In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful. Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon Prophet Muhammad. Welcome!

We proceed with the first lecture of "Parables of the Qur'an" on the first of Ramadan. We have agreed that our slogan will be “We will live by the Qur'an". The goal of these lectures is that we live and abide by all the ethics and morals presented in the Qur'an. Let us recall the Prophet's hadith that we should read the Qur'an because it would intervene for us on the Day of Judgment. On that Day, the people who worked by the Qur'an will come, especially proceeded by the two chapters of al-Baqara and al-'Imran, as if they were two shades from the heat of that Day.

Today's lecture is about mending your relations with your family. Today's story is the first in Creation; it is the story of the son's of Adam: Qabeel and Habeel [Cain and Abel]. There are a lot of values, lessons, and great meanings in this story. This story is in Surah al-Ma'idah and begins with

**وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ…**

"And recite to them the tiding of the two sons of Adam with the truth […]" (5:27)

The first point in the story concerns the words, "**sons of Adam**." This shows that the story is not addressed to some people in particular. It is **universally addressed to everyone**, for the betterment of mankind. You should be proud that your religion is universal, not just limited to Muslims. Notice that the first verse in the Qur'an is:

**الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ**

"Praise be to Allah, The Lord of the worlds" (1:2)

**قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ إِلَهِ النَّاسِ**

And the last chapter begins with, "Say, 'I take refuge with The Lord of mankind, '" (114:1-3)

The second point in the story concerns, "**And recite to them**." This is not going to be an anecdote or a story; it does not go as, "relate to them the story" but as, "recite to them." It sounds like an important statement addressed to mankind. As if Muhammad has gathered all mankind to recite this statement.

The words **"with the truth"** are also important. The whole issue was a personal dispute between two brothers; it augmented until one of them killed the other. The story sounds different from the point of view of each of them. Had you heard it from the view of Qabeel it would be different from the view of the sisters, from that of the mother.

The same is true with us, when two people get divorced, for example, you hear different and opposing stories from each party. That is why Allah says, "with the truth"; i.e., not according to your personal prejudices.

Let us begin the story. How much is the globe's population at present? It is round 8 billion. Let us return to the beginning of Creation; how many people were there? They consisted of six people: a father, a mother, two daughters, and two sons. It is truly an ancient story, but is still happening. It is the story of problems between relatives, disputes among families, and siblings that break their ties after their parents' death; it is the story of spilled blood on the face of the earth. It is the story of human nature, which is replete with unattended flaws.

**The Story Has Three Lessons:**

* Never break ties with your relatives
* Watch out for blood on your hands, especially in Iraq, Darfur, Syria, Egypt, Pakistan, Lebanon; i.e., blood among siblings
* Know thy self. And protect yourself from six afflictions of the human soul which will lead you to the Hellfire.

So, the goal of this episode is to heal yourself from these six spiritual afflictions. These are: ***pride, envy, desire, greed, stubbornness, and rage***. I would fear for you if you have these afflictions. If you have none, prostrate to Allah in thankfulness.

So, it is important to "**know yourself**." You all care about your physical appearances. How many hours do women spend looking into their mirrors? Of course you all know what the model of your car is, but do you know yourself, **which kind** of "***self***" is it? Is it a *peaceful* *composed* "self" or a *blaming* "self"? Or is it a "self" *ordaining evil-deeds*. **Do you heal yourself when you have physical ailment?** Then, look into the mirror and heal your spiritual ailments from these six afflictions. This is the goal of the episode.

That is why this episode is at the beginning of Ramadan. **Ramadan is a month that heals** these six afflictions and calls for the good relations with one's relatives. These should be your two goals. We use the story of the sons of Adam, because it has such wide range of issues, from greed until murder. All of these are in Qabeel, but on the other hand, there is the range from tolerance until rejection of murder in Habeel . That is, through this story you come to confront yourself. **Which one are you: Qabeel or Habeel**? Which "self" are you? So, please confront yourself and decide not to be Qabeel. I dedicate this episode to the families that broke their ties after the death of a parent.

**The story is made of six characters**: **the father is Adam**, who was the first father. He did not achieve immortality in Paradise, but lived through the pain of the Fall into earth. He lived both in Paradise and on earth. **The mother was Eve**. She was the first to experience motherhood and was extremely in love with Adam.

She also experienced the pain of the Fall with him. **The two sons were Qabeel and Habeel**; Qabeel was the elder and Habeel the younger. They were the first sons of Adam, because *the Prophet says that the blame of any person that is unjustly murdered goes back to the first son of Adam; meaning, Cain*. **They are the difference between good and evil, between strength and wisdom, and between recklessness and vigilance**. **The daughters were first two brides.** This was the first family.

