**DRAFT**

**Revelation in a Time of *Survival*: Spirituality and Sustainability. A Zoom Series from Spiritual Leaders of the Greater Boston Area on Climate Change and the** **Pandemic.**

Session Three: “The Oneness of God in Islam with the Earth and its Peoples”

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* Fay Khudairi is a registered nurse and member of the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) and founding leader of the ISBCC Green Team.
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**Harun Spevack:** I'll begin my comments on this is by reading from a translation of the 91st chapter of the first seven verses of the 91st chapter of the Quran in the name of God the all Merciful, the all Compassionate.

”By the sun and its brightness and the moon as it follows it. And the day as it reveals it and the night as it in shrouds it and the heaven and him who built it, and the earth and him who spread it and the soul and him who has formed it to perfection.”

I wanted to begin by reflecting on this particular verse because it's one of the many verses of the Quran that draws the reader or listener to reflect on the universe broadly around them close to them and then within them, you know, it brings the attention to the heavens and the earth, all the way to the end of the day, the night that's around one to the soul that is within one. And so that reflection outwardly and inwardly is crucial to indicating the site and they do all of these with what the furthest horizons to out with the deepest parts of ourselves. All of these are signs that point to the divine. So, I began by reflecting on these questions that were guiding questions that were given to us.

About the role of God and the pandemic and the climate change and last I spoke up several months ago, I forget when that was, but a similar kind of question. I brought our attention to a particular worldview amongst the various different worldviews amongst Muslims, one of them.

Is called an occasional list worldview, which is basically to recognize that law being all powerful, all willing, all knowing is the creator of all that we see around us is the Creator of everything that we experience. And so, that when we find ourselves in a particular situation such as a climate crisis or a pandemic, or whatever it may be. Maybe we know that where we are is where Allah intended us to be. We are somewhere that was willfully chosen. We are in a moment in a place and a time that his will created by a law by his will, according to his knowledge.

And so that with this recognition that ultimately everything that is occurring everything that we experience is by Allah’s will power and knowledge. That reminds us of a greater picture, which I'll come back to later at the level of observed and empirically experienced reality whatever is happening around us is connected to the willful intended choices of individuals of people, of course, there are unintended consequences as well. We're at the level of our experience of the day to day level of experience. We are also aware that our actions have an impact right that our actions and our inactions have effects on the world around us.

So we are you know theologically speaking I wanted to bring us to a theological point on this, which is that theologically speaking although we recognize that everything is from a law. We have accountability and we have to take and we take responsibility. Therefore, for the choices that we make for those actions that we choose so in thinking about how everything in the universe, including the, you know, the environment, immediately around us and within us and beyond us are you know are all signs pointing at to the Creator.

I was reminded of a heady saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) that I heard many years ago and I went and I looked it up and found. Found a translation of it. It is basically translated. It's a headache. It's a saying of the Prophet, that is attributed to him with some question about the authenticity, but enough that the soundness and the meaning and possibility of being transmitted from him that we can mention it, it says beware, or take care or guard and preserve the earth for IT IS YOUR OWN. IT IS YOUR MOTHER.

One of the translations of his mother be so that garden preserve and take care of the earth, for it is your mother. No one does good or evil on her except that she will speak of it. So whatever we do in this world is witnessed even things that we would normally think of as inanimate objects will witness for or against us on the day of judgment. So the we have indications from our religious tradition from our primary texts that draw us to consider to be to take very seriously what our actions are, and especially within the domain of these signs around us. If the universe around us are you know it's full of signs pointing to a law, then we want to be careful to metaphorically not pave over all of them. We want to be careful to not destroy many of these signs that are there that are that are pointing so clearly for us to the divine.

So this brings us to the question of the, the role of the faithful and all of this and connecting with spirituality that what again wherever we are is where we were meant to be. And in every single moment there is something that Allah has sought from us. There is a request, there is a demand, there is a command. There is something that is required of us as the pop song from many years ago refrains it is “getting over till it's over that every single moment, no matter how bad things get,” there is something that is requested of us. So when we look at the situation that we're in environmentally when we look at the climate crises, all of the new developments that we think about what is the role that we play in it.

