

Transcript of Nouman Ali Khan's Lecture: "I Believe I Can Fly (Back to You, Allah)"

As Salam o alaikum WA rahmatullahi WA barakatuhoo.
Alhamdulillah rabbil alamin...Insha'Allah, before I share with you some things about the Ayah I have picked for this talk, I want to tell you guys something about myself and Imam Siraj. Back in college - this is like 98-99-2000 time when I used to be in an MSA in New York city in Burlington college and you know how MSA has club hours (we had club hours on Thursdays - and we're in NY city, and of course this masjid is in Brooklyn so a couple of us guys would go on Wednesday night because we knew there was no way to catch Imam Siraj that time on the phone, it's impossible, so, we used to go to Masjid-e-eTaqwa for Zuhr - cut a class or two and go (I'm not, I don't recommend it), so we'd go before Zuhr up to the security desk (there's a real, big security officer there, so we say. "Is the Imam there? We have to ask him something about our MSA." So Zuhr comes and there's no Imam Siraj, "Alright guys, let's wait until Asar." We wait until Asr, Maghreb, and imam's here. "Imam Sahib we got to talk to you! We've been here since Zuhr. Could you please come to our program tomorrow? There's going to be only 4 of us, but that doesn't matter. Imam Siraj would consistently, every time we came - we dragged him, and he'd consistently come to our program even though there were only 4 people sitting there. It didn't matter to him. He just did it for us. He was this father figure for us and ever since then (and this is before I could grow a beard, mind you, okay. So, ever since then, he's been picking on me at conferences consistently. He does not stop. And he has the right to do it. I'm not complaining. He'll be like, "I LOVE YOU Nouman, really, really love you. But this is easier

on me. But you know what he'd used to do back in the day? I'd be sitting, back in the audience somewhere, and in the middle of his talk - out of nowhere - he'd say, "Where's Nouman? I know you here!" Oh God!

1. But anyhow, what I wanted to talk to you about in these few minutes is Insha'Allah o Ta'Allah. I have to give you guys credit for picking the weirdest titles for speeches you know. You've beat the MSA and other conferences in strange titles. "I Believe I Can Fly?" Are you serious? First time I thought, is this going to be about drugs? What is it really about? And the title of these speeches apparently for me is I love you, bro. So, you can basically take that anywhere you can. But I'll take it to what I think is an appropriate discussion, an important one especially for young Muslims. Some of the older Muslims here have suffered as a result of that understanding, and internalizing some of these things in their lives. Look, I say this in a lot of my talks but the most important relationships you have are the relationships that are not in public; the most important relationships you and I have are in our homes; in our private lives. Even if you have a great reputation outside but have a horrible relationship with your brother, your own sister, your own parents, your own close friends - you don't have good relationships with them, you end up in an argument with them very, very quickly, very easily you lose your temper with them, or they lose their temper with you. Or you notice that everyone in your family is upset with you for some reason. Then there is a problem; then it doesn't matter what the people on the outside think of you. It's all hollow; it's all empty because those relationships are

just of acquaintances. These are just people who know *about* you, they don't *know* you. The people that know you aren't happy with you. That should tell you something about yourself; that should tell me something about myself. And that's something that needs a lot of work. And I tell you; in Islam we talk about big things and sometimes overlook what we think are little things. But Allah doesn't let us do that in His Qur'aan. You know, we talk about Islam coming to all the world and institutions, and universities, and we have big visions. I share those visions but at the same time, our Deen makes us start at the level of the individual, forces us to fix the situation inside our household first so we can build a better society. Our Deen teaches us that a building block of a good society is the family first. The ducks going together you know - the geese, I'm sorry, the geese; they're going together.

So, on that note, I want to share something with you; something about jealousy. What is the first murder that happened in human history? Anyone know? Call it out. (Aside: "I'm over five minutes? Okay. I'll hold this closer.")

