

The Prophet Sulaymān

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 1 of 2]

Introduction

This week¹ there was a sort of celebration in Palestine under the slogan that this is the 50th birthday of Israel. On the other side, the Palestinians, and the Arabs in general, were declaring it as a week of sadness, because they have been driven out of their land and out of their homes. Israel was created as a state based upon religion, as a Jewish state, and was supported by the only big power at the time, to the extent that the United States, lately, was boasting that they recognized Israel after only eleven minutes of the declaration of the division of Palestine by the United Nations.

Firstly, if states are to be based on religions, then there should be about 7 or 8 states all over the world. You would have a Jewish state, a Christian state, a Hindu state, and a handful of other religions around the world, so the United Nations would have a membership of five or six states. While Muslims are trying to have unity among themselves, they are being cut into pieces and very small states, so none of them will even be able to defend itself, let alone come to the defense of its brothers.

The establishment of the Jewish state on the grounds of religion is based on the Bible according to the Christians, and on the Old Testament according to the Jews. The Jews claim that this was their land 2000 years ago and they were

promised to have it, as it is called, in their books, “The Promised Land”. If we are to interpret the Qur’an in the same way, we can claim all the earth and declare it a Muslim state – the whole earth. Because the Qur’an says: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“God has promised those of you who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power *on earth*, even as He caused some of those who lived before them to accede to it; and that, of a certainty, He will firmly establish for them the religion which *He has been pleased to bestow on them*;² and that, of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security – seeing that they worship Me alone, not ascribing divine powers to aught beside Me. But all who, after having understood this, choose to deny the truth – it is they, they who are truly iniquitous” [24:55].

So if we take that Qur’anic verse and interpret it as the Jews have taken the statement of the “Promised Land”, then all the earth belongs to the Muslims, and the Muslims should claim every inch on earth. But we don’t do that. Instead, it is the opposite. Wherever there is Islam, there is a war waged against it from within and from without. Inside the Muslim countries, the secret service does not look for

¹ Second week of May, 1998

² “I have willed that self-surrender (*al-Islam*) shall be your religion” [5:3].

criminals; they are assigned fulltime to listen to the imams³ in the mosques to hear what they are saying and to record their speeches. And if an imam says something which does not follow what the authority would like the people to hear, he will end up in jail.

Nowadays, when you ask the Jews why they have occupied Palestine, and why this part of the world especially, and why they don't go and have one state to themselves in the United States, they say: "Because this is our 'Promised Land' and this is where *Haykal Sulaymān*⁴ is located, and we have to re-establish it here in our Promised Land." I am going to analyze these ideas in light of verses from the Qur'an, and thereby inform the attitude of the Muslims towards the facts related to that subject.

The Jews claim that Sulaymān⁵ belongs to them, and that is why they are coming to the area where he lived, and where he reigned. Before all that talk about establishing peace was initiated, it was not unusual to hear that the state of Israel will extend from the River Euphrates to the River Nile. That is the dream of the Israelis: to establish their state from Iraq to Egypt. On what basis do they say this? They say the kingdom of Sulaymān covered what is known today as Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon; that was the kingdom of Sulaymān. They expanded it to my land,⁶ up to the River Nile, because Moses was brought up in Egypt; so they claim a right to inherit part of it, also. That's how they are talking about the state of Israel.

I wonder about a certain myth which even some Muslims believe. They say the Muslims are the children of Ismā'il,⁷ while the Christians and the Jews are the children of Ishaq or Isaac. There are a lot of Muslims who also believe this. But there is a mixing up of race and religion here. We have to distinguish between race and religion; these are two entirely different things. When you talk about the *descendants* of Ishaq, or the *descendants* of Ismā'il, then you are talking about race or offspring of a certain family, and it has nothing to do with religion. As a result, we can ask ourselves the question: if a Muslim converts to Christianity today, will that change him from the son of Ismā'il to the son of Ishaq? Or, if a Christian

or a Jew converts to Islam, will that change him from a child of Ishaq to a child of Ismā'il? *That is the myth.* And that is something we, Muslims, hear too often and take for granted and accept it. My great grandfather was Pharaoh.⁸ Was he the son of Isaac or the son of Ismā'il? I don't know myself. This is the interference of politics with religion, and this has taken place throughout history, and with all religions, whether Christianity, Judaism, or Islam.