The Qur'an refers to only **six scenes** in this story. The first is of the **sanctified-sacrifice**,

**إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الآخَرِ قَالَ لأقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ**

"As they offered a sacrifice, (Literally: sacrificed an all-sanctified sacrifice) (and) it was (graciously) accepted of one of them and not (graciously) accepted of the other […]"(5:27)

Then, there is the scene of **conflict and the dispute**, the **scene of death**, the **scene of remorse**, the **scene of the crow**, and the **scene of burial**. There are only six scenes despite the fact that the story is replete with other dramatic and evoking events. For instance, what might have been the feelings of Hawaa? Adam himself was in pain. And what might have been the feelings of the daughters?

We will begin even before the scene of the sanctified-sacrifice. The origin of the story is even before Adam and Eve descended to the earth. Five snap-shots happened in Paradise and are related to what happened between Qabeel and Habeel; and are also related to the six afflictions of pride, envy, desire, greed, stubbornness, and rage.

***The First Scene:***

**وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الأرْضِ خَلِيفَةً**

"And (remember) as your Lord said to the Angels, 'Surely I am making in the earth a successor.'" (2:30)

Can you imagine how Adam becomes Allah's successor and the one responsible for the reform on earth? We are going to become responsible for the reform of this earth. And this was the beginning of **the first spiritual disease** **when Satan envied Adam** because he was chosen as the successor and reformer instead of him. That is why we all are tempted to forget that we are successors.

***The Second Scene:***

The Prophet says that when Allah created mankind, the blood-ties or kinship were held into Allah's Throne and said, "I take refuge with Thee Lord from the breaker of blood-ties." So, Allah granted it that He will support whoever maintains these ties and break with whoever breaks these ties.

***The Third Scene:*** happens when Allah says

**وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ**

"And (remember) as We said to the Angels, 'Prostrate (yourselves) to Adam', so they prostrated (themselves) except Iblis: He refused and waxed proud, […]" (2:34)

So, when Satan was asked why he did not prostrate, he said that he was better since he was created out of fire and Adam was created out of clay;

**قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ**

"Allah said, 'What prevented you from prostrating as I commanded you?' Said he, 'I am more charitable (i.e. better) than he. You created me of fire, and You created him of clay'" (7:12)

And this is **the** **second disease: that of pride**. Then, Satan asked for an extension until the Day of Judgment in order to lead most of Adam's offspring; to have them steal, betray, cheat, etc.

**قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ أَخَّرْتَنِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لأحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلا قَلِيلا**

"Said he, 'Have You seen? This, whom you have honoured above me, indeed in case you defer me to the Day of the Resurrection, indeed I will definitely bring his offspring under my subjection, except a few'" (17:62)

**And this shows the stubbornness. If you have any of these qualities, then you have things from Satan in you.**

***The Fourth Scene***is related to the ***Tree of Eternity or Immortality***.

**فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لا يَبْلَى**

Then Satan whispered to him. He said, "O Adam, shall I indicate to you the Tree of Eternity and a Kingdom that does not decay? '"(20:120)

Satan tells Adam that he will lead him to the tree of Immortality. **Satan tempted** him by trying to show it to be the best. Similarly, a man would be married to a beautiful, moral, kind, and loyal wife, yet is driven to see that which he does not have as a hundred times better than what he has. **This is the fourth disease: that of greed**.

***The Fifth Scene Is About The Repentance Of Adam:***

So, who has these diseases, and who intends to repent and mend relations with their relatives? Adam was running away from Allah because he was ashamed. That is the difference between him and Satan; one was stubborn and the other repented quickly. The Prophet said that a person does not enter Paradise if they have an atom of pride in their heart; so how do you deal with your families, employees, and poor people. So, watch out from pride. Adam did not have it since he kept on crying until he descended. However, Allah consoled him saying that Paradise was made for him and that he should sow the seeds in earth; and when he misses Paradise he can return. So, Allah maintains that had he secured Adam and his progeny from sin, who would enjoy Allah's mercy? **It is preferable that Adam enters upon his Lord as a bondman; it is better to ask forgiveness from sin than to brag in one's obedience.**

When Adam and Eve descended from Paradise, Satan tempted Qabeel with the same six afflictions. When they were on earth, Adam started toiling hard, living through heat and cold, sadness and happiness, and success and failure.

**إِنَّ لَكَ أَلا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلا تَعْرَى**

"Surely it is (given) to you neither to hunger therein, nor to go naked,"(20:118)

Afterwards, he felt the need for someone's help. Eve became pregnant with a twin: a boy and a girl; Qabeel and his sister. Then, she got pregnant with another twin: a boy and a girl; Habeel and his sister.

This was the first family on earth and Adam started his role as a father. So, he started narrating his story to his children, especially when the Angels prostrated to him and when he saw the blood-ties holding to the Throne. And that Satan envied him, so that both Adam and Eve were tempted to eat the fruit of the Tree. He said that to make the children aware of Satan as their enemy.