Go ahead and tell me: First murder in history: Habel and Qabeel; an act of jealousy; an act of jealousy between siblings. Yes? Even before that crime, the first act of jealousy - or sin - or the first act of disobedience directly to Allah that we know, can also be found rooted in jealousy; The jealousy of Iblis against...against? Adam (as)! Jealousy is serious business. And jealousy is so powerful that even if you grow up in a good household...Yaqaob (as) is an awesome father; I cannot question his parenting; I can't. As a matter of fact, I've said this many times before: when the Qur'aan talks about

role models of fathers, it keeps going back to Yaqoob (as). Yaqoob is highlighted as a model for fathers and how you are supposed to be with your children. And yet, even in that beautiful, amazing household that was three generations of prophets: Ibrahim (as), Ishaq (as), and Yaqoob (as) and their sibling, Yusuf (as) – fourth generation too. Even in that household trouble makes its way as a result of what? Jealousy between siblings; sibling rivalry they call it nowadays, right? Now, tell me this: how many of you have siblings by the way so I know just know who I'm talking to; or Muslims...and pretty much all of us have siblings. We don't do single child; that's not our style. Like "Only one? Aren't you bored?" You know. So, as our children are coming up and as I came up, as you come up, sometimes Dad gets angry with you and the first thing that comes in your head is, "How come he doesn't get mad at him? How come he's always picking on me? How come my mom keeps telling me, 'Why can't you be more like your sister? I hate her! Now I hate her more because mom wants me to be like her. I can't *stand* her!'" And that rivalry grows and you have friends outside and your sister walks into the room and you say, "Get out. These are *my* friends here! These are my friends and you can't have any of those! And then when your friends leave the house you say, "Were you talking to my friend? Don't talk to my friends." You know what's going to happen. Rivalry between sisters; rivalries between brothers, you know; always fighting over stuff. "No bro, that's my shirt! What! You always do that! I hate you. And you beat each other up and Dad comes because we are Muslim fathers (and Muslim fathers are awesome) and they do one of two things: One, they punish the guy closest to them (that's like one justice system in the Muslim home, "Hey!" That's one. And two: (this is also pretty amazing we

should have equal rights and lets gather the entire extended family and punish all of them, right? And as you're all getting punished you blame that one: "Because of this...I can't stand him! You know, in childhood these things are funny, but they grow, and they grow, and they grow until eventually you're going to have a family of your own and you're not going to be calling your brother or your sister because of some things that have been brewing for a very, very long time. And I tell you now - as a matter of fact - I think that one of the people who understands me better than anybody else is my older sister. I can talk to her when I can't talk to; even my mom I can't talk to about some things or my wife. Nobody will understand like my older sister. And she's very different from me; we're like polar opposites; we get on each other's nerves; we do. But, when it comes to certain things, I know that the only one that will understand what I'm saying is her. And she knows that the only one that will understand her is me. So we call each other and talk about that stuff, you know. Siblings have to have a lot of love for each other. And you know it's amazing. Some things Allah put inside of us, you'll be beating each other to death at home like you're two guys pounding each other; and then you go to school and somebody says something about your little brother and you go, "Hey! What did you say about my brother? It's MY brother! I get to punch him in the face. You don't talk to my brother like that! You know, you're so protective of him on the outside and it's time to be protective of your siblings inside the home, too. They have to be your best friends. Fighting's going to happen; it's inevitable. Jealousy should never be there. A little bit of quarrel here and there, it's a part of growing up. There's nothing wrong with it. I don't say there's anything wrong with it, you know. But there has to be a

healthy atmosphere. A lot of your parents are worried because they're noticing that all you do when you talk is they fight; every time they interact with each other, they fight. You know, they don't want the other to be around. And with girls it's even more complicated; it's really, really complicated with girls. My girls will tell me:

"Abba, she looked at me!" "

"Okay, okay, calm down. Don't look at her!"

"I wasn't looking at her!"

So complicated!

"She always says I'm looking at her."

You know. But - to some level - this is natural. But at another level, it's "Mom loves her more." "Mom loves him more."

