ân is not all that difficult to understand, - you just sort of read thru it I've found and you just sort of follow your nose through it and see what it says. I'm sure as most of you here in the audience know. Okay, so we see that man is not only a learning creature but he is a moral being as well. There's another verse in the Qur'ân that says 'by the soul and that which whispers into it' or 'that which breathes into it',- it's morality it's immorality, -and it's God's consciousness -both of these we are under the influence of, and God allows us to be under the influences of. He creates us to be exposed to both influences, and then the verse says, 'truly he is successful who causes it to grow, causes his soul, his self, his real self the *nafs* to grow. And truly he is lost who stunts it, -who disallows, who destroys his personal growth'. So mankind is not only an intellectual being but is a moral being. And in the next verse,- 'O Adam, dwell you and your spouse in the garden and eat freely thereof what you wish, but come not near as of this tree for then you'll be among the wrong doers' I looked at this verse and I was you know, starting to wonder if the author was drifting back to the old story again, -I was confused. 'And We said, O Adam, dwell you and your spouse in the garden and eat freely thereof what you wish but come not near this tree for you will be among the wrong doers'. That was drifting back to the old story, -man sins, man's punished for his sins with earthly life- maybe the author is drifting, he had a good idea, now he is drifting back to the sort of traditional story. Maybe you could let man make his mind up what story he wanted, except for a couple of things about this verse -*and it happens in almost every verse as I read through it*, is that the whole tenor of the passage is that not that what you would expect. I noticed that the chronicle in this story has a tremendous passion for understating things cause it says 'dwell ye and your spouse in the garden and eat freely thereof what you wish, but come not near this tree for you will be among the wrong doers'. I mean there is absolutely no sense of God being threatened by the possibility of man eating of the tree, and in this verse you don't see that God is nervous of the prospect, or that he's threatened by the prospect, or that He's anxious about it; -the tree that He picks it seems is that He's just picking out any tree -nothing special about the tree, 'go not near this tree, for you will be among the wrong doers'. Satan will later come to him and tell him it's the tree of eternal life, the kingdom that never decays, that turns out to be a complete farce on his part. Nothing special about the tree, it's just a tree. God's not nervous at the prospect at all, you know in the tradition that I came from, God is threatened by the prospect, He has to put an angel with a fiery sword by to protect

the tree so that mankind never goes near to it again, I'm not putting it down, I'm just pointing out the differences of the story, they are both beautifully told, but he has to guard the tree, -why, because if they eat from it they'll become gods like us. This man who already has a rebellious nature,- can you imagine if he eats from this tree? Can't let them get near that tree. But here, it just calmly says,- but if you do, you'll be among the wrong doers. God is not worried about himself- it is just a warning to man, making it clear that if you do this, you've committed a wrongful deed. Again, the whole tenor of the pattern all these verses as you read through it, **God knows exactly what He's doing.**

Okay, next verse,- 'but Satan caused them to slip and expelled them from the state in which they were and We said go you all down, some of you being the enemies of others and on earth will be your dwelling place and provision for a time', -*what is that?* I mean, you know I was expecting now the rage, the anger, the violence, the jealousy - that is what I was expecting- okay- they eat from the tree -where is the rage, the violence, I'm going to punish you now; you are going to sweat on earth, and you going to suffer and you going to work and you going to labour and you going to die there for what you did; - and where is the woman - and the woman, she's the one who's going to suffer the most right, she'll have to suffer her labour pains and monthly cycles and bleeding and crying out when her children come in the world, she'll scream out, and worse of all,- the greatest humiliation, the man will rule over her.

It's obviously her intellectual inferiority because she and Satan seduced Adam and he just bumbled along and committed you know the wrong deed. Well, I don't mean to make light of it but the story is obviously different you know, no threat here as a matter of fact- look at the way it says 'O Adam, dwell you and your spouse here in the garden and eat freely thereof of what you wish but come not near this tree for you will be among the wrongdoers', then they make the mistake, 'but Satan caused them to **slip** and expel them from the state in which they were and We said go all you down, some of you being enemies of others some of you will be adversaries of others and the earth will be your dwelling place and provision for a time', this is not a God that is losing it,- if you look at it - 'on earth will be your dwelling place and provision for a time'. That's not the words of a God that got lost you know, or that is really, extremely upset. 'On earth will be your dwelling place and provision for a time'. When I walked into the hotel today and they said - and that is a nice one up there -I don't remember the name of it,- and they said your room will be room 111, and there's a continental breakfast in the morning, I didn't say Ahhh..... you know, I didn't think they were mad at me cause they said, you are going to sleep here and this will be your provision until the morning, oh thank you, I said- but notice something else about this verse- I mean when you read these verses for the first time - I don't know maybe I'm nuts and many people think I am, but when you read these verses for the first time, there is just so much that catches your attention,- *but Satan caused them to slip. I remember I couldn't get the verse, the words out of my head- Satan caused them to slip; to slip, the greatest sin in the history of the human race and it's called a slip.* Now in my culture, slip means you know, you just momentarily for a fraction of a second you lose your focus, it's not a big deal. My uncle Bob used to always say to me ah Jeff, I'm sorry I'm five minutes late I slipped up you know, the understanding is that it's just no big deal, it's just a slip you know, that's what we say when we make a minor mistake, I slipped up it will never happen again.

A slip it said, -momentarily loss of focus- the greatest sin in the history of humanity why we're all here and why we're all suffering, why we all experience death- is that a slip. I didn't believe it so I went to my Arabian friends at that time,- I didn't know any Arabic and when they came to this verse, -we went through it line by line, I said now don't change any words, just read them one at a time. 'But Satan made them', and I said okay, this one, this one right here, what does

it mean, tell me what that means, they said '*a slip*'. A slip and he expelled them from the state in which they were. A slip I thought, but then I was trying to force the traditional understanding, the traditional interpretation, maybe it was just a slip after all, they did not commit murder, they didn't commit robbery, rape, pillaging, assault, they just ate, they ate a couple of pieces of fruit, it's not the greatest sin in the history of humanity by any means,- then in the next verse it says they were expelled from the state in which they were, now which state were they, let's see now, let's go back to where we started,- mankind is being taught -we see he's a intellectual being then we see he's a moral being, -moral being means he's a being that's going to have to make choices- and then God gives them this choice -it's not a huge deal, it's not the greatest sin in the history of humanity by any means -it's minor by any standards, and they make it though. We see that God originally intended to put men on earth as His vicegerent, - we see a period of preparation where he's being prepared intellectually, - where he's growing intellectually, where he's growing as a moral creature. When does God finally put him on earth, - what signals that he's ready to begin. *He makes his first independent choice* - not the worst deed in the history of humanity - its minor on anybody's scale but it shows that mankind is ready to act on his own, to make his own choices,- that God has empowered him to make his own choices and he is ready to make them and carry them out and see them most often to their expected ends if God wills.