The children grew up and their personalities evolved. **Habeel was physically stronger but kinder. Qabeel was older, but hard-hearted and aggressive**. You may say it is not his fault: that is how he was created and these are his genes. Still, he had a choice. Actually Adam distributed the available vocations so he assigned agriculture to Qabeel, the older, and herding to Habeel, the younger. Each took what was suitable for him. You know that Allah taught Adam the names of everything. So, Habeel wanted to learn from his father, while Qabeel was lazy and unwilling to put an effort.

Therefore, Habeel's abilities grew and he started to be more distinguished. Allah is merciful and just; He had equally divided the lots. But one needs to work hard. Habeel listened to his father and worked hard. So, listen to your parents. As for Qabeel, he was lethargic and his abilities never showed but he did not work at them.

This is the problem of the youth in the Muslim world. **So, instead of focusing on himself, Qabeel started focusing on his brother, and this is envy. This is how the afflictions of the soul begin**.

**Adam noticed that and he advised him to work and focus on himself. This is the first message to parents. Beware of lethargy for your children! Have them work summer-jobs, or play sports, or learn skills!** Discover the abilities of your children, or they will start envying their siblings and this will start the problems and the spiritual diseases! That is, the beginning of the diseases of the soul is lethargy and not discovering one's abilities. A message to the youth is to focus on themselves and compete with themselves instead of looking at the other people**. Begin with yourself: learn, work hard, and get tired! This will be better than sitting in coffee shops and abandoning work.** I dedicate the story of Qabeel to every lazy young person that does not want work. Notice how this story touches aspects of our self!

Adam's children grew up and reached the age of marriage. Our Lord's legislation's at that time were that neither should marry his twin sister. Each should marry the other's sister, since there were no other people at that time. **Now Satan reappears**, playing the same game. **He would whisper to Qabeel**, why is it that Habeel married your sister; your sister is prettier. Satan makes you see that which you do not have as better than that which you have. It is the same trick which he played on his father, Adam.

Satan does that with every single one of us; due to that many women have been divorced, many houses broken, and many children unsatisfied with their parents, their cars, their homes, or their jobs**. This brings us back to greed. Are you greedy**? **Do you always look at what other people have?** Do you, ladies, look at one another's dresses and desire them? Do you have clothes in your wardrobe that you do not use? Do you, men, restrain your gaze to your lawful wives? **Another message to parents: do not give your children all that which they want. So, even if you have the money, do not provide everything they want in order to teach them not to be greedy.**

Omar Ibn al-Khattab was once walking in the market-place with one of the followers. This man used to admire and crave everything that he passed by. So, Omar smacked him and said "do you buy at any time you desire something?" The youth should also train themselves not to take everything. You sometimes need to prevent yourself by will.

**What Satan did to Qabeel was that he manipulated his definition of beauty.** **Standards of beauty change**. If you look at the standards of beauty in Syria and Egypt twenty years ago, they thought the pretty woman should be heavy and fair, not slim and tanned. Now it is the opposite. Satan does that in order to distract man's eyes from something even prettier than in the woman: **her heart, tenderness, loyalty, and support**. **How do you observe a woman's beauty?**

Are you distracted from noticing the true beauty of a woman? This is what Satan did and this is what he does with thousands of young men every day.

We should now go back to the question of; where is Adam in all this! He has been advising his son to focus on himself and develop his talents. But the son was stubborn, and refused, insisting that no one will marry her except him. **Are you stubborn with your folks**? If you want to know, think about your answer when your parents have a request. **Do you keep saying "no" even if there is no reason? Do you ignore their request if they ask you not to drive fast, or refuse to take their phone calls**? Watch out from stubbornness. This is what wasted Qabeel. **So, Are you proud, envious, greedy, or stubborn?**

Anyway, **Adam came up with the idea of having a contest between the two brothers, in order to motivate Qabeel**. Therefore, a good advice to parent: if you have sibling-jealousies, or a lazy child, then motivate them through contests. Therefore, Adam suggested that both his sons would offer a sanctified-sacrifice. The judgment would be left to Allah to accept the sanctified-sacrifice in which more effort was used.

***A Fourth Advice To Parents: Never Take Sides Between Your Children.***

**إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الآخَرِ قَالَ لأقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ**

"[…] as they offered a sacrifice, (Literally: sacrificed an all-sanctified sacrifice) (and) it was (graciously) accepted of one of them and not (graciously) accepted of the other […]"(5:27)

The whole idea was that Qabeel would work hard on agriculture and provide great plants as sanctified-sacrifice, while Habeel would work hard on his cattle and provide the best livestock as a sanctified-sacrifice. **So, Qabeel demonstrated another disease of the soul. He offered the worst sanctified-sacrifice. That is, he was both greedy and miser**. He wanted to offer the least but get the best.