"Dad always praises him and always puts me down. My failures are the result of the love I don't get. I'm messed up 'cos of that guy. My little brother went to med school and I'm still like, you know, super-duper awesome senior trying to figure out what major I'll take and I'm twenty-eight years old and I'm not sure you know. I've met those guys. I've bet those twenty-eight, twenty-nine year old guys who "So, you've been in college? So, what's your major? "I don't know; I need to change it. How many times, bro? You know. Then when you get deep into a conversation, you know my brother, he's just really smart, you know. Allah gave him the good genes. Apparently He gave you a Jinn and gave him a gene. Right? Don't blame your inadequacy on somebody else. And the easiest target is your sibling, or your parents: "My parents didn't give me..." Stop blaming others. (Arabic) Excuses are nothing but lies; that's all they are. So, let's

listen to what Allah azowajan has to say. A very powerful statement: *Wala taatamanna* (Suratun Nisa). By the way, before I tell you what the ayah means, where it is in soorah al Nisa is also remarkable. Right before this ayah, Allah was talking about major sins. Major sins. Allah azza wajal says right before this ayah that **“In tajtaniboo kaba-ira matunhawna AAanhu nukaffir AAankum sayyi-atikum wanudkhilkummudkhalan kareema(nisa:31)”** (If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise]).

If you were to be able to stay away from the major sins, the major big things that you have been forbidden from: murder, ribah, haram consumption, those kinds of things...if you can stay away from that big stuff, I'll forgive your sins. We will bury away from you your evil deeds. And look at the language: “We will enter you into a gracious entrance”; in other words, you can say, the gate itself will be beautiful in paradise. The gate is going to be grand; it's going to be big. Allah says, “No, the gate will be noble. In other words, anybody walking through it is being honored. They're being like - you know - inaugurated. You're being commemorated as they walk in. So, honor is mentioned; dignity is mentioned. And in the very next ayah, Allah talks about people that have low self-esteem. They don't have enough respect for themselves. In the previous ayah Allah said I want you to go through a noble gate “*mudkhalan kareema*”. And the entrance that is noble in itself. And the next ayah Allah says “*Wala taatamanna ma faddalaAllahu bihi baAAadakum AAala baAAad*”(nisa:32) (And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others.)

Don't wish for things Allah favored others with. Allah gave your sibling better physical strength; he gave you better intellect. He gave him a more mathematical line; he gave you a more creative mind, artistic mind. You know. So, what I'm trying to get across is Allah forbade us from wishing I wish I could be taller. I wish I was the older brother...I wish I was like my sister. I wish I was this. I wish I was that. You know, what Allah has given you is good. It's a favor from Allah. And wishing for something else is actually a negation of Alhamdulillah. When you and I say Alhamdulillah, we are grateful to Allah for what He has given us, not what we wish he had given us. Alhamdulillah, already it's a statement of self-esteem. You're already grateful happy content with what Allah has given you, what Allah has given me. Don't try to be somebody else. Just be yourself and acknowledge that what you have is a gift from Allah azza wajal. And then he adds and sometimes this happens between brothers and sisters:

"You know, my brother gets to go outside; I don't get to hang out late at night." "My brother gets to do everything; I don't get to do anything," the sister says. Allah says Arabic "لِرِّجَالٍ مِّنْهُم مِّمَّا كَسَبُواْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا كَسَبَتِ النِّسَاءُ مِمَّا كَسَبْنَ" (For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned).

For men they have a portion from what they're going to earn. For women they're going to have a portion from what they're going to earn and nothing more. In other words, what you get in this world is trivial compared to what you're going to earn with Allah. What you have to earn with Allah is equal opportunity on getting the pleasure of Allah.