And that seems to be the only real significance of it,- but I thought maybe I'm getting this wrong- maybe God just blows off into an angry rampage the next verse- and so I look in the next one and it says- and 'then Adam received words from his Lord - then God turned to him mercifully for His oft returning ever merciful. Well if I had had any doubts up till now that God is not enraged at what just had happened that God hasn't prepared mankind for this choice for what was eventually going to happen -but all this was preparation for mankind to begin his earthly sojourn. If I had any doubts before now I certainly didn't have them after reading this verse. ***This verse is entirely consoling, reaching and merciful, reaching out to mankind and merciful.*** Mankind goes to earth, he's obviously afraid, he's obviously feels remorse, he's in a non-familiar environment, and what does God do, He turns to him, He turns to him. In Arabic the word is like, it has a meaning like a father who is returning towards an infant or a child or somebody or a parent or a mother turning towards her child. And He turns to him mercifully and He oft returning, ever merciful, - and Adam received words from his Lord,- what kind of words, probably words of consolation, words of hope, words telling him not to be scared and in the next verse we see those are exactly the type of words that Adam received. He says, 'go down Adam and his spouse, go down from this state all of you together' repeating that again just so that we know this is not a punishment here, 'go down from this state all of you together and truly there will come to you guidance from me and whoever follows my guidance has nothing to fear nor shall they grieve'. It is an emotional picture,- this couple, young couple is here in fear and in shame, feeling remorse and God reaches out to them and turns to them and tells them, you have nothing to fear nor shall you grieve. I know this is tough for you but you've been prepared for it up to now, up till now your entire existence, it had to happen, this is a necessary stage in your development, in your growth but just hang in there and follow My guidance, be true to Me and I'll be true to you, I'll guide you, I'll help you, I'll do whatever you need,- just follow My guidance and you have nothing to fear nor shall you grieve.

Okay, so I was impressed you know, - I thought this author whom I didn't know - I felt was extremely brilliant because the story is entirely coherent but it's bringing out an entirely new meaning and it's stressing some things in the human equation that I would never have normally thought of, -actually I thought these sort of things argued against the existence of God. Here the author was using them to say- look at these, -these play a fundamental role in the purpose of life.

Human beings have intellect and in response to the angels quest, they are moral creatures, and they are subject to evil and angelic promptings, and they have to choose between them again and again and again throughout their existence and their growth which the Qur'ân talks about frequently is going to depend on that. We're here to grow as you will see, but it emphasizes choice,-human beings are creatures of choice. It also emphasizes suffering, human beings are going to suffer here on earth, that's the first thing the story mentions- spread corruption and shed blood, havoc, suffering, pain,- yes these three things play a central role somehow the story is saying in our development here on earth, in our very purpose of our existence.

These are the three things we've always had the most trouble grappling with, - our theologians have had the most trouble grappling with. I thought- why give us intellect, if it leads us often to challenge in our minds the existence of God,- if we can't reconcile the existence of God with our minds with our reason. Why give us choice if we could choose to do wrong- just make us angels. Why let us suffer so on earth - just pop us into heaven - and here are the grounds telling us that *these play essential roles in our attaining of faith*. Not only these of course, it also mentions guidance, God's forgiveness, revelations, etc. Angelic forces, satanic temptation, it mentions all the other things as well but these three are essential that really caught my attention. *I never expected that these three things would be emphasized*. And so as I read through the Qur'ân I looked at anything I saw that related to this, I would write down notes and underline it. You know I would walk up and down in San Francisco with my pad and as I'm walking - cause I like to walk about seven miles every day -and I'd be underlining. My friends would always say- Jeff what book are you reading, and I would lie to them and I would tell them oh, it's a great novel or something. I didn't want them to know that I was reading the Qur'ân and I think they thought that I was going nuts. But in any case, I was wondering- does the Qur'ân really emphasize reason, does it really emphasize choice, does it really emphasize suffering? Turns to moderator- How much more time do I have madam speaker? 35, 25minutes okay, I'll do the best I can.

So let me just try to indicate to you, as I read the Qur'ân and I'll try to get through this quickly (jokes) you guys look tired and I know you're interested in finding out how that basket ball game is turning out. Ah, let's see, does the Qur'ân really emphasize reason as essential to human growth. Does this experience that we're having here on earth helps our very purpose - and the answer is definitely **yes**, so much so that even western orientalist -people wrote against the Qur'ân said that this is a major feature of the Qur'ân, a feature that you cannot miss. Andre Lamens writing in an early part of this century -one of the famous orientalist, you know, who wrote very much against Muslims hoping to unseat them from their religious belief, he wrote, '*The Qur'ân*' and this is his quote '*is not very far from the considering unbelief as an infirmity of the human mind*'. Unbelief is, though he said it mockingly, you know, not thinking straight - you're not using your mind right as my father used to say. Maxine Roberson wrote at length about the the rationalistic approach of the Qur'ân to faith. And this rational tone of the Qur'ân is one of its most salient features beyond doubt. I'll just give you a few quotations that it is that one of its fundamental themes is that people ignore or reject God's signs and corrupt religion, precisely because they do not use their reason.

The Qur'ân will say that again and again and again. The Qur'ân says about the disbelievers, 'they refuse to reason' -I have seven such quotes in the Qur'ân. The Qur'ân will say, '*will you not reason?*' It mentions that fourteen times to the reader. '*God reveals signs and lessons and admonition so that*' this is a quote from the Qur'ân, '*perhaps, perhaps you will finally use your reason,*' there are eight such statements in the Qur'ân. From the Qur'ân's viewpoint, reason and

faith are allies just as the illogic and false beliefs or allies. And this clearly sets the conflict along these lines, it says, *'the right way has henceforth become clear from error.'* *'Those who benefits most from the Qur'ân are persons of insight,'* sixteen such statements in the Qur'ân. *'Firmly rooted in knowledge,'* eight such statements, *'use reason,'* ten such statements, *'stand on clear evidence and proof,'* seven such statements, *'those who oppose this revelation are deluded,'* nine such statements and *'in manifest error,* twenty eight such statements, *'ignorant,'* fifteen, *'foolish,'* three, *'have no understanding,'* nine, *'only follow from surmise and conjecture,'* nine, *'and blindly follow,'* multiple, multiple times, it states that.

The Qur'ân repeatedly quizzes the reader and causes to question his or her assumptions. Again and again it asks us, *'what do you think,'* eighteen such statements, *'have you considered this or that,'* thirteen, *'did you suppose,'* seven, it sounds like a math teacher. *'Did they not ponder,'* two such statements, *'do you think, do you even think,'* eighteen such statements. The message is clear, to gain truth or faith we need to free ourselves from inherited notions and examine our beliefs rationally. Learning plays a key role in human development. Read! - the Qur'ân exhorts the reader. God taught us the use of the pen and taught human kind what it otherwise could not know. In life, nature and history, *'in the Qur'ân there are signs and lessons for those who are wise,'* there are twenty one such statements. The Qur'ân states over one hundred times that it's been revealed to make things clear. I thought the author of this Qur'ân must have had a strong mathematical insight, you know -a natural mathematician author - when I was reading the Qur'ân. I was trying to figure out what he must have been like. God teaches humanity both directly and indirectly and sometimes so subtly that we are unaware of his instruction. Thus He touches us in multifarious ways cause, I just want to make it clear, Muslims believe that God is the author of the Qur'ân. You know, sometimes I give this speech and people come away and ask me, Jeff who is the author of the Qur'ân? - But I didn't know at that time so I was just trying to figure it out. Repetition is indicative of the importance given to certain ideas. It should be observed the Arabic word for knowledge in the Qur'ân is *'ilm.'* **It appears eight hundred and fifty four times in the texts in its various forms. That's one of the most frequently occurring words.** So the Qur'ân really does put great emphasis on reason in our spiritual quest.