And here is another myth: the Jews claim that Sulaymān belongs to them. In fact, Sulaymān does not belong to anybody. Sulaymān was a descendent of Ibrahim,⁹ and we, the Muslims, Christians, and Jews are the descendants of Ibrahim. This is well known. So Sulaymān is a part of us. He was the one who originally built *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa* – The Sacred Mosque – in Jerusalem. The Jews adapted the situation to themselves now, and so they talk about the "Temple of Sulaymān". Temple, church, mosque, synagogue – all of them can fall under the term "Houses of Worship". But with the change of these concepts in the mind, people begin to play on the language, and so, today, the Jews say that Sulaymān belongs to them. The Qur'an does not say that. The Qur'an says: [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"And We bestowed upon Abraham Isaac and Jacob; and We guided each of them as We had guided Noah aforetime. And out of his offspring, We bestowed prophethood upon David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Aaron..." [6:84].

And if we, the Arabs, are the descendants of Ismā'il – as they say – and Ismā'il is the son of Ibrahim, then Sulaymān and Ismā'il are both the offspring of Ibrahim. Then, why does Jerusalem belong to the Jews, and not to the Muslims, if we are taking it from the aspect of race? These are concepts and myths which we have to understand when we talk with Americans, because the Americans are convinced of these "facts" propagated by the mass media.

The religion of Sulaymān is referred to as "Islam" several times in the Qur'an. This indicates the unity of the message of God, whether it came through Muhammad, or Jesus, or Sulaymān, or Moses, because all these messengers were inspired by one and the same source. And all of them came with the message which is called Islam. Islam means to

³ The religious leaders

⁴ The Temple of Solomon

⁵ The Prophet Solomon

⁶ Egypt

⁷ Ishmael, son of Abraham

⁸ Imam is Egyptian and frequently refers, jokingly, to the Pharaohs as his ancestors

⁹ The Prophet Abraham

live in peace – total peace – with yourself, your brother, with God.

Why does the Qur'an mention the story of Sulaymān? The stories in the Qur'an have two purposes: the first purpose is to comfort the Prophet,¹⁰ peace be upon him, in difficult times when he preached the faith of Islam, while, the second purpose is to serve as "a lesson for those who are willing to think and reflect" – *عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ*. When Muhammad, an illiterate man who could not read or write, narrated such a story to the people, the first question they asked was, "Who told you this?" How did Muhammad know these events which preceded him by thousands of years? Therefore, the second purpose illustrates that an illiterate man like Muhammad could not have possessed this knowledge, since these stories preceded his time by thousands of years. Thus, it is a confirmation that the stories must be coming from a Superpower, and Muhammad had no role in that but to receive them. [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

"Indeed, in the stories of these men there is a lesson for those who are endowed with insight. As for this revelation it could not possibly be a discourse invented by man: nay indeed, it is a divine writ confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations, clearly spelling out everything, and offering guidance and grace unto people who will believe."¹¹ "These accounts of something that was beyond the reach of thy perception we now reveal unto thee O Muhammad: for neither thou nor thy people knew them fully before this..."¹² So the narration of these stories in the Qur'an is to serve these purposes.

Every prophet was supported by miracles to prove to the people that he was supported by a Supreme Power. How does Sulaymān fit in that category of miracles? The story of Sulaymān is especially interesting because he was not only a prophet, but a king, also. He was a Chief of Staff of his army. And, before him, his father, Dāwūd,¹³ was a king. There is even a King David Hotel, in Jerusalem, named after him now.

King David and King Sulaymān were very famous for their courts. They would solve the problems of their people. One day there was a case in the court between two farmers.

One had sheep, and the other had his land planted. The sheep grazed on the land at night and ate and damaged all the plants. The owner of the farm went in the morning to King and Judge Dāwūd to complain. The King summoned the owner of the sheep to the court, and judged for the owner of the land to take the sheep. Sulaymān, who was a little boy at the time, was with his father when this took place. He opposed his father because he considered the judgment was not right. He said he had his own judgment. Upon his father asking him about his judgment, he said the owner of the land should take the sheep, utilize their milk, and the owner of the sheep should assume ownership of the land and replant it. When the land is as it used to be before the sheep damaged it, then the owner of the sheep should take back his sheep and the owner of the land take back his land. By doing this, the damage will be corrected. The Qur'an talks about that in a concise manner: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"And remember David and Solomon – how it was when both of them gave judgment concerning the field into which some people's sheep had strayed by night and pastured therein, and how We bore witness to their judgment for, though We made Solomon understand the case more profoundly, yet We vouchsafed unto both of them sound judgment and knowledge of right and wrong. . . ." [21:78, 79].