So, one of the last things I want to share with you on this issue - I'm telling you this can really destroy a person if you don't pay attention to this you can become obsessive; you can become so obsessive that every time you think about your problems, you don't think about yourself. You think about whom to blame other than yourself for your problems and it's usually someone - in many cases - that you're jealous of. It's very peculiar that in Surah Yusuf I was telling you the story about jealousy, right? The aspect of jealousy between Yusuf and his brothers. It's very peculiar that when Yusuf's brothers spoke, the Qur'aan records their speech. And in Allah recording what they said He practically psychoanalyzed them. He gave us the entire psychological profile of these kids in like a sentence. You got these kids figured out. You know what they said? They're a bunch of guys and they don't begin with defining themselves; they begin with defining the problem they have in life: "lth qaloo layoosufu waakhoohu ahabbuila abeena minna." (yusuf:8) And then they define themselves: "Wanahnu AAusbatuninna abana lafee dalalin mubeen." (yusuf 8 contd)

My goodness! Yusuf and his brothers...Dad loves him way more than He loves us and we are a strong bunch of guys. Instead of saying, "We are a strong bunch of guys..." they say how come Dad loves him more? They couldn't even talk about themselves because they are so obsessed with their object of jealousy; it has so invaded their minds that whenever they get together, they talk about that. You know. This is a very serious problem because what this does is it never allows you to grow. It never allows you to become a better person, to come out of your shell, constantly living in the big shadow of somebody else. And you put that shadow

there yourself; nobody else did that for you. You know. WA nahnu...and then of course the blame doesn't stop at your sibling. If you say "My sibling is better than me, smarter than me, then the next thing is, "my parents, it must have been their fault. So, the first object of your negative feelings was your sibling, and then it progresses over to what? Your parents. They say "inna abana lafee dalalin mubeen"...our father is clearly confuse. So, not only do we have bad feelings toward Yusuf, now it's going to extend to Dad also. And by the way, what happens to many of us? First we blame somebody else, then we expand the circle and eventually you know what happens? People start blaming Allah: Allah didn't bless me, Allah didn't give me enough. Allah expresses these adjectives together in the Qur'aan: Arabic. These are very powerful adjectives. Yaoosun kafoor. Whenever trouble comes to us, to a certain kind of person, they become extremely depressed. Aooze mubalagha extremely, overwhelmingly negative. La yadkhulfi...Nothing positive enters his mind. He's always thinking about problems. La yatha Sami...he doesn't laugh, he doesn't smile. He's just constantly like negative, negative. You ever see those people? You're within five feet of them and you get depressed. Those kinds of people:

"Huh"

"Isn't this conference amazing?"

"Yeah, it is? I don't know. "

This is going to downs everything. Or, when you're talking they have to find the negative in everything:

"Wasn't that khutba amazing?"

"Yeah, but somebody double-parked their car."

They have to find something to poke at, something to be negative about. This is yaoose. And Allah says the only university you will graduate into is from this high school of yahoos to kafoor is disbelief. If you're constantly complaining, you have no reason to be grateful to Allah. No reason to praise Him. And that praise disappears and all that's left is disbelief. Subhanallah. It's a very logical progression; that's why it's so important. Sheikh Abdul Nasser in another session spoke about this. Allah azza wajal forbids us from losing hope in Allah. Why? Because hope is the first thing to go and imaan is next! Imaan is next. And it starts for many of you with jealousy. A lot of your depression is a result of jealousy. And it shouldn't be. I'll end with some practical examples (aside: oh wow. Is that one minute thing for Imam Siraj or is it for me?)

Okay. So you have, for example, where I come from, Pakistan. Alhamdulillah, I have 4 daughters; three together, and then two sons then fourth daughter, and you know, they're little girls right now, and but I have three sisters and all three of them got married. And there was a formula when they got married. This this is a formula in my household, a formula across households: the oldest daughter should get married first, then the one younger than her, then the one younger than her. And if you are the fourth brother, well, you know what? Isbir.Sabir... Too bad. We have to go in order...because it looks bad. And if, for instance, a proposal came for one of the younger daughters, we have to turn it down because there are two more planes waiting to take off. So you can't get on the runway until it's the turn for your flight. So you're in the pipeline. And if one does get married, the other two older sisters are in serious depression, like, "Come on! You

