## Taking Back Our Narrative by NAK

AsSalam o Alaikum Wa RahmatUllah he Wabarkatu!

Aa'odu Billah he-minash Shaytannir rajeem

Transliteration: SharaAAa lakum mina alddeeni ma wassa bihi noohan waallathee awhayna ilayka wama wassayna bihi ibraheema wamoosa waAAeesa an aqeemoo alddeena wala tatafarraqoo feehi kabura AAala almushrikeena ma tadAAoohum ilayhi Allahu yajtabee ilayhi man yashao wayahdee ilayhi man yuneeb [Surah Ash-Shuaraa, Ayah 13]

**Translation**: He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]. [Sahih International]

Alhumdulilah he rabbil Aa'lamin, WasSalat o WasSalam u Aa'la Sayidil Anbiya e WalMursaleen wa Aa'laa Ahle he Wa Sahbi he Wa minstanna be Sunnate he ila Yaummid-Deen. Allahuma Ja'alna min hum wa Minalla-dhina aamanu wa Aa'milus Salihat e Wa tawasau bil Haq e Wa tawasau bis Sabr. [Ameen Ya Rubb al Aa'lameen!]

When we talk about taking our narrative back, I think we have to divide the conversation into two parts. The conversation has to be taken back from the forces outside of ourselves and the forces within ourselves. And so when we talk about

I like to add is a reminder, it is not something new. All Messengers of Allah, Aa'laehi musSalat o WasSalam (ASWS), were faced with a hijacking of their narratives. They were portrayed with something they were not; whether that portrayal started with character assassination; of them being accused of having agendas other than their actual agenda or it being a point of ridicule; that is how could they (the messengers) follow something so not even close to the truth.

Whether it was words like magic or sorcery or whether they were accused of being liars. All of this was essentially an attempt to hijack narratives. One of the greatest examples of that, which are repeated in the quran is the discourse between Firoun (Laa'ana hullah) and Musa (AS). It is repeated over and over again in the quran and I want to share with you a couple of really remarkable places in regard to that, before I talk about the challenge within the Ummah itself. [Surah Taha – AYAh 63]

"Qaloo in Haadhani Lasahirani"... the narrative given by the leaders of Firoun, the chiefs of Firoun and his ministery, the unanimous press release was that these two are nothing but magicians. Now, who am I talking about; Prophet Musa & Haroon, Firoun said they are nothing but magicians. But he did not just stop there, he said do not get impresses by their tricks, this is just magic, simple, no big deal. He went ahead and says: "Yureedaane un yukhrija kum min ardh-kum be sehri-hima...", "They intend to get you kicked out of your land by means of their magic". They (Firoun's ministers) are going around to the population not only telling them that this guy (Musa AS) is a magician so don't be impressed, it's nothing special; on top of that he (Firoun) is saying if you do listen to them (Musa & Haroon AS) watch out they are going to get you out of your land, they are a threat to homeland security – this is what they are. So, I just want to ask you to ponder for a moment, this is the same Firoun who in other places in the Quran says, [Surah Zukhraf – Ayah 51]

## وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِى قَوْمِهِ ءَ قَالَ يَنَقَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِى مُلَكُ مِصْرَ وَهَلَذِهِ ٱلْأَنْهَارُ تَجَرِى مِن تَعْتِيَّ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿ اللَّهِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَكُ مِلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَلَذِهِ ٱلْأَنْهَارُ تَجَرِى مِن

"AaLaisa lee Mulku Misra?...", "Don't I alone, exclusively own the Dominion of Eygpt", "Wa Hadhi hil anharu tajree min tahtee...", "and these rivers flow beneath MY Feet..."

He used to speak of the ownership of the Egypt and his Kingdom above it for himself exclusively. But when he saw that Musa (AS) and his message is gaining power and people are actually starting to listen, he could not tell people don't listen to him because he will take away my land, he had to change the narrative and say No No No he is not a threat to me; he is a threat to your land, this is your land too. We are in this land together; well! They were not in this together before!, but now that Firoun sees this shift of power happening by nothing but just with the words of Musa AS; the words that Allah has given him; the consistency and constancy that he has, Firoun is changing the narrative.