Does it put great emphasis on choice? Well here's what it has to say, *'let there be no compulsion in religion,'* *'the right way is henceforth clear from error,'* it's a choice. And it must be freely made, and it's a choice between correctness and error, between right and wrong, between reason and falsity. If God willed, *'He could have indeed guided you all,'* it says in the Qur'ân, - I thought why not, I thought why not just guide us all. Why let some of us choose to go this way and that way. The Qur'ân was constantly provoking me as I read it. *'Do not the believers know that had God willed, he could have guided all mankind.'*

Okay, I'm an unbeliever I thought, tell me why didn't you guide all mankind, if you want us to be in the conformity of your will, well, just make us that way. *'And if We had so-willed, we could have given every soul its guidance.'* Why did You let us be creatures of choice, just program us to do the right thing. Never make a wrong choice, - *'had God willed, he could have made us all one community,'* He could have made us clones of one another, but He didn't. It wasn't part of His plan, - *'enlightenment has come from your Lord, he who sees does so from his own good, he who is blind is so to his own hurt.'* It's your choice, -says it again and again in the Qur'ân, - remember when I was reading this, I was a disbeliever, you know, and this scripture constantly reminded me of *'it's your choice Jeff, there is no compulsion in this, it's your choice, it's up to you'.* You know Jeff, you probably are not reasoning correctly, think a little harder, come on, try, few

more steps. *'And whoever is guided is only to his own gain and whoever is stray, I am only a warner,'* it's your choice. *'We have revealed to you the book with the truth for mankind- you who lets himself be guided does so for his own good but he who goes astray, it's to his own hurt,'* it's his choice. There are many, many such references, I'll stop there but you get the point, the Qur'ân clearly emphasizes that choice plays a key role in our development.

But what about suffering, I mean you know- suffering is the biggy, right, -well that's the real major question. What does the Qur'ân have to say about suffering, you know, because every religion deals with suffering in a different way, that is something you have to be saved from and so some religion stress salvation or it's something you have to sort of transcend through meditation and training' so you could sort of not feel it so much, -get above it and beyond it. Some religions see it as primarily punishment, some of see it as; -the more ancient religions- see it as the result of the precarious and whimsical control of many gods working against each other, playing with human beings. Different religions have dealt with it in different ways, but almost all of them, I would indeed say, all of them have sort of seen it as something not so good. Let's see what the Qur'ân has to say about it, is it something to be avoided, to transcend it, or to be saved from.

The Qur'ân says just the opposite, - *you are going to experience it, you will suffer in this life and it plays a fundamental role in your development, in your growth, in what you are to become.* This scripture didn't just say, you're going to experience it, it says you should embrace it, you should struggle through it, and your life should be a struggle it says. It should be a *'Jihad*, that's what it says, - *'Jihad'* which means to struggle - when the Qur'ân says *'Jihad'* -very seldom, - its most often not in the context of fighting. *'Qitaal'* is the Arabic word for fighting. But you know it says, even in the Mecca verses long before Muslims had to defend themselves against the oppressors, it mentions that you have to struggle in the path of God with the Qur'ân, it even says, -struggle in the path of God with this Qur'ân, Life is a struggle it says and in one verse, - *'most assuredly we will try you with something of danger and hunger and the loss of worldly goods, with the loss of your lives and the fruits of your labor. Most assuredly we will try you,'* It's not just talking about evil people, but good people. *'But give the glad tidings; be happy for those who are patient in adversity, in suffering.'* Good news I thought, doesn't the author understand the terrible effects of suffering, - *'give the good news to those who are patient through adversity, who in calamity when it befalls them say, truly unto God we belong and truly unto Him we shall return.'* The author writes that this could benefit them. What a remarkable statement!

Here's another one, - *'do you think that you could enter paradise without having the like of those who passed away before you',* -and in the next verse it starts to explain that these people are good people who'd suffered terribly,- *'do you think you could enter paradise without going through the same,'* why I thought, why do we have to suffer in life. *'Misfortune and hardship befell them and so shaken were they that the apostle and the believers with them would exclaim, when will God's help come?'* These are good people, *'when will God's help come? O truly God's help is always near, you will certainly be tried in your possessions in yourselves'* the Qur'ân tells the reader. You are going to face hardship, it's guaranteed,- *'every soul must taste of death and We try you with calamity and prosperity both as a means of trial and to Us you are returned.'* You are going to have hardship here; there is no heaven on earth. This is an environment made to be an environment of adversity, it is made to be an environment where you have to work, where you have to struggle, where you have to strive and it plays a key role in man's development. *'O man, truly you've been toiling to your Lord and in painful toil but you shall meet Him.'* You're toiling yes, but you shall meet Him. *'We certainly created man to face*

stress,'- What, I thought. *'We certainly have created man to face stress;'* you made us to face the stress. *'Does he think that no one has power over him,'* sometimes people get, you know so down they just think ah, this can't be of God, look how I'm suffering. *'He would say I have wasted much wealth;'* some people just become totally devoted to worldly aims. *'Does he think that no one sees him, have we not given him two eyes to see with, a tongue and two lips to communicate with to learn from by communicating, can't he see around him, can't he tell from communication with other people. Haven't we pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways?'* What are the two conspicuous ways? *'But he attempts not the uphill climb,'* -one of them is the uphill climb and he says this is the way you should be pursuing, - *'and what will make you comprehend the uphill climb, is to free a slave or to feed in a day of hunger an orphan nearly related or a poor one laying in the dust, then he or she is of those who believe and exhorts one another to patience and exhorts one another to mercy.'* You have not attained the faith until you struggle the uphill climb, the Qur'ân is telling us, we should pursue the uphill climb. What is the uphill climb? Reaching out to your fellow man who suffers, to feed the poor one, to help the poor soul that is lying in the dust. And all over the world there are people in that state and we watch the news as if it's just entertainment and the Qur'ân tells us that this is something you should involve yourself in, that is the road that you should travel. It describes a successful life as an uphill climb.

(A note is handed to him from the convener) Well, I can see that I'm running out of time so I'm going to just have to tie this up in about fifteen minutes I guess. But, definitely the Qur'ân emphasizes these three elements in the human drama. But as I read through it, I couldn't see how it all fit together. I mean why didn't God just, -why, why, why do we have to experience these things, what purpose do they play,-just pop us into heaven and beam us up, I thought. One thing like I mentioned before, the Qur'ân repeatedly emphasizes that we're here to grow and to learn,- I'll give you four or five quick verses because I know you're tired. It says, *'our Lord, and raise up in their midst's the messenger from among them who shall recite unto them your signs and shall teach them the book and the wisdom and you shall cause them to grow.'* We have to learn, we learn wisdom in the book, a revelation in particular and who shall cause us to grow. *'And we have sent among you of yourselves a messenger to recite our signs to you and to cause you to grow.'* *'Truly God was gracious to the believers,'* this is in the third Surah, *'when he raised up from among them a messenger from themselves, to recite his signs to them and to cause them to grow.'* *'It is He who sent among you the an lettered people, a messenger from among them to recite His signs and to cause them to grow.'* These are all distinct references, just two more, there are many more. *'And the soul and that which breathes into,'* it is immortality and it's God consciousness, *'he is indeed successful who causes it to grow and he is indeed a failure who stunts it.'* And in verse,17, of the 92nd Surah, Surah Al Lail, it says, *'far removed from it will be the righteous who give his wealth that he may grow.'* So the purpose somehow is to grow, we're in a growing, learning, developing experience. We weren't just created when we came into the world; this is actually a stage of our creation. Just like the development in the womb was a stage in our creation, a central stage in our physical creation. This is an essential stage in our personality creation, in the creation of our real being. That which we take into the next life, our essential selves, we've gone from the physical creation in the womb, primarily physical, now to the human creation.