The sanctified-sacrifice was accepted form one and not the other. It is true we no longer have sanctified-sacrifices in Islam, **but if you are entering a project, a marriage, or an exam, then approach Allah by offering something**: going to hajj [pilgrimage], reciting the whole Qur'an, paying sadaqa, saving someone from trouble, or performing qiyam, or siyam.

When both sons provided the sanctified-sacrifice, it was instantaneously known --and Adam knew-- that the sacrifice was accepted from one and not the other. This does not happen with us. We do not instantaneously know if our fasting in Ramadan was accepted or not. For us, it is all postponed until the Day of Judgment. It is part of Allah's mercy that we would not know whose work has been accepted and whose not. Imagine if we knew the amount of jealousies and envy that would be there!

***Four Advices To Parents So Far:***

(1) Do not leave your children prey to laziness and let them work during the summer;

(2) Discover your child's talent;

(3) Do not begin with the punishment;

(4) Motivate your children by means of contests.

**إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الآخَرِ قَالَ لأقْتُلَنَّكَ**

"[…] as they offered a sacrifice, (Literally: sacrificed an all-sanctified sacrifice) (and) it was (graciously) accepted of one of them and not (graciously) accepted of the other One (of them) said, 'Indeed, I will definitely kill you.' […]" (5:27)

That is, Qabeel told his brother that he would kill him; it is probable that he did not mean it at the beginning but it then took hold of him**. Are you full of rage?** **How do you react: do you yell, suppress it, does your face become red, or do you become insulting and beat people up; especially the servants, your wife, or the employees? Do you swear or do you hurt people?** Qabeel reached a serious stage because he did not try to heal himself. **Are you more like Qabeel or Habeel?** Believe me it is possible to change one's morals through hard work.

Let us imagine the dialogue inside the family. Adam would tell Eve to advise her son lovingly. Eve would tell her daughters to console their father. Eve would remind her son of the blood-ties. Similarly, I advise every family here to sustain their blood-ties.

In Hadith Qudsi, Allah says that He is ar-Rahman [the all-merciful] and blood-ties are called rahem, derived from His name. Whoever maintains their blood-ties, is regarded by Allah; and whoever breaks their blood-ties is broken down by Allah. The Prophet maintains that mercy does not descend upon a group that includes one breaking blood-ties.

This family was the first family in Creation; there needed to be that amount of dialogue amongst them. So, whenever there is a problem, speak up and do not suppress it. Dialogue is important.

**Which two do you think are the most dangerous of these six afflictions**? My opinion is: pride and envy. Envy has become the worst affliction amongst us. Envy means hating to see other people's bliss and wish they would lose them. It is acceptable that you wish to own the same thing; in Islam that is called ghebtah. It is halal in Islam, but envy is haram because it entails that you wish it gone from the other person. The problem with envy is that you are interfering with Allah's will in distributing lots.

**وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ**

"And from the evil of an envier when he envies,'" (113:5)

The Prophet has warned us against envy because envy and faith cannot coexist in the heart of a person. He also said that envy devours the hasanat in a way similar to how fire consumes wood-logs. That is, you would appear on the Day of Judgment devoid of good deeds. Our society is full of envy. For example, a woman would ruin a girl's marriage because she envies her beauty or her family's background. Or, there is the businessman that would spoil the transaction of another businessman in order to drive him out of competition. Or, there is the football player that would beat another player and break his limbs because Allah has provided one with a talent. **Do you have envy in your soul? Have you ever hindered another person's progress? Have you ever harmed any person? Are you envious?**

This brings us to the end? Have you confronted yourself? Try to heal yourself from these six afflictions. Please mend your blood-ties and decide not to become similar to Qabeel. I want you to be spared by Allah. I want you to forget about the money and the inheritance if it would break blood-ties. So, approach your kin, even if they have wronged you. Try to forgive.

The second thing that you need to do is to write down these six afflictions and try to find treatment for them.

 (1) **Are you proud**? The solution would be to be modest with the poor, to visit the needy, and sympathize with the weak, especially during the month of Ramadan.

(2) **Are you stubborn**? The solution would be to try and say "yes" to your parents, maintain the relations with your kin, or make up with your wife with the niya of effacing stubbornness.

(3) **Are you greedy**? The solution would be to prohibit yourself from some of the things that you covet, and restrain your gaze.

(4) **Are you a miser**? The solution would be, give a lot of sadaqa.

(5) **Are you full of rage**? The solution would be to control yourself and follow the Prophet's advice: not to get angry, and perform wudu whenever you become angry. Finally,

(6) **Are you envious**? The solution would be to focus on yourself and compete with yourself only.