If you want to study the response to propaganda in Quran just study how Musa AS talks to Firoun, just study that carefully; you will find amazing things .Firoun will go this way and that way and that way.... Saying to Musa AS did not you commit this crime, did not you do that, did not we raise you here; what sort of a traitor are you?. He pulls this way and that way and the other way, he tries everything he can but Musa AS stays on point. He does not budge, he does not move from his position. I want to tell you something else here about this narrative and I think it will sound familiar to you as it does to me. Firoun is emphasizing watch out for MUSA AS he is a threat! But why is he a threat?

Because according to Firoun Musa will get the people kicked out of their land; so if you really love your land (and there is this part of you; its part of your identity to love the land you belong to, if you have any sense of patriotism) then part of your patriotism will be to hate this message. You cannot be attracted to or consider this message without being a traitor to your own country. So, this narrative is made such that either you love your country, you love your people, you love your tribe, you love Mecca, you love your family, you love your beloved and glorious history,

your past OR you can love Islam because the two cannot go together in this hijacked narrative. It's one or the other; it's painted that way. I have friends; friends who recently became Muslims, who get told by their family, "how could you be a traitor to America, how could you do that?? What kind of an American are you who became a Muslim, adopted the religion of enemy??

See what an amazing job they have done! You have got to commend them. SubhanAllah! The two things have been made polar opposite and people are really, truly convinced of this narrative and sometimes even we, Muslims, are convinced too. And I actually consider Muslims innocent in this discussion, and I think our ignorance has a lot to do with it too. I know many Muslims when they talk about non-Muslims they say, "I met an American friend today". What does that mean?? What they mean by that is that they "met their Kaafir friends"... Are you kidding Me! Seriously! SubhanAllah! In our minds these two things have become synonymous. We have to first look deep into ourselves and see how big a victim we have become of this propaganda.

The discussion of Firoun and his chiefs, in the last part of this ayah, is what I want to finish this discussion with you. "Wa Yadhhaba BiTareeqatiKum Almuthlaa"...

Amazing! They said, "If you listen to these guys; they will get rid of ...", "Dhahaba" in Arabic means "to go", but when it comes with a proposition of "Baa" it means "to remove" so, what Firoun is saying is that they will remove, they will erase... But what will they remove and erase? - "TareeqatiKum" - "Your Lifestyle". You know Tareeqa in Arabic is "a path", "At-Tareeqah" is a feminine form with a "taa" at the end and this means "a path you live life in", the life style – figurative form. "AtTareeqateKum alMuslaa" - "Your exemplary Lifestyle".

Let me explain word "Musla" to you so you can appreciate what is being said here. The word "Musla" is feminine form of "Amsal"; Amsal is "the best possible example you can give". What Firoun and his associates are saying is our lifestyle is

so awesome everybody else; when they talk about best kind of life they give our example and these two Prophets(Musa & Haroon AS), these messengers of yours they are going to get rid of your perfect lifestyle that everybody else loves. The whole world wants to be like us and they want to get rid of it. "Wa Yadhhaba betareeqateKum AlMuslaa"...

Does that sound familiar at all?! SubhanAllah! This is nothing new, this is the first point I wanted to make, that this propaganda war is not new and Allah did not leave us without guidance and instructions, without His wisdom in how to deal with this propaganda and how to take the path of Musa AS and as our Messenger SAW himself did, that's the first thing I wanted to share with you. The second thing that I wanted to share with you is what you DO! On the one hand you have a multi-billion dollar propaganda machine which does something in a very synchronized fashion. If you noticed some of the buzz words that are used; they are used across media outlets and across newspapers, John Stuart does a good job of making fun of them right! There is something peculiar about that; all these media outlets apparently independent of each other, are saying the exact same thing. I want to share with you a little bit of next ayah, "FaAjmioo Kaida Kum..." "Unify you Plot"..." Thumma tu Saffa"..." "And know for sure, the only one who will succeed today is the one who is able to show his superiority".