The personality creation in this stage, I thought maybe I was projecting my own thought into this scripture, maybe it doesn't really emphasize that life has a purpose, but time and time again I would find it does, for example, just quickly it (as time is almost up) says, *'those who remember God standing and sitting and laying down and reflect upon the creation of the heaven and earth and say, our Lord You did not create all this in vain,'* *'You did not create all this without*

any purpose.' Just when I was starting to think maybe the Qur'ân really doesn't state a purpose of life, it really doesn't mean there's a real purpose of life, maybe I'm reading into it something that is not there, I would come upon verses like that, that would force me to read a little further, make me think, or maybe it is just around the corner. *'We have not created the heaven and under the earth or whatever is between them in play,' 'if We wish to take a sport We could have done it by Ourselves, if We were to do that at all.'* God doesn't create to satisfy His whims or fantasies or entertain himself.

'Do you think that We created you without purpose and that you will not be returning to Us'? -it says in the 23rd Surah. - In the 44th Surah,- *'We did not create the heavens and earth and all that is between them in play,'* it has to serve a purpose. Now, what kind of purpose could it possibly serve, -so I tried to analyze, -apparently the Qur'ân speaks about believers and those that are the rejecters. If the believers are on the one hand and the rejecters on the other, apparently God has created us to be believers, so I tried to study what the Qur'ân has to say about the believers, it's a natural thing to do, to see how, what he wants us to become if it has anything to do with these essential elements that it stated, - I mean it's a natural way to approach it, I think you agree, do you agree, somebody nod your head. That's what I say to my math students, you know, just one head nod is enough for a mathematician. Get one head going, okay, I did my job. So, how does the Qur'ân describe the believers, what are they suppose to attain to, what is the ultimate thing that they are supposed to get, what are they ultimately supposed to achieve? And it's very clear when you read the Qur'ân that what they will achieve in this life- it will an experience to so much greater degree in the next, is they will experience a relationship of love with God. They will turn to God in love and God will turn to them in love. In the Qur'ân God's mercy, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, beneficence, warmth, generosity, all the things we normally think is associated with God are freely given to all mankind. But when the Qur'ân speaks of God love, we would normally think of that as God's love, -but when the Qur'ân speaks of God's love, it's telling you of something really special. Love is always presented as a relationship, a relationship between two, if we do not turn to God in love, then we just receive His mercy, His forgiveness, kindness, beneficence, warmth, generosity, all those wonderful, nurturing things, and His nurturing and we reject Him. And so we never really experience that love, because we never really turned to it and opened ourselves up to it. It is always there for us, but unless we enter into that relationship, that love, that give and take, that relationship of love is never developed. We reject it, and that's what the word *kefir* means, it means to reject, to turn your back, to ignore, to throw something, a gift that someone gives you behind your back. And so the Qur'ân tells us, that the believers will experience this sublime relationship of love, it says,- *'yet there are men who take others beside God as equal, loving them as they should love God, but those that believe, love God more ardently. Say, if you love God follow me9the prophet), and God will love you and forgive you your faults for God loves to forgive and is merciful.'* *'Oh you believe, if any from among you should turn back from his faith, then God will assuredly bring a people He loves and who loves him.'* And throughout the Qur'ân it will mention time and time again that God loves this type of believer, God loves this type of person, and God loves that type of person and so forth and so on. I'm trying to pick the speed up here, you'll have to excuse me for that, - but it is apparent from the Qur'ân that one of the purposes of creation, maybe *the essential purpose of the creation is to produce from this subset of humanity, the subset of humanity that will freely enter a relationship of love with God.* They would not only experience the beauty of other relationships in their lives but this love they would experience with God is the sublime experience that they will enjoy. Not only in this life but infinitely greater in the next when all the distractions, all the -masks are stripped away. Okay I thought, -You created us to love you, for us to turn to your love and for us to experience your love, to receive and experience your love. But, why do we

need these, just pop us into heaven and you know, make us love you, program us to love you, you know, you make my dog love me, you know, do the same sort of thing. I keep on coming back to the same issue, just do it, you know. Okay, I still couldn't see it and I was almost through the Qur'ân and I thought, either I'm dumb or this scripture never really got to it,- so I didn't give up. I thought, okay, what's the next natural thing to do, -so we're here to develop this relationship with God, the Qur'ân tells us that, -if we are believers and we do good, we'll experience great joy and peace in this life not only through our relationship with God, but through complimentary relationships, with all the other people around us and this world would be in one for us with peace and serenity even though we have to struggle to survive and suffer, - but I couldn't see, you know, how this all tied in with this suffering business and why couldn't He just put us into heaven. So what's the next natural thing to say, -okay, so we're created to have this relationship of love with God, to enter this relationship, to experience and receive all that He has to offer us, so the natural thing to do, is to study the two partners in that relationship.

What does the Qur'ân have to say about us, the believer, what does it asks of him and her, what does it require of them and then what does the Qur'ân tell us about God, and then is there some essential connection between them, and does it have anything to do with these. Cause if the Qur'ân doesn't show that, then the essential link that links all this together, that pieces it all together is missing. As I thought to myself, whoever this author is, and by now I knew he had fantastic genius, even though he came from the primitive confines of the most backward, uncivilized sector of humanity, of people that had no literary history really to speak of, no great works of literature, no scripture that preceded them, even though they came from the desert of culture, even if it came out of that environment and the mind behind it had to be tremendously, phenomenally genius, to come out of that surroundings and produce something like this. It that essential link was missing, I knew that, you know, he was great, but, he's extremely great, but, you know, what do you expect, how could anybody answer those questions. Nobody in the history of humanity had been able to answer them. Okay. So I thought, first I'll have to see what the Qur'ân has to say about the believers, what does it require of them, then what it has to say about God and see if there's some essential link. Are you following me?

[Receives note telling him to finish his speech]-You're giving me the note, 'get off the stage' [laughs] okay, I'll do my best. It's a deep subject, we're almost done, bear with me a few more minutes, I'm sorry, really. I know Siraaj Wahaaj when he gives these sorts of speeches, he always says, okay, I'm finishing up now, then ten minutes later he says, you thought I was telling you the truth?' I won't say that but just give me a few more minutes, bear with me. Okay, quickly, what does the Qur'ân asks of the believers? From the Qur'ân's many exhortations, and its description of acts and the types of individuals loved by God, it's not difficult to compose a partial list of things that the Qur'ân wants us to do. It's called, good deeds, time and time again, to believe in God, to have faith in God, to have a relationship with God and to do good. So what is described as to these good deeds? - well, as I read through the Qur'ân it says that, remember the three essential points:- *intellect, choice, suffering*.