cut the line!” It’s like, when you’re upset with somebody who cuts the line at the restaurant. You know. Come on bro! That’s not fair! What formula is this? We made these arbitrary rules and got ourselves in trouble. When Allah brings rizk, when a good proposal comes it’s a rizk for your family. It’s like a gift from Allah. Consider it. Don’t just say it doesn’t meet our formula that we set up for ourselves and we will hold on to it stronger than we hold on to any commandment of God Himself, and we’ll put our own family in trouble as a result. Allah says to us, you redullahi yukhaffif...Allah wants to lighten your burden for you. We make our life hard. We make it hard. These jealousies land us in so much trouble, so much difficulty. If your brother went to med school (your parents are going to hate me for this), and you don’t like medicine, and you’re going because your brother went. And if you don’t go, and there’s going to be some serious like when you get introduced at weddings:

“This is my son; he’s a doctor. Or he’s going to be, Insha’Allah.”

“Don’t you have another son...?”

“Ah, excuse me I have to go.”

The other kid is just sitting there like, “Thanks, mom!” You know. Don’t do that to your kids. Don’t instill that jealousy in them. There are so many things in our culture. And the last I’ll talk about is just for the parents, guys. Just the parents here: There are things that are part of our culture now that instill jealousy. That introduces jealousy into the family. Birthday, birthdays. I’m not talking about a fatwa. You know I’m not qualified. But you go and you get one of your kids a

gift. Have you seen the look on the other kid's face? Have you seen what they look like?

"When's my birthday coming?"

"It was just last month."

"You mean I got to wait eleven more months? And I have to just tolerate that this one received special accolades over everybody else?"

You guys review, you guys repeat the story of Yusuf (as): "Dad loves him more than us." You'll repeat that every birthday in your household. If you're going to get a gift, get it for everybody. And if you're going to give a gift, part of it is to be given to charity together. Allah gave us this; we are going to give some of it back. Instill good values into your kids. Don't brew jealousy among them. Stop comparing your children to your other children. Stop purposely praising some of your children in front of other children. Stop doing that. "You know, you're my good son," while you're looking at the other son: "Aaja, shabash mayree achi baity. This is my good daughter, Masha 'Allah. She listens to me. " Man, if you could see the flames coming out the other ones head. You know, when you see a knife on the other ones pillow when she goes to bed, you know where that came from. YOU did that! The parents did that. That's no way of parenting. I don't know why all these forms of psychological torture became standards of Muslim households as parenting techniques. But that's all they are: psychological torture. You'll find a way to stick it to your kids. Come on! Your kids should feel the most comfortable with you; the most relaxed with you. Their jealousy should be removed. They should be more protective of one another. It's a destructive force. A destructive,

destructive force. And you have to not just be jealous of your siblings, constantly talking down to your siblings. I'm giving advice to the older siblings now: Older siblings, be nicer to your younger siblings. You're not their parent. And they'll tell you that: "You're not my Dad!" "Oh yeah? Well I'm bigger! What you got to know, huh? Who's your bro?" Be nicer to your younger siblings. Be kinder to them because it's important because they will grow to resent you. Naturally younger siblings grow to admire their older siblings. You know why they are always taking your stuff? Not because they think it's cool. They think you're cool and they want to be like you. That's what it is. They just really like you. They look up to you. They want to be like you. You know why they want to talk to your friend and not their own? Because they really like you! They just think. "My older brother is so cool." They won't say it to your face, but they do. And you say, "Why are you always following me around?" No; he's following you around because he loves you. And you should keep them with you. You should be more tolerant of them. You should take them. When you hang out with your friends, take them with you. It's okay. It's an expression of love and it's supposed to be there. And one day you will appreciate it because later, I've seen it in a lot of homes - when these siblings become older they say "My older sister's so messed up I don't want to talk to her." And that's when you'll pay the price. You know, Alhamdulillah I am a family man and I have a wife, and kids, and parents, Alhamdulillah. We're all together. But sometimes you just need your sibling. You just need your brother. You just need your sister. I hope that Insha'Allah ta aala we can benefit from this conversation and wabarakallah walakm, Assalamoalaikum WA rahmataullillah.