## [Surah Taha – Ayah 64]

In other words, your job is not to prove how great you are, your job is to prove how terrible they are! That is all you have to worry about. You just have to Demonize them; you don't have to show people how good you are...I was just interestingly enough, what an interesting weekend I had, I was in Atlanta and there is an eradicating Islamophobic conference going on there and I was hanging out with Shaykh Zayd today and yesterday and one of the most brilliant things he said; he said, "All this attention on the Muslim boogeyman, who is apparently also your Dentist (LOL) and also the guy who works at the gas station store...whatever!, But

this terribly scary entity; why all this attention on him? BECAUSE you have to take the attention away from other things...! Jobs are shipping overseas you know, and there is enough money in Government budget to put scanners that are apparently not even impressive to the Israeli Airports. We have money for that because some special interest groups are making bucks through it, and it's not even hidden news, it's like national news at this point you know that there are private interest groups involved and their hand is deeply tied. Attention has to be taken away from all this and somebody has to be a scapegoat and we are a relatively easy target! We are! But this is the external challenge.

When we critically talk about internal challenge, and the thing I want to talk about the most, especially because you are an MSA crowd, you guys are young, you have your whole lives ahead of you, you also have your understanding of Islam to mature and ferment; you are in a process of developing your understanding yourselves and you are exposed to many different speakers, writers, books, blogs, YouTube videos whatever... You are still developing your thoughts and understanding and in this time it is very important that I mention that you need to become savvy and you need not be naïve, you have need to have an open mind and need to understand when a game is being played because it is!

I see too many youth today that games are being played with and they don't even know it. What I am talking about is the exact propaganda that Islam is being painted with, by certain fringe media outlets, that exact narrative is being duplicated by certain Muslims that are calling for their definition of Jihad Fisabillillah and writing blogs and articles and papers and there are aayat and ahadith, quoted one after the other; a string of aayat & ahadith and at the end of which a call is being made to impressionable stupid teenage Muslim kids and many of you are victim to it. And if you are not going to do anything about it by actions; in your thoughts you are already sold.

Watch out for this new propaganda! Because what this is; I will break it down as basically as I can for you, you know, in genuine studies whether it is Islamic studies or any other studies, in genuine studies you never make your conclusion first. What do you do in genuine studies first? You do research, you study, you study the evidences, and you embark upon a quest of finding all the facts you can and eventually you make your conclusion. Your conclusion never comes first. Is it

possible, however, let's just talk about the Quran, is it possible that I make a conclusion; I want to justify the killing of innocents, already have that conclusion, is it possible I can take a string of Aayat and Ahadith and put them all together and make it sound like by the time you are done reading all of that my conclusion would make perfect sense. Is that possible? It IS! And it's happening. This is a disingenuous approach to Islamic studies but someone who does not know any Arabic, has never sat with an Aa'lim, doesnot know first thing about Usul al Fiqh or the derivation of principles, does not understand the intricacy involved in driving shariah principles, knows none of those things, just knows that this man quoted a lot of Aayat and Ahadith ...Daleel? Man! He quoted a lot of Aayat and concluded, so, this is what we got to do. So, obviously he knows what he is talking about.

If that's the simplistic view of Islam you take then you are heading down a dangerous path and so the bit of advice, I know this is a long discussion, but the bit of advice I have for all of you is that you have to make a distinction between those who are seeking knowledge still and those who are more knowledgeable than you, relatively speaking, and those who are scholars. I am not a scholar, I really am not! I get deeply offended when people call me Shaykh. No man, Stop it! But it has become a relative term; everybody is a Shaykh now, right! But understand that there are people that are relatively knowledgeable, who know a little more than you do, and actual scholars, actual research scholars you know and we have to show respect to that.