It says we should, show compassion, show compassion, we should be merciful, - I have the references here, but just excuse me, I'm not going to list them all, we're running out of time, - we should be forgiving, forgive others, we should be just, we should protect the weak, and defend the oppressed, we should seek knowledge and wisdom, be peaceful, we should be generous, truthful, and we should love our fellow man, love others. I'm just going to give you one verse cause I know we're running out of time, madam speaker, - *'truly those who believe and do good are the most merciful*

endowed with love and to this end We have made this scripture easy to understand in your own tongue so that you may convey glad tidings to the God-conscious and warn those who's given to contention. To this end we have made this easy to understand so that we all learn to love others, okay, that's all I'll say about that. I would like to say a lot more, but I don't have time.

Now, what does the Qur'ân tell us about God, - you have to realize that I'm just about through with the Qur'ân here on my first time reading it and now I was really caught, I searched my head, what does the Qur'ân tell us about God, it tells us nothing could be compared to Him that He's out, that He's outside anything that we may have compared to, that our definitions doesn't encompass Him, that our reason do not comprehend Him, that He is transcendent and we are finite, that He is a more, He transcends time and space and we are bound by it, that He is immortal, we are mortal, He is incorporeal, we are corporeal, that we have no way comparing ourselves to Him, nothing to be compared to Him. I thought, oh my God, I'm so close, and yet so far. Because I'll never understand the essential link between us and God and why these three things fit into place, because the Qur'ân tells us that we will, can never really quite understand God, or at least that's the way I thought.

And so I put down the Qur'ân when I had finished it and much to my dismay, I was honestly disappointed because I thought, the author made a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant, brilliant, try, but he never quite made it. And so I was sitting in front of my t v, about three, four weeks later, -I was sitting in Diamond Heights in my apartment watching a football game, I think it was. And you know sometimes these things just slip into your mind when you least expect them and I was sitting there and watching, and all of a sudden into my mind came a thought. And I said, wait a minute, the Qur'ân does tell us so much about God, it tells us again and again and again but somehow I just missed it, just skimmed over it, every single time because if you turn to almost any page, if you turn to the beginning of any Surah, you could see time and time again essential information about God that I just thought was sort of a literally device, something to make it just sound more beautiful, because if you turn to the beginning of any Surah you'll see the words '*Bis'mil'la'hir Rah'ma'nir Rahim*' 'In the Name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate.' If you read almost any passage, when you come to the end of it, it's punctuated by dual attributive statements like, God is the Merciful, the Compassionate, God is the Forgiving, the Gentle, God is the Kind, the Protector, God is the Generous, the Truthful, God is ..., and so forth and so on. There are tens of thousands of such references in the statements in the Qur'ân. What the Qur'ân defines as God's most beautiful names, His attributes of perfection, repeated again and again and again on almost every page.

And as I sat there, sitting by the television, I started to jot them down, you know, on my little notebook, the same notebook I used to jot these down before and I began to list from my own mind the attributes of perfection as I remembered them, and they were, God is the Compassion, God is the Merciful, God is the Forgiving, God is the Just, the Protector, the Defender of the oppresses, the Knowing, the Wise, the Generous, the Kind, the Truthful, the Loving, the Peaceful, the Source of all Peace, the Truth, and so forth and so on.

Every item I had listed in my list for the qualities that we human beings are supposed to develop; the Qur'ân was telling me that it's infinite source and perfection is Allah, is God and then all of a sudden all of the pieces fell together. Then I suddenly saw it as I see most of you probably see as well, - that now, suddenly it all began to make sense to me. In what way do I say that? Well, it was now obvious why we had to develop these qualities; it was now obvious how the things

fell into place. And I'll just say clearly, we're here to develop a relationship with God, to become closer to God, -but how can you become closer to God when He's transcendent and you're finite, when He's immortal and you are mortal, when He's unfettered by time and space and you are, and so forth and so on. How can you become close to that One?

If I want to become close to you, I need to have something to share with you, something that we have in common. So for example, if I want to come close to this young man here, physically, I'll approach him, because we both have bodies and I can position my body closer to him. Physical presence, bodily presence is something we both share. If I wanted to become closer to that gentleman back there, if I wanted to become closer to him intellectually, I'll reason with him, so we'll have a convergence of minds because we both possess reason. If I want to become closer to one of my sisters on this side, emotionally, I'll try to appeal to their sentiments because we both share feelings and its similar types of experiences that generate those feelings.

But how does one become closer to God, what do we share with Him? We share with Him exactly what He gave us because the Qur'ân tells us that when we came into this life, He '*breathes*' into our '*spirit*' something of His Spirit. And that we come into this world with a sea of these very qualities in us. And we can either kill them, stunt them as the Qur'ân says, or cause them to grow. And when we grow in these, we grow in our ability not just to experience it's beauty in our life to all this, but we grow in our ability to receive and experience the infinite beauty, the infinite peace, the infinite truth, the infinite compassion, the infinite mercy, the infinite etc. all the way down to the list that only comes from the infinite person, the perfect source of all these. The more we grow in mercy, the more we grow in our ability to receive and to experience, in this life, and in the next, to an infinitely greater degree the mercy of God. The more that we grow in compassion, the more we grow in our ability to receive and experience God's compassion, then this life through prayer and through rituals and through contemplation and through other experiences of others and of course, infinitely more in the next life, the compassion of God. The more we grow in our truthfulness, the more we grow in our experience to experience God the truth, - because all truth comes from God. The more we grow in these things, the more we grow in our ability to receive and experience God's attributes of perfection, the more we grow in our ability to receive and experience His being, and that sort of nearness we are growing to Him is tied to our essential nature and to His. It's more than just physical nearness, it's more than just a convergence of ideas, it's more than just a convergence of feelings, it's a convergence of essential beings. It's the closest type of nearness one can feel, one can experience. I'll just give you a quick analogy cause it's helped my children, let's pretend I have a cat, a gold fish, a dog and three children, three daughters let's say. And I do have three daughters, no matter how much my love, compassion, forgiveness, caring, I pour upon that gold fish it could only experience it to a tiny degree. It might not even really be aware of it, cause it's a very primitive creature. But my dog on the other hand, when I show it all my kindness, all my love, all my compassion, all that is essential in me, it can experience it to a much higher degree than my goldfish. And through its interaction with me, it's trying to give its own self to me; we can experience a quite wonderful relationship. But my children, especially as they grow older and go through their own experience and their own development could receive and experience all the love and the compassion and the forgiveness and the caring and the generosity and the protection and everything I have to offer. They can experience my being to a much higher degree than my dog ever can. And we could have a relationship of beauty that I could never have with my dog as much as I love animals. Having had three daughters, I know that the relationship you have with three beautiful daughters could never even come close; no

other relationship could approximate that. Of course, my relationship with my wife is also extremely beautiful and she's a wonderful woman, really, I mean she's the source of so much beauty.

But okay, madam chairman I am ready. So that seems to bring it all together, so now, I thought, wait a minute, that doesn't explain this, why the intellect, why the choice, why the suffering. I thought, you almost had me, this Qur'ân, you almost duped me, you almost tricked me. Seduced me into accepting this philosophy, but, wait a minute, what about intellect, choice, suffering, why do we have to experience these, why couldn't you just program us to be merciful, compassionate, forgiving, etc. Why did we have to go through all this? And then of course the answer came to me as quickly as I thought it, - we are creatures and we grow and we become and yes, you could make us anything that you want, but you can't attain any of those attributes I listed without these three things. In mathematics, you know, proving a theorem we see if we could take one of them away and if it is essential, and all three of these are definitely essential.