Some of us have great answers to that. Some of us have big plans for that others of us try to maybe do us you know as much as we can in the domain that we are sort of capable of participating in. It said that if the day of judgment comes in, you're planting a tree to finish planting that tree to. Don't you know it's the one that continues the good work that they're that they're doing and what this brings me to is the concept of hope the sustained hope that one of the, I think theological concerns that I have about the subject of environmentalism in general is that quite often, people who care and really care a lot fall into in a sort of apocalyptic negativity and lack of and loss of hope.

And so, what we have to remember is that what God seeks from us, but the divine with a loss seeks from us. In all of this, as we approach the environment around us and seek to find the balance for Allah does say and in the Quran that Allah does not love the wasteful and excessive and extravagant those who go to access that we see, we see, we see that we are called to act righteously to do to do good in this world to respect the earth and the world in the environment that we're in.

And one of the key areas that we can be of service in that is to not go to excess and not go to waste. Given that there is a sense of urgency and time running out and things falling apart that many people often fall into a sort of state of despair. And so, in reflecting on our responsibilities and the strengths that we draw from our religious traditions. I think one of the most important points to keep in mind is to stay hopeful because Allah is the one who brings about all of the effects. Allah is the one who brings about everything that will happen, whatever happens is because Allah has willed it to happen. We are responsible for the choices that we make in our responses to this situation that we're in and therefore we don't stop improving and doing the right thing and taking the small steps, even if they seem small and insignificant because Allah is the one who brings about the effects. A small and seemingly insignificant effort may have huge impact going forward. So, since I know that my colleagues will have plenty more to say about more specific details related to the to the efforts of Muslims that have to do with environmentalism, and sustainable living and so on. I wanted to reflect on the sort of spiritual theological dimensions primarily about the state that we should be approaching the situation which with which is a sustained hope. Thank you.

**Basyouny Nehela Boston Islamic Seminary:** In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the most delicious. First, I would like to thank the organizers of all of you for inviting us to be part of this very significant program that all of us should join and should be part of especially the religious leaders, the doors, who are serving the mission of God on earth. You have the need to come together to work together to provide solutions to be able to be connected with their source of light source of hope source of provision, source of solutions and help in this life.

And so, when I was invited actually to attend this meeting, I found that this is an interest response responsibility to join those get people on the out thinking about connecting people humanity to their source of life and sorts of mercy and provision. That's why I accepted the invitation and I am very glad to be part of this for this part of this event and also I would like to emphasize the importance of talking about the current crisis the pandemic and the other issue that we are facing as human beings these days, that the significance of talking about these issues from the spiritual perspective taking people to their and their gut and the helping people to repent to a law helping people to take care of quality and to understand that the key of the of all solutions that we are looking for and trying to find these days.

I would like to emphasize actually some important principles and values that we learn from that revelation from Allah and carry those principles are really very important, especially for me. When I read those verses. I learned from them. That Allah is with us. God is with us, is guiding us is taking care of us. And also, I see the one is having a law and all those values when we talk when we talk about Earth taking care of earth, maintaining our life together.

As religious leaders as human beings together working collectively to be connected with Allah. We see the oneness of Allah the power of Allah the care of a loss of panel data in all our affairs in this in this life, I would start with that one verse that talks about a lot as the Creator of everything and I see the one is Allah when he talks about himself introduces himself as the Lord of everything as the Creator of everything. Allah says Allah is the Creator of everything is the disposal of all affairs is the control of everything.

And for us as Muslims only believe in Allah who believe in his oneness, we have to take care of his creatures of His creation, you have to take care of the earth. The heavens last panel …. He subjected everything up for food you he has subjected the whatever on the earth for you. Whatever is in the heavens for you. Everything is from him to in order to worship him. You have to take care of His creation. You will have to take care of his of this first that he made all of us sitting in it. And that made all of us take benefit from in order to be connected with a law. You have to, to, to maintain life for all people.