By and by, Dāwūd passed away. Sulaymān inherited him – not only the kingdom – but inherited him from the aspect of knowledge and judgment. The Qur'an states: [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

"And, indeed, We granted true Knowledge (*'ilm*) unto David and Solomon as well; and both were wont to say: "All praise is due to God, who has thus favored us above many of His believing servants! And [in this *'ilm*] Solomon was truly David's heir; and he would say, 'O you people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and have been given in abundance of all good things: this, behold, is indeed a manifest favor from God" [27:15-16].

There is a distinction marking this verse. What is it? It is *'ilm* – Knowledge. God gave them Knowledge and because of this Knowledge they said: "All praise is due to God, who has thus favored us above many of His believing servants!" He was taught the speech of birds: that's a miracle. In addition, God gave him some other miracles.

Nowadays, we have scientists who are studying the organization of the bees. They have discovered some of the secrets of bees and ants. Both have elaborate organization, and

¹⁰ Muhammad

¹¹ 12:111

¹² 11: 49

¹³ David

a sort of a constitution and bylaws, and every member of each kingdom abides by these laws. And there is a sort of division of labor – not like us, nowadays, where everyone is Jack-of-all-trades. No. Every bee knows its role: some are collecting nectar, some are manufacturing the honey, some are working inside the hive fixing it, taking care of it and. . . , and, then, there is the Queen. They have a queen, not a king. See how the female is respected even by the bees, but not by the men. And the queen issues orders which are strictly carried out. So, to Sayyidna Sulaymān¹⁴ God taught the language of the bees, and the insects, and the birds, and all the animals. That was *ni'mah* – a provision from God – a mark of distinction to show that he is a prophet; and he was to convey the message of Islam to the people. Sulaymān said, “ وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ –

We have been given in *abundance of all good things*: this, behold is indeed a manifest favor from God!”

Every kingdom has to have an army to protect it, and Sulaymān had his army to protect his kingdom. What did his army consist of? The Qur'an states that his “army would assemble before him – *jinn*, men and birds.” So Sulaymān's army was composed of human beings, the *jinn*, and the birds. The human beings – we know what they are. But what are the *jinn*? Many people think they know the *jinn*, but we don't know anything about them except that which is written in the Qur'an. Nowadays, some people claim Mr. So-and-So is utilizing the *jinn* to make some woman hate her husband, or another woman love her husband, and. . . he utilizes the *jinn*. That is nonsense.

Jinn are a type of creation that can see us, but we don't see them. Even Muhammad, *'alayhi as-salato wa-s-salaam*,¹⁵ could not see the *jinn*. There is no communication between the human beings and the *jinn* as some people believe; the only exception is the one who is selected by God to have that capability. In such a case, the ability to communicate with the *jinn* and to utilize their services amounts to a miracle, and Sulaymān was chosen by God and given that power. The miracles prove to the people that those men are appointed by Allah as messengers, and, as a result, they do things which are beyond the ability of normal human beings. The *jinn* were soldiers in the army of Sulaymān. Not all *jinn*, human beings, and birds were soldiers in the army of

Sulaymān, but only selected *jinn*, human beings and birds were recruited into the army of Sulaymān.

You know, army means organization. They stand up in rows, and march in formation according to the rules of the military. One day, Sulaymān's army was practicing, and while the army was moving from its barracks to some other place, they came to an area where there were lots of ants. The chief of the ants told all the other ants to get inside their houses quickly otherwise Sulaymān and his army will tread over them and kill them. Sulaymān understood what she said. That was another miracle. And he smiled when he heard it, and prayed to Allah. [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“And one day there were assembled before Solomon his hosts of *jinn*, and of men, and of birds; and then they were led forth in orderly ranks, till, when they came upon a valley full of ants, an ant exclaimed: ‘O you ants! Get into your dwellings, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you without even being aware of you!’ Thereupon Solomon smiled joyously at her words, and said: ‘O my Sustainer! Inspire me so that I may forever be grateful for those blessings of Thine with which Thou hast graced me and my parents, and that I may do what is right in a manner that will please Thee; and include me, by Thy grace, among Thy righteous servants’ [27:17-19].

“He smiled.” The word “smile” was commented on by Dr. Maher Hathout¹⁶ in his lecture last night, and he jokingly said that the teeth are not *awta*¹⁷ if you uncover them while you are smiling; they are not *awta*. We, the Muslims who consider ourselves very strict followers of Islam, don't smile; we are always serious, although, do you know what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said? “When you face your brother with a smile it is *sadaqa*.”¹⁸ It is a charity to smile when you meet your brother.