For example, you could program a computer never to make an incorrect statement, but it doesn't become a truthful computer. Never heard anybody say to me, Jeff, this Mackintosh is the most truthful computer I ever saw. If it's programmed, it is not true, you could program a cat scan to help the sick, but it doesn't become compassionate. Never heard a doctor say, - Jeff, if you want to see a compassionate cat scan you come right over here. Because all those things, compassion, forgiveness, truth, caring, love, all are born out of choice, suffering and reason. In order to do a compassionate deed, when we consider reaching out to someone in compassion, -first of all, it's inconceivable without the presence of suffering, an environment where there's suffering and when we decide to help them or not, we reason in our minds, what is this going to require of me. It's going to require some suffering on my part, some giving of myself, and without that mental process, it doesn't become a compassionate deed. And if it isn't by choice, it's not a compassionate deed, - it's a choice that makes it compassionate. Same thing with truth, truth is a choice between telling the truth or not telling the truth. Often times we tell it when we're at risk to our own personal loss. The more suffering that might come out of that choice, the greater is the truth behind it, the greater the act of truthfulness and all the time we have to weigh the consequences of that choice, by telling the truth there, my teacher's going to give me a F, if I don't tell the truth, I may get an A. We weigh it in our mind, last example, the famous wedding vow, 'Do you take this woman to be your wife, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do you part'? What are they asking us? Do you knowingly make this choice, understanding full well what's at stake here, that there might involve richness but poverty, health or sickness that suffering is going to be involved, until death.

Once a young lady told me, you know you never really loved me, cause when the going got tough, when things got hard, when we hit rock bottom, when my life fell apart, you just got up and left. And she was right, and she understood full well that that's what love is all about, it is through giving and suffering together and hanging in there with each other and not bailing out, and persevering and suffering and making that choice and knowing what you're doing, all those three things are essential. So it's very easy to see why the Qur'ân stresses these, for in order for us to grow in these, we have to have these. And that's why it's very easy to see, ladies and gentlemen why the Qur'ân, talks about sin as self-destruction. The Qur'ân says that when we sin, -we commit the Arabic word is '*zulm*,' or '*z'lm*' whatever dialect you have. We *zulm* against ourselves, we oppress, we destroy ourselves. Because when we don't grow in these, we grow in the very opposite of these, we are literally destroying ourselves, when we grow in the things that are epithetical to these, we are destroying our natures and we will not allow ourselves to receive and experience the beauty that could

be in store for us that, in this life and the next. It's like coming into this world and developing in the womb not enough, the physical things you need to experience comfort and joy and peace and happiness on a physical level and this life, as if you're coming into this life and you've destroyed yourself physically somehow in the womb and you came in here and you had nothing to protect you from the cold, from the heat, from the harshness of the elements, from germs, from disease, nothing to protect you, nothing to satisfy, to give you the ability to satisfy your thirst or your hunger, nothing for you to experience any physical comfort. This is all that matters to me going to the next life. If we don't develop these, through our relationship with God, the very purpose of our being, then we will experience terrible suffering in this life, worst that if we came into this life in a physical state that didn't avail us of any of the comfort of this life. And so it will be worse than fire, it will be worse than endless fire, it will be worse than the hell, the worst hell we could possibly imagine.

So the Qur'ân tells us, you know, when it talks of about heaven and hell it uses very powerful symbolic language, but what it's essentially telling us is that imagine the greatest joy, and wonderful peace and serenity you could ever experience and that's what's open to you, -on the one end -but on the other end, imagine the most terrible suffering that you could ever possibly bring on yourself and you could also do that to yourself as well. It'll be worst than anything you could ever imagine. And the Qur'ân tells us that God says on the Day of Judgment, - 'I did not harm you in the least, you destroyed yourself.' And He could say that as a total objective truth and that's why the Qur'ân well, -I think I'll leave it at that because madam speaker is about to shoot me. I still have other things to talk about, but I want to find out how that basketball game is going, so, thank you so much for listening to me for so long. May the peace and mercy of Allah be upon you all, I didn't mean to try to scare anybody at the end, that wasn't my goal; I was just trying to make a point. And may the peace and mercy of God be upon you all, thank you so much, Salaamu-alaikum.

Speech given by Prof. Jeff Lang (2008)

[Please note: repetitive statements were deleted and slight changes were made]

References of the verses from the Qur'ân:

Greatness of Human beings and Need for Revelation

2:30 And when your *Rabb* said to the *malâ'ikah*,^a I am going to place a ruler^b in the earth, they said: Will You place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood?^c And we celebrate Your praise and extol Your holiness.^d He said: Surely I know what you know not.

30a. The Arabic word *malâ'ikah*, is the plural of *malak*. It is said to be derived, either from *malaka* which means *he controlled*, and refers to the *malâ'ikahs'* function of controlling the forces of nature on the physical side of life, or from *alk*, to *send*, the original being in this case *ma'lak*, contracted into *malak*, and refers to the *malâ'ikah's* function of acting as intermediaries between Allâh and human beings. Both root ideas thus contain a reference to the principal functions ascribed to the *malâ'ikah*. The existence of such intermediaries has been recognized by righteous human beings in all ages and all countries. It will also be seen, from what has been said above as to the functions of the *malâ'ikah*, that Allâh's saying to them is really the expression of an intention which is to be brought into execution. It is not a conversation, or a consultation with the *malâ'ikah*; it is an expression of the Divine will to those intermediary functionaries which are entrusted by the Divine Being with the execution of it. It may also be added that by the

malâ'ikah here are meant the *functionaries* entrusted with this particular affair, not all the *malâ'ikah* of the universe.

30b. This shows the high place that human beings were destined to hold in the whole of creation. The original word *khalîfah* (from *khalafa*, meaning *he came after or succeeded another that had perished or died*), means primarily a *successor*, and hence *the supreme or the greatest ruler who supplies the place of him who has been before him* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). 'Abd Allâh *ibn Mas'ûd* (Companion) and 'Abd Allâh *ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion) explain *khalîfah* as meaning *one who judges among, or rules, the creatures of Allâh by His command* (*Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân* (Commentary), by *Imâm Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî*). What is stated here is an allegorical description of the preference of human beings above the whole of the creation on this earth, and then of the election of those righteous servants of Allâh from among men themselves who lead others into the right path. One of the significances suggested by the commentators is that the word *khalîfah* here refers to the *children of Âdam*, i.e., *the whole of mankind*. The correctness of this view is corroborated by the Qur'ân itself, which says, referring to the whole of mankind: "and He it is Who has made you successors in the land (or rulers in the earth)" (6:165), the word used for *rulers* being *khalâ'if*, plural of *khalîfah*. Hence the reference here seems to be to the whole of mankind. References to Âdam are contained in 2:30–39 and in 3:59; 7:11–25; 15:28–44; 17:61–65; 18:50; 20:115–124 and 38:71–85.