Muslims and non-Muslims for your fellow citizens and fellow human beings we understand the from of course in that If you would like to please Abbas a panel. What are you have to remember him through taking care of the condition of Allah. When you best buy some trees you understand that they are glorifying God and remembering. Good. And that's why you look at them you reflect on them and you say your Lord is my Lord and I want what you are worshipping. I'm asking who created you, the one who created you created me. I respect you. I have to take care of you as a lot me. Do you taking care of me?

This is a form of fortune that each one of us should practice should be for Allah when we wake up every morning. We thank Allah for giving us life, for giving us the opportunity to utilize his bounties on earth to walk to move to cultivate life to populate our life, we have to thank him every morning. And can we have to counter his bounties? Every morning we seize the one is of a loss of panel data in our relationship was his creation, with earth and heavens, and people and everything that we are interacting with the a life. We have to remember a lot. We have to reflect on his creation and the considering this as a way of worship.

The other thing that we learn from and which is very beautiful, Allah was talking to some one who used to make mischief on Earth. He was not to take care of the creation of a law, he didn't understand his role as a human being as a servant of God in serving humanity and serving the creation of a lot. That was one of the tyrants whom Allah talks about him and our for our own

Allah directed him through Prophet Moses are a very beautiful instruction that we need to look at it and move to reflect on it, specially through this time we're asking a dumb ass on Allah relates do good as Allah has been good to you.

And do not see corruption on Earth one activity for set apart and be sure that Allah’s good doesn't like the corruptors the the mischief beepers Allah just loves those who are doing righteousness on Earth. Those who are righteous in dealing with one another and dealing with the creatures of Allah. This is something that is important to for the believers to reflect on and as Allah has done good to me, I have to be nice and kind to his creation. I have to be nice and kind to others. And if I would like to earn the love of my creator, I have to be nice and I have to love his creation in general.

This is very inspiring for me. And I think for everyone who cares about his relation with Allah because he has to understand or she has to understand that he cannot earn a stronger relationship and connection with Allah with our big thing. This is strong connection with his condition loving you, the creation of alarming pandemic. Maintaining earth and heaven and everything on Earth. In general, the other thing which is also very important, we see, do you want me to have a lot of the power of Allah of the mercy of Allah. The power of Allah in general when Allah talks about with the reason behind corruption on Earth or is the reason behind this unless he is in one of the shutter offer that report and the autumn festival barely went back the dead. The corruptions have appeared on earth because of what your hands have heard. And what you will have done, on earth you didn't take care of the trust of a mob. You didn't to fulfill your responsibilities towards the creation of a block. You didn't see the one is of a law in being good and nice to his creations. That's why you see this kind of corruption and mischief on Earth.

Be my cassava emptiness and because God Allah is the most merciful, he has given us just a small pictures of the consequences of our actions of our evil actions. And then you see this corruption and to be struggling with because he wants you to return to him to repent to him. So we see in our lives, the consequences of our production because we are the reasons behind this corruption on earth we might return to him might go back to him. Why reform ourselves and the for our surroundings might work together as we are doing today.

To protect ourselves from the consequences of our bad actions from not being from those who understand the responsibility and the role in serving humanity. With the name of God and being immersed support one another in dealing with one another. And this is something we need to understand if we are looking for. What is the reason behind what we are going through

Our actions, our bad intentions, we are not working as a collectively to serve a was mission to serve humanity. Just to our thinking about our own benefit and Entrust. We are not thinking about the common good, that all of us should work together to save and maintain and to be part of the path, but hopefully we can listen, from what we are going to through hopefully we're in return to Allah. We will return to get to our Creator. Hopefully, we know that will not accept our surface anymore to be at ease in behind the mischief and corruption that all humanity to these are suffering from.

We'd be a source of mercy, a source of solution, a source of help to one another. This is what we need to learn from a circumstances like this spirituality. Is the most important thing that we have to take care of, if we are kidding about sustainable sustainability. We have to maintain life in general. The more spirituality, we have in our hearts. The more love, we have in our heart. The more information we see the more goodness will see The more sustainability, we will find and see in this life and that's why I really thank all of you for bringing this good topic spirituality is the key.