Now a days the standards of Islamic studies have dropped so much that we are going to call pretty much everybody a scholar, pretty much! And even institutions, I am going to say something very bold but I just have to say what I believe I am convinced of, academic standards of many Islamic institutions in the Muslim world that are supposedly producing scholars has dropped dramatically! They have dropped dramatically. I have met Ulema e.g. from Egypt or from India that are like they are in their 80's and 90's and when you ask them about what they think about the Madrassahs they graduated from, "what do you think about it now a days", they say, "What we did in like before we got to the Madrassah is what students graduate with now". The standards have dropped. I met an Aa'lim from India, in Ohio, I did not know he was an Aa'lim and after the seminar we started talking and he starts quoting Zamakhshari – the linguistic tafsir of Quran, from memory. I was

like, Where did you go to School? That's Incredible! He knows like thousands of lines of Jahilliyah poetry by heart. He was an Indian Scholar, right! But he is just chilling with his grandson, not an Imam or something... you can call him Uncle (LOL) and he says what we did in first year is what students do in their 9<sup>th</sup> year, they do in the 9<sup>th</sup> year; the standards have dropped.

What is considered a Scholar in many institutions has dropped and in some institutions it is scary, Wallahi! It is scary. I have met people from institutions that graduated, that are calling themselves Imams and Shaykhs and Scholars and they are saying all kind of ridiculous things but when you sit them down with an aayah of the Quran and say, "Can you please explain the grammar of this aayah to me? How do you get the translation of this aayah?", Aaaaa.... Nothing! When we become shallow in our study of our own Deen and those who are supposedly our Leaders, their studies themselves are shallow, nothing more than empty rhetoric than we are all in deep trouble. All of you need to be pursuing knowledge of Islam but know what the limits of that knowledge are! Know that you don't know everything, know that "Fauga Kulle Ze Ilmin Adheem", Know that, "there is someone who has more knowledge, above..." on the way here, I was asked by somebody, "Can we combine Maghrib and Isha?", I said, "I don't know!". I am not going to answer a figh question, I am not a Faqeeh, I know my limits. Young people have to know their limits. When you are young; you think you know everything... I was there too... I have been there, believe me! Thank God those videos are not on YouTube (LOL).

So, that's a really strong bit of advice I have for you, that our narrative is right now being hijacked by trolls underneath YouTube videos and blogger comments on blogs and things and there are handful of crazies that are bullying all the rest of us into being quite because they paint us as sells outs or this or that or the other but understand that if we are true to our Deen and explain, understand and teach this book the way it is supposed to be taught, there is nothing to be ashamed of, there is no controversy, there is nothing we need to hide. So, here is my last advice to you, as negative as the environment is, what messenger ASWS went through, you have to believe, was much worse. As tough as times are, what he had to go through was worse.

And Allah in this aayah that I am sharing with you Allah talks about the people of the book not accepting, he talks about Mushrikun, "Kabura Aa'lal Mushrikeen ma Tadhouhum Ilayh"... (Surah Shura, Ayah 13).It's really big on the people of shirk, they cannot accept what you are calling to, it's very hard on them. You know if somebody else says it's hard on them, they are not going to accept, I'll say I'd still try. Allah himself is saying that it's hard on them; they are not going to accept! Moving on, "Allah hu Yajtabee..." Allah calls to Him whoever He wants, you can try but in the end who is going to bring them to Allah? He Himself! He will guide whoever he wants. "Wa Yahdee Ilayhe Mun Yuneeb"...So, these are the challenges listed, but those are the external challenges, the people of the book, the Mushrikun, those are external challenges in the life of Prophet ASWS.

This aayah...