That is the introduction for Sayyidna Sulaymān, *'alayhi-s-salaam*; Muslims need to know where we stand on the subject of Sulaymān. And we are going to continue the same topic next week, so be prepared, because the big points are coming later, which will show what the role of Sulaymān was in this area of Jerusalem, and of the Arabs, in general.

¹⁴ A title of respect for the Prophet Solomon

¹⁵ Upon him be prayers and peace

¹⁶ Maher Hathout is spokesperson for the Islamic Center of Southern California, a gynecologist by profession. He was invited as a guest speaker to the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, as a visiting scholar

¹⁷ A jurisprudential term indicating the parts of the body which are to be covered

¹⁸ Charity

The Prophet Sulaymān

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 2 of 2]

A Visit from the Queen of Sheba

As Chief of Staff of his army, Sulaymān used to examine his army regularly to see that orders were carried out and that the soldiers were in attendance. One day he was inspecting his army and noticed that one of the generals was not there. That general was the bird *hudhud*, as known in Arabic, or the hoopoe¹⁹ in English. Sulaymān did not find the hoopoe occupying his position in the army. And you know, even in our armies nowadays, if a soldier is absent without a permit, or without a reasonable excuse, he is punished.²⁰ So when Sulaymān found this soldier absent, he asked where he was, and proclaimed that, for being absent, he will be faced with three alternatives: either severe punishment for his absence, or, if his crime is bigger than that, slaughter, or if he wants to save himself, he should give a reasonable and acceptable excuse. It was not too long before the *hudhud* came back and was questioned about his absence. He said to the Chief of Staff: “I went to Sheba and I have news which you don’t know.” Imagine, Sulaymān for whom God harnessed the jinn, the **أَنس** (*ins*²¹), the mountains, the wind, the birds, and the insects, and the hoopoe is claiming that he has some news which Sulaymān does not know. It is a challenge! “What is the news, Hoopoe?” He replied: I went to the land of Sabā²² and I found there a woman controlling the country; she is the Queen. She has a very great throne. Richness and power exude from her throne. And those people seem to be very

powerful, very rich, very capable, but there is one drawback: they worship the sun. The devil has fascinated them and shown them that this is the best thing they are doing and by that he has barred them from the right way. Then, the hoopoe adds a remark of his own: Isn’t it more appropriate that they should worship God who knows everything in the heavens and the earth, and what we reveal and what we conceal? God – and there is no god but Him – He is the **رَبِّ** or the Sustainer of the Great Throne which is greater than any throne. [Imam quotes the verses in Arabic. The English translation is:]

“And one day he looked in vain for a particular one of the birds; and so he said: “How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Or could he be among the absent? If so, I will punish him most severely or will kill him unless he brings me a convincing excuse!” But the hoopoe tarried but a short while; and when it came it said: ‘I have encompassed with my knowledge something that thou hast never yet encompassed with thine – for I have come to thee from Sheba with a tidings sure! Behold, I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given abundance of all good things, and hers is a mighty throne. And I found her and her people adoring the sun instead of God; and Satan has made these doings of theirs seem goodly to them, and thus has barred them from the path of God so that they cannot find the right way: for they have come to believe that they *ought not* to adore God – although it is He who brings forth all that is hidden in the heavens and on earth, and knows all that you would conceal as well as all that you bring into the open: God, save whom there is no deity – the Sustainer, in awesome almightiness enthroned!’ Said

¹⁹ A woodpecker

²⁰ Abbreviated as AWOL (absent without leave)

²¹ Arabic for “human beings”

²² In Al-Yemen, known as the Land of Sheba

Solomon: ‘We shall see whether thou hast told the truth or art one of the liars! Go with this my letter and convey it to them; and thereafter withdraw from them and see what answer they return’ [27:20-28].

Sulaymān heard the excuse but did not believe it right away; he needed some confirmation of what the hoopoe told him. So, he said, let us see if you are telling the truth or not. Sulaymān wrote a letter, gave it to the hoopoe to carry to the Queen. And he waited for her answer.

From this Qur’anic story, human beings learned a lesson. Even before the creation, or the invention of the post office, and the mail, and the telegram, and the e-mail, and the Internet, there was a sort of mail delivery system. It was through the birds – the pigeons. Human beings learned from that story of the hoopoe to utilize the birds to deliver mail. And this was not the first time human beings learned from the birds. They learned something before also: when Cain killed Abel, he wondered what to do with the dead body. God sent a raven to teach him.