30c. Allâh declares His will to the *malâ'ikah*, the controlling forces of nature, to create human beings who is meant to rule the forces of nature, and to whom, therefore, power to rule is to be delegated. Being entrusted with such great powers, human beings could use them rightly or wrongly, and it is to this fear of abuse of power that the *malâ'ikah* give expression, they themselves being only executors of Divine will in which they have no choice. The concluding words of this verse show that Allâh knew that human beings would abuse the power given to them, but He also knew that they would turn it to good use as well. The whole history of human beings is briefly written in this one verse. Human beings are the greatest killers on this earth but they also turn the gifts of Allâh to the best use. The *malâ'ikah* speak of the darker side of the picture of humanity, but to Allâh was known the brighter side as well as the darker side of this picture. Hence the words, *I know what you know not*.

30d. While giving expression to the darker side of the picture of humanity, these intermediaries declare that this could not be the Divine purpose, for *Allâh is free from all Imperfections*, such being the significance of *tasbîḥ* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), generally rendered as *declaring* the glory of Allâh.

2:31 And He taught Âdam^a all the names,^b then presented them to the *malâ'ikah*; He said: Tell Me the names of those if you are right.^c

31a. Âdam is generally taken to be the proper name for the first man, but neither here nor anywhere else in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân is it affirmed that Âdam was the first man or that there was no creation before him. On the other hand, great Muslim theologians have held that there were many Âdams — thousands of Âdams — before the great ancestor of mankind known by this name (*Rûh al-Ma'ânî* (Commentary), by *Abu-l-Fadl Shâhâb al-Dîn al-Sayyid Mahmûd al-Alûsî*). As the previous verse shows, the whole of humanity is spoken of here because the shedding of blood could not be the work of one man; the reference is to the shedding of the blood of man by man. Âdam, therefore, though it may also be the name of a particular man, stands for human beings generally.

31b. Explaining *asmâ'*, which literally signifies *names* (being plural of *ism*, meaning a *name*), *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr*

(Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî says: “He taught him the attributes of things and their descriptions and their characteristics, for the attributes of a thing are indicative of its nature”. Teaching Âdam the names therefore signifies the vast capability of human beings and the superiority of their knowledge to that of the *malâ’ikah*. Or, the reference may be to the faculty of speech, which is the real source of the excellence of human beings above the whole of creation. To this the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân refers elsewhere too: “He created human beings, taught them (the mode of) expression” (55:3, 4).

31c. Human being’s superiority to the *malâ’ikah* is made clear here. The *malâ’ikah* were not gifted with the knowledge which was given to human beings, and the gift of knowledge was the greatest gift of Allâh. The form of dialogue is kept up to indicate eternal truths. Human beings might be a maker of mischief and a shedder of blood, but they possessed vast capability for knowledge, and hence the *malâ’ikah*’s estimate of human beings, which looked only to the darker side of the picture, was not a right estimate. Evil there might be in them, but the good was preponderant.

Note that: *sidq* (lit., *truth*) sometimes signifies *sawâb*, or *that which is right*, as *kidhb* (lit., *falsehood*) sometimes signifies *khata’*, i.e., *that which is wrong* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî).

2:32 They said: Glory be to You! We have no knowledge but that which You have taught us. Surely You are the Knowing, the Wise.

2:33 He said: O Âdam, inform them of their names. So when he informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I know what is unseen in the *samâwât* and the earth? And I know what you manifest and what you hide.^a

33a. “What you hide” refers to those great qualities in human beings, which is preponderate the evil in them, and which remain hidden until they are made manifest through the Divine gift of knowledge. The immense capability of human beings for progress remains hidden, while the evil of shedding blood is manifested in a very primary stage in their growth.

2:34 And when We said to the *malâ’ikah*, Be submissive to Âdam,^a they submitted, but *Iblîs*^b (did not).^c He refused and was proud, and he was one of the disbelievers.^d

34a. *Sajada* is really synonymous with *khad’a*, i.e., *he was lowly or submissive* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). In the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, the word is frequently used to signify simple submission. And you also say, *sajada la-hû*, meaning *he saluted him or he paid respect or honour to him* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). What is the significance of the *malâ’ikah* being submissive to Âdam? In the first place, it must be remembered that Âdam throughout this section stands for human beings generally; so submission is not limited to one particular man; it is to human beings generally. Secondly, it has already been shown that human beings has a superiority over the *malâ’ikah* on account of his great gift of knowledge of things, the *malâ’ikah* being the controlling powers of the forces of nature. By his knowledge human beings could harness the forces of nature and exercise control over them; in other words, the *malâ’ikah* submitted to them.

34b. *Iblîs* was not one of the *malâ’ikah*: “He was of the *jinn*, so he transgressed” (18:50). In verse 36 he is called *Shaitân*. It should be borne in mind that *Iblîs* and *Shaitân* (Arabic *shaitân*) refer to one and the same (function or

action). The word *Iblîs* is used when the Evil one's evil is limited to him, and *Shaitân*, when his evil affects others besides himself; or *Iblîs* is the proud one, and *Shaitân* the deceiver. *Iblîs* is derived from *balasa*, meaning *he despaired*, and *Shaitân* from *shatana*, meaning *he became distant or remote*. The same entity is thus mentioned under two different names; he is called *Iblîs* because he despairs of the mercy of Allâh and *Shaitân* because he allures others to do things which remove them further off from Divine mercy. *Iblîs* therefore stands for the lower desires which keep human beings off from bowing before Allâh and seeking His mercy, and *Shaitân* incites the low desires of human beings to lead others away from the path of rectitude. What is the significance underlying the refusal of *Iblîs* to submit to human beings? As shown in the last footnote, the *malâ'ikah's* submission meant that human beings could control the forces of nature by their knowledge of things; they could conquer nature. But *Iblîs* himself was a part of nature, and he could not conquer his own evil desires. His advancement lay in two directions, the conquest of nature and the conquest of his own self. He could attain the first end by the power of knowledge with which he was gifted, but the higher end, the conquest of self, needed yet another act of Divine mercy, the sending of Divine Revelation; and this is explained in this story of Âdam in verse 38.

34c. The thing excepted by means of *illâ* (lit., *except*) is in some cases disunited in kind from that from which the exception is made, and the statement which follows *illâ* is, therefore, a new statement altogether cut off from the first. Therefore instead of adopting the ordinary rendering, *with the exception of Iblîs*, I adopt *but Iblîs did not*.

34d. Note that he refused to submit because he was a disbeliever, which further corroborates the statement that he was not one of the *malâ'ikah*.

2:35 And We said: O Âdam, dwell you and your wife in the garden,^a and eat from it a plenteous (food)^b wherever you wish, and approach not this tree,^c lest you be of the unjust.

35a. The garden spoken of in this verse was on this earth, as it was on the earth that human beings were placed. It was certainly not the paradise to which human beings go after death, and from which they will never be expelled (15:48). The placing in the garden signifies leading a life of ease and comfort, as is shown by the words that follow: "Eat from it a plenteous food wherever you wish". And more clearly still, the life in the garden is thus described in 20:117–119: "So let him not drive you both out of the garden so that you are unhappy. Surely it is granted to you therein that you are not hungry, nor naked. And that you are not thirsty therein, nor exposed to the sun's heat". And now, as it were, to complete the picture of happiness, the woman is brought in, and both Âdam and his wife are made to dwell in the garden, though there is no mention of the wife in what has gone before. All this shows that life in the garden meant a life of comfort, ease and happiness.