وَمَا نَفَرَقُوۤ أَإِلَّامِنُ بَعَدِ مَاجَآءَ هُمُ ٱلْعِلْمُ بَغَيَّا بَيْنَهُمُّ وَلَوَلَا كَلِمَةُ سَبَقَتُ مِن رَّبِكَ إِلَىٓ أَجَلِ مُسَمَّى لَقُضِى بَيْنَهُمُّ وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أُورِثُواْ ٱلْكِئَابُ مِنْ بَعَدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكِ مِنْ مُريبٍ الْ

[Surah Ash-Shua'raa – Ayah 14]

"Wa Ma taffarraqu Illah Min Ba'de Ma Jaa.." They did not fall into disagreement until after knowledge came, out of arrogance among themselves. People of knowledge would have fights within. Is this an external problem or an internal problem? This is an internal problem! People of knowledge fighting each other! We see that in Ummah today or no?? We see that problem too! And after listing all of these problems Allah tells His messenger ASWS, as a result of all of this, and therefore, we say therefore at the end of our speeches, that's the Arabic word "FA", so therefore, in conclusion..."Falidhalika..." "So, in response to that, "Wastaqim"...in response to all of that you keep on inviting and you stay firm like you have been told. "Wastaqim Kamaa Umirta..." You remain firm whereyu are told, "Walaa Tattabay Ahwa a hum"... and do not follow into their main desires. You have heard this kind of expression in Quran before, "don't follow their

desires", Right! I need you to understand what it means here... It means don't get weak in you call, it means don't get loose in your commitment because if you do, THAT is their desire! You stop making your Dawah, you stop standing up for what is truth in your speech and in your character that is exactly what the desire of theirs is.

فَلِذَ اللَّهُ فَادُ عُ وَاسُتَقِمُ كَمَا أُمِرُتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُ أَهُوٓ آءَهُمُ وَقُلُ ءَامَنتُ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِن كِتَنبٍ وَأُمِرُتُ الْأَعُدِلَ بَيُنَكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمُ لَنَا أَعُمَلُنَا وَلَكُمُ أَللَّهُ مَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمُ لَنَا أَعُمَلُنَا وَلَكُمُ أَللَّهُ مَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمُ لَنَا أَعُمَلُنا وَلَكُمُ أَللَّهُ يَجُمَعُ بَيُنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ المُصِيرُ وَلَكُمُ أَللَّهُ يَجُمَعُ بَيُنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ المُصِيرُ



## [Surah Shua'ra – Ayah 15]

"Wa Qul Aamuntu Bimaa Anzallallahu Min Kitab..." and say openly, "I have come to believe in what Allah has sent down from a book...", "Umirtu Li Aa'dila BainaKum...", and "I have been commanded to do justice between you..." What I am calling for is justice and nothing else. "Lanaa Aa'maluna WalaKum Aa'maluKum...", We have our deeds and they speak for themselves and you have yours and they speak for theirselves.

This "Lanaa Aa'maluna WalaKum Aa'maluKum", you have to understand this, people don't understand this, "LaKum DeenuKUm Waliya Deen", in surah Al-Kafirun. You know what Deen means? What does Deen mean?? Does anyone know? Deen means what you get! In classical Arabic, Deen means what you get. You are going to get what you have coming to you and I am going to get what I have coming to me. That's part of the meaning of the "LaKum DeenuKUm Waliya Deen", what you are upto – Kufr (that's what Surah Al-Kafirun is all about Right!) you are going to get something because of that and I am refusing to worship that Kufr so I am going to get something because of what I am doing too because that's part of "LaKum DeenuKUm Waliya Deen". Here Allah says, "Lanaa Aa'maluna WalaKum Aa'maluKum, La Hujjata BainaNa Wa BainaKum", there is no need to make a case for you against me or me against you. You know

what, Let's just do what we are doing. "La Hujjata BainaNa Wa BainaKum"... and the purpose of that is DO NOT GET TANGLED INTO UNNECESSARRY DEBATES.

WallahHe! They come, you know there are certain elements, by the way I have to be very honest, there's a great majority of people in this country that are genuinely not aware of what Islam is and there is a huge amount of population that is genuinely curious about what Islam is too. Good People, they are curious about what Islam is but we have not gone to public library and done a seminar on Quran. How about, "Before you decide to burn it, WHY don't you learn it" Right?! We have not done that, we did not do our job. We have to be honest about this... you know there are some people who hate us and that's fine. They are going to hate us no matter what we do. The messenger ASWS was the nicest guy, you have got no reason to hate him (SAW), it's not like we are nice so they are just going to like us; that's not going to happen. There are some people who are going to hate us no matter what but there is a significant population in this country that are genuinely good and we have not done our job of reaching out to them.