Our heart is the key. And they are sincere to find a solution. Let us go back to our heart. Let us go back to the reasons behind the problems and the crisis that we are witnessing today. Once we find our heart wants to work together to make our heart and spirituality in the right place. I think we'll find a solution. I think we'll find a way out from what we are going through as a human being today.

Thank you for the opportunity. And hopefully we'll have more gatherings like this to have more reflections, how we can help one another to help humanity to be connected with the source of life and happiness.

**Fay Khudairi**: My name is Fay and I'm a nurse. I work in Boston with Boston health care for the homeless program, and I'm a member of this Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. So that's my background. I'm not a theologian, but have more experience and community organizing,

And I started the ISP CC the cultural center sustainability team two years ago with the mission to honor the trust. We have a lot with Allah or God as caretakers of the earth through adopting sustainable living practices and balance with nature and in this mission. There are a number of different embedded in another a number of different Islamic values.

That really reflects the worldview and the lens in which we approach, taking care of the earth and by extension sustainability. So just to extrapolate that our trust is the Amana, which is the Arabic word for the that we've been entrusted with the planet that we have a responsibility for the planet caretakers, the Arabic word is called if we are again entrusted with the earth and have to act as vice chairman. And leaders and not responsibility and living in balance with nature's reason we believe that everything is in balance. Everything is in harmony as a lead decrease and our role is to live in harmony with nature rather than spread corruption has been mentioned.

So, the inspiration for this and why I became enthused to start this team was because of the Muslim community that I grew up in specifically my family. I grew up playing in the gardens of my grandparents home and Wellesley, which is outside of Boston. And coming inside after playing. I would see the overflowing pots of succulents and flowers in my Grandmother's kitchen window. Before I would see her at the door to greet me. Those were very happy memories and I would play with bugs in the yard and come inside to look through stacks of National Geographics in my grandfather’s study. My grandfather was a very formative person in my life and Dr. A cream canary who so people know, and the Interfaith community. He was in esteem botanist and educator. A larger than life man who is a mentor and role model for so many and taught me our responsibility to understand our place amongst all of creation.

And use the resources we have both scientific and religious to preserve the earth and restore balance.

And he actually you know his dedication to education. I'm now doing my masters in public health and nursing and really interested in learning more about Environmental Health and Sustainability, and a lot of that is because it's because of his influence. In they'll put an hour 55 man verses one through nine state, the Most Merciful taught the awkward and created man and taught him eloquence. The sun and the moon move by precise calculation, the stars and the trees prostrate and the heaven. He raised and imposed the balance that you do not transgress within the balance and established wait and justice, and do not make deficient, the just the balance. We'll just let us all sit with that for a second.

As a first generation Iraqi American on our lives have already been affected firsthand by the displacement of people at the hands of greed for fossil fuels. It really hits home. My grandfather brought my family to Boston following the brain drain. After the 1966 Baath party revolution. And he began a new life for us here as a professor at Northeastern University a botanist. And yet, in the department botany.

And was an advocate for education and peace within the Interfaith community. He passed away. This past April and asleep at the age of 95 having lived a life of service to his community. And he really embodies what a Muslim is and now I'm the next generation. I see my role is planting. As being the seed that was planted from my grandfather's hand planted in the soil of Community watered by knowledge and as some values.

And my grandfather's dedication to the preservation of life, both planted human inspired me to start this. I'm excited boss and cultural center sustainability team, as I mentioned, to educate and bring sustainable practices like gardening and composting to the center. Our team grand accomplishing recycling program for Ramadan last year, which is our holy month of fasting from food, water, worldly desires ill speech and wrongful action. Um, it's a great time to bring everyone. Together and really energized around sustainability, because we Ramadan is a time to reflect on our past actions to make amends to realign ourselves spiritually and communally

And there is this idea of the end that was already spoken about already beautifully of the internal obligation. The individual obligation.

To work on their spiritual character. And then, by extension, how does that to then take form and the actions that they care about in their community. And so that's something that I constantly am thinking about, because I know. Like, for example, not everyone is obligated to go out and protest and demonstrate and fight the fossil fuels. Fossil fuel industries and that's an important role, but not everyone has to do that. And so what is the individual versus the communal obligation.