35b. *Raghad* here either qualifies an understood noun, and the meaning is *a plenteous food*, or it is indicative of the condition of Âdam and Woman, and the words may thus be rendered: *Eat from it wherever you wish, having abundance of all things*.

35c. According to the Bible, the tree which Âdam was forbidden to approach was the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the Qur'ân does not say so. On the other hand, where the *shaitân* deceives human beings, he calls it "the tree of immortality" (20:120). It was therefore just the opposite of what the *shaitân* stated it to be. It was the tree of death, in other words it is depriving human beings of receiving Divine benefits — metaphorically the tree of evil. Âdam undoubtedly stands for human beings in the whole of this description, and it is evil which human beings is

again and again forbidden to approach, and it is evil against which all prophets of Allâh have warned human beings. In the Qur'ân, it is always called *this* tree, which further shows that it was something which was known to human beings, and there is not the least doubt that not only has human beings been warned against evil throughout their history, but hatred for evil is also innate in them. That human beings hates evil by nature is shown by the fact that every human being condemns evil when it is done by another. As regards the figurative use of the word *tree*, compare 14:24–26, where a good word is likened to “a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, yielding its fruit in every season”, and an evil word is likened to “an evil tree pulled up from the earth’s surface; it has no stability”. The order to eat from the earth a plenteous food but not to approach evil is really a description of what pure human nature is. Human beings are entitled to all the benefits of nature to maintain the body, to harness the forces of nature for their physical comforts and happiness, so long as they does not forget their duties to their Creator. It is an order not to pamper the body at the expense of the *nafs*, but it is as yet an order innate in human nature, not an order given by Divine Revelation — the need for revelation comes on later.

2:36 But the *shaitân* made them slip from it,^a and caused them to depart from the state in which they were. And We said: Go forth,^b some of you are the enemies of others. And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.^c

36a. *Azalla* (translated as made them slip) is derived from *zall*, to slip (foot or tongue) unintentionally (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*), and *zallat* is a fault committed unintentionally (ibid). *Azalla-humâ* therefore means the *shaitân* made them commit a fault unintentionally. The result was that they were made to depart from the happy condition in which they were. The lesson taught here is that real happiness lies in peace of mind, so that when the peace of mind is disturbed by committing an evil, even if it be unintentional, physical happiness does not avail a human being.

How did the *shaitân* do it? Here the Qur'ân again contradicts the Bible. It was not the serpent that misled Eve, nor did Eve mislead Adam. The *shaitân* cast an evil suggestion into the minds of both Adam and Eve, as he casts evil suggestions into the mind of every son and daughter of man and woman: “But the *shaitân* made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them that which had been hidden from them of their shame” (7:20).

36b. *Habt* sometimes means going down a declivity, or descending from a high place to a low one, but it’s more frequent use in literature is simply in the sense of removing from one place to another, as in *ihbitû misr-an* (2:61), which means go to, or enter into, a city. It also signifies simply change in condition. According to the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, *habata* means he came forth from it and also he became lowered or degraded. And *habt* further signifies falling into evil; or becoming low or abject; or suffering loss or diminution. This loss or suffering is brought about by means of indulgence in evil.

The new condition in which human beings finds themselves by submitting to their low desires is the condition of the mutual enmity of one to the other. The tyranny of a human being to another human being is undoubtedly the greatest evil which humans can commit. The use of the words “some of you are the enemies of others” shows clearly that this address is not to Adam and Woman alone, but to all mankind or human beings in general.

36c. The words “an abode and a provision for a time” refer to human being’s span of life on earth, which is limited as compared with the eternal life of the next world.

2:37 Then Âdam received (revealed) words from his *Rabb*, and He turned to him (mercifully).^a Surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

37a. The Arabic word *taubah* (repentance) gives us in fact the philosophy of repentance.

Tâba originally means *he returned*, and hence the primary meaning of *tâba il-Allâhi* is *he returned to Allâh*. In devotional terminology the word *taubah* comes to mean the *returning to a state of obedience*. Thus *taubah* implies a perfect change in the course of one's life, and this is repentance according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. It is not an utterance of certain words, but an actual *change* for the better. The same word *tâba* is used to express the Divine act of the acceptance of repentance, with reference again to the original meaning of the word, because in this case the Divine Being deals with human beings mercifully.

Kalimat (words) here means *the revealed words of Allâh*. Human beings are found too weak to overcome the evil suggestions of the *shaitân* or the evil inclinations in him or her, however strong they may be to conquer the forces of nature. So Allâh comes to their help and reveals Himself to them. He sends down revelation which, strengthening his or her faith in Allâh, gives them the strength to overcome the *shaitân* and reject his suggestions.

38a. This section is now closed with the statement of a general law that Divine Revelation will be granted to the whole of humanity and prophets will appear everywhere from time to time, and that it would be by following the Guidance sent by Allâh through His prophets that human beings will attain to perfection. This state of perfection is described as a state in which "no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve". The human being who truly follows the Divine Revelation shall have no fear of the *shaitân* misleading him or her, for they have subjugated their *shaitân*, nor shall he or she grieve that he or she wasted the opportunity given them in this life, for he or she turned it to the best use.

2:38 We said: Go forth from this (state) all. Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.

2:39 And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our messages,^a they are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide.^b

39a. The word *âyat* (plural *âyât*), which occurs for the first time here, is of very frequent occurrence in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân and conveys a number of significances. The primary meaning of *âyat* is *an apparent sign or mark* (*Al-Mufradât fî Ghariib al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî), by which a thing is known. Hence it comes to signify *a sign* as meaning *an indication or evidence or proof* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). In this sense it signifies what is called a *mu'jizah* or a *miracle*, instead of which the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân always uses the word *âyat*, thus showing that the miracles of which it speaks are not *wonders* but actual *evidence* or *proof* of the truth of a prophet. But the most frequent use of the word *âyat* in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân is to signify *a message* or *a communication* and it is in this sense that the word is applied to a verse of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, i.e., *a collection of the words of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân continued to its breaking, or a portion of the Qur'ân after which a suspension of the speech is approvable* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). But it generally retains the wider significance of *a sign* or *a mark*, or *a Divine message* or *a Divine communication*.

39b. As against those who attain to perfection by following the Divine message, the people spoken of in this verse are those who not only disbelieve but also exert their utmost to oppose revealed truth and uproot it. Such people are described as companions of the Fire. They keep company with evil in this life, so the fire becomes their companion in the next to purge them of the evil consequences of their evil deeds. Their hearts burn with evil passions in this life, and it is this very fire that assumes a palpable shape in the next. *Khalada* signifies originally *he remained* or *abode*, or *remained* or *abode long*, being synonymous with *aqâma* (*Asâs al-Balâghah* (Dictionary), by Abu-I-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharî). Hence you say *khwâlid* (plural of *khâlid*), meaning *the three stones upon which the cooking-pot is placed*, so called because of their remaining for a long time after the standing relics of a house have become effaced (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Therefore *khâlidûn* signifies simply *abiding*, and does not necessarily convey the idea of perpetuity.

(The prophet Mohammed (peace is upon him

His name מוחמד -

in the old Bible on Hebrew language-

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You can **copy** this word **מוחמד** and **paste** in the translation web sites from Hebrew to English

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Subhana Allah!

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