"La Hujjata BainaNa Wa BainaKum, Allah hu Yajmau Bai-nanaa Wa BainaKum..."Allah will cause union between us. It's almost a dua in this aayah, though it's a proclamation too; Allah will call union on judgment day, when all people will be gathered, it also means hopefully those of you that are good may there be union between us and "Wa Ilayhi AlMaseer", and to Him we have to return anyway and only to Him! It's an open call, it's an open call! I tell you, the Muslim youth in this country, Insha'Allah, you guys are pioneers. You don't know the kind of responsibility that's on your shoulders. One of the major MAJOR causes of our decline intellectually, spiritually and a major cause of us not being aware of our narrative, the root cause I'd say is the distance from Allah's book. We don't know what this book has to say, we are not educated in it. When people quote the aayat, we don't the aayah that comes before it, we don't know the Surah it comes from, we don't know what the actual context was, we don't know how WE understand it before we can say NO No No, they are misquoting, we don't know it ourselves. We have to have a Quran Education campaign for ourselves first and that would give birth to the Quran education for masses of people; it'd do that, you know.

So instead of the entire narrative around this book being, "This is the book yhat make people kill each other and it's craziness..."; all of that great stuff you know, instead of that we can call people to you know what this is one marvel of Literature, this is a beautiful book you know! Here is a seminar about how beautiful the Fatiha is, open to the public. Quran education, take it very seriously, become more aware what this book has to say. You have to do that, you have a role to play. Your awareness of this book, it will, WallahHe!, Open your eyes because it's not like any other religion. Any other religion you could say, "Oh! You are so lost in religion you don't know anything that is going on in the world around you". Not Quran! If you study Quran, if you study Quran it makes you see the world for what it really is. It does not close your eyes! It opens them!



[Surah Yusuf: Ayah 108]

"Adhu Illallahi Aa'la Baseerah...", the messenger ASWS was told to say, "This is my path, I call to Allah with my eyes open (with full knowledge, with full understanding)...". We have to be people who understand the times we live in, understand the book of Allah the best we possibly can, and you have to start now. All of you insha'Allah!; as this massive responsibility rests on your shoulders.

May Allah give us the ability to carry this message as it should be carried in our speech, in our character and in our actions. May Allah make us of those that if don't open our mouth, just because of how we kept ourselves, how we behaved in this conference and how we took care of the trash and how we left in an orderly fashion when it was done and how we treated nom-Muslims and did not give them the dirty looks and how we, when security personnel passed us by in the campus, stopped and said thank you for what you are doing; just because of that they'll know that there is something about Muslims. Because we carry ourselves differently; the way we act, the way we behave should be different and just because you are angry at what's happening in the world, don't show that anger to your neighbor. They are not policy maker, that's just a guy man! Just a dude who

lives next door! He's not in charge of foreign policy. Okay, so you can be good to your neighbor, actually, you have to be, it's part of our narrative. If were truly good to our neighbors, they could watch CNN all day long and they still won't hate us. They'd be like, "I am not going to hate that guy, he cleaned my snow and I did not even ask him!" That's the kind of people we have to become.

I pray that we are able to take this advice to heart and that you are really a source of generation to come. I really pray that your parent's duas are fulfilled; that you become a source of light in the midst of all this darkness. I pray that Allah protect you from vanity, from not having any higher purpose in life, from becoming people whose only greatest purpose in life is finish a video game or keep up with certain fashion or update your profile, that life means much more than these things. That you are able to find a higher purpose and commit to it and I pray that Allah makes us the people of Balance. AMEEN!

Barakallah hu le walaKum Feh! WasSalam o Alaikum Warahmatullah!