And there is a communal obligation that people do have to go out and do that. But with each individual there are Islamic ethical things that we need to be doing on a day to day basis that still move the dial towards justice and but allowing ourselves to be creative with what that looks like. And so there's often debate and Dr. Home mentioned this on, like, what is the what is the impact of an individual action.

And so there are ways that we can counteract through divestment, and on our everyday purchases that many of you may already know about such as eating less meat on getting a hybrid car, rather than a diesel car and using electric car electric cars are trying to minimize cars completely and biking a walking and we can see that in Islam that inner purification, or a test, get the next, as it's called, and then extends, as I said, to our actions, which is the basic, basic basis of Islamic ethics to enjoin what is right and forbid, what is wrong.

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. The Prophet Mohammed is narrated to have said there is no Muslim who planted a tree or sows a seed and then a bird or a person or an animal eats from it, except that is a charity for him just highlighting how each individual action matters, and so as I said, perhaps, making some very public display of fighting against the fossil fuel industry, maybe that's not that's not where your where your comfort zone is but there are small impacts, for example.

I'll you know in our house. I'm kind of like the sustainability police where I'll be like watching my husband as he's using water in the faucet and brushing his teeth and I'll you know scold him to turn off the water and then meanwhile I leave the shower on to get warm and get distracted maker lunch and leave it running for five minutes. So while the showers a higher impact you go for minimizing that right my action, but at the same time the faucet while you're brushing that still does matter that still water that's being wasted.

And and so I think it's important to remember, we don't have to save the planet, necessarily.

Our actions matter individually. And yet, whatever is going to happen with a planet that is part of God's round. And so we still do important things, um, as it relates to our relationship with the planet, but not for the outcome, just to save the planet, but also taking moments to reflect on our relationship. For example, composting at home. Why does that matter. Sometimes I think like, is this really making a difference that I'm composting at home.

It's just, you know, a couple bags of food scraps and what is this really making a difference when you look at the statistics and think about how huge this problem is you'll you read in the book on in sura 41 verse 39 Allah says, and among his signs and this that you see the earth barren, but when we send down water rain to it. It is start to life and growth of edge of vegetation. Verily, he who gives it its life. Surely he is able to give life to the dead on the Day of Resurrection.

Indeed, he's able to do all things. And so in even the act of composting. We have the signs from a law. He only uses birth and death and the rebirth cycle as a metaphor for our souls. Just as when we die our bodies will break down into the soil that is the medium for new growth. Our soils will be our souls will be rebirth. On the day of judgment. And so we see nature as a mirror for us and by struggling with ourselves to learn how best to live in harmony with nature and by fighting for justice we know a lot better.

And so as I said they're practical ways, like, a lot of times I think about the family role because that was so Instrumental in my upbringing and that's where the habit start. And that's really the center of Islamic the small systemic systemic. Okay. First, it starts in, like, how can I enjoy good forbid evil, on a personal spiritual basis. But then the next extension off of that is the family.

And that's where habits start in our reinforce so it's in the culture of the family to care take for the planet and respect and building that loving relationship through play and gardening and cleaning litter off the street and that is what is going to then help the child then be that person be that leader in the future. So if a mother is teaching her child not to litter. You're not necessarily, you're not going to say that that's less impactful than, you know, my example of the fossil fuel industry in some public way right and then take it a step further to how we measure impact in the divine realm and you're our job is to live in balances on Islamic Lee and by living in harmony with nature and maybe that looks like taking down the fossil fuel industry, but that doesn't need to be the only way, as I said, you know, some final closing remarks as Muslims, we believe God is the most just ultimately and he loves to forgive, and so just ending on that hopeful note again that it's never too late to turn back, Allah constantly mentioned in the Quran that it's never too late to turn back and make amends change our course to one of balance and plant those seeds for the next generation because they're already here.

And, and I believe that, as it's been taught in Islam correcting our past errors comes from establishing those habits within the family and then carrying out those everyday goodness that over the course of a lifetime leans towards justice.

Thank you.

Rodney Petersen: Thank you for those inspiring remarks wonderful lifestyle like yours. The contribution of **Aijaz Baloch** are summarized in the two power point presentations as attached with this email.