The hoopoe took the letter and flew to the palace of the Queen – now he knew the way very well – and dropped the letter in front of her. She did not see him. She took the letter and read it. She found that the letter began with *Bis-millah-hir-Rahman-ir-Raheem*,²³ and Sulaymān is exhorting her and her people not to consider themselves above Him, and “to come back to me as Muslims”. See the religion of Sulaymān? It was Islam. He says to her: “In the name of Allah I ask you to submit yourself to the Will of God and to come to me as Muslims.” Thus, in the chapter of The Ant, *Bis-millah-hir-Rahman-ir-Raheem* is written twice, once at the start and once in the middle. The one at the start of the chapter is not counted as a verse of the chapter, but the one in the middle is an essential part of the sura. The queen, after reading the letter of Sulaymān – she was living in a democratic society; it was not a dictatorship – went to her cabinet ministers and the leaders of her army, and consulted with them, and told them that she had received a letter. She described the letter as **كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ**

– a generous letter, a great letter – and she tells them that it is from Sulaymān because he had signed it; she tells them the letter begins with *Bis-millah-hir-Rahman-ir-Raheem*, and it says we should not continue our way of worshipping the sun but come to him as Muslims. And now, she was seeking their

opinion on how to answer Sulaymān. She asked them for their opinion, their fatwa, on how to answer that letter, because she would never issue an order until she consulted with her chiefs and gained their approval. It means that there was a sort of democracy there. She is not issuing the orders solely as Queen. [The translation of the above-explained verses is:]

“When the Queen had read Solomon’s letter, she said: ‘O you nobles! A truly distinguished letter has been conveyed unto me. Behold, it is from Solomon, and it says, ‘In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace: [God says:] Exalt not yourselves against Me, but *come unto Me in willing surrender* (**وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ**)²⁴. She added: ‘O you nobles! Give me your opinion on the problem with which I am now faced; I would never make a weighty decision unless you are present with me’ [27:29-32].

You know, military people always talk about guns, and power, and killing, just like us, the Muslims, who like to talk about killing and end up never killing.²⁵ So, too, her people responded to her by saying, we are a people of power, we are a people who have never been surpassed in military affairs and the order is your order. Just issue your order and we are going to carry it out. That was their answer to her.

This was the Queen of Sheba whose name is Bilquees. And she was the Queen, and she was the head of the State, whereas, nowadays, some of our Muslim brothers say that *Ar-Rasool*,²⁶ ‘*alayhi as-salato wa-s-salaam*, said, “The people who put their affairs in the hands of a woman will never be successful.” That’s a “hadith”²⁷ they quote. And I don’t know how we can reconcile that hadith with Prime Minister Golda Meir. Golda Meir was the third Prime Minister of Israel and all the Arab leaders, who are men, she put under her feet. Margaret Thatcher recently put every Arab leader under her feet. And we, the Muslims, say, “The people whose head-of-state is a woman will never be successful.” Now we are in a dilemma: if the Prophet said this “hadith”, then he is not telling the truth; if he did not say it, then, we, the Muslims, are inventing lies

²⁴ **وَأْتُونِي** = “Come unto Me”

مُسْلِمِينَ = “muslimeen” (plural of *muslim*) the meaning is “willing self-surrender to God”

²⁵ Just bragging

²⁶ The Messenger (Muhammad)

²⁷ A report or account of what the Prophet said

²³ In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace

about the Prophet and attributing them to him. With regard to this particular hadith, there is another alternative: that the Prophet said this hadith – if he said it at all – in a specific context. What is that specific context which the ulama²⁸ talk about? Some ulama say this is *hadith sahih*²⁹ but the Prophet intended to identify a country by saying that “*the country, whose head is a woman, will never be successful*” and that he was not referring to a woman *per se*. He did not want to mention the country by name, so he identified that country as “the country whose head is a woman” exactly as if you were to say, “O, the country whose leader has a long beard, will never be successful.” But the main idea, and the lesson we have to look at in this story, is that it was the Queen of Sheba – as the Qur’an states –

وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ

who was given abundance of all good things and she had a great throne.”

Now, when she consulted with her people, they said, we are ready, just issue your order and we’ll carry it out; we are very powerful, we are ready to fight Sulaymān or other than Sulaymān.

She was wise. She did not like war. She said that the result of a war is that when kings enter a country, they cause corruption and they humiliate the people who are living in that country, and this is their habit. So she pondered how she was going to solve this problem. She decided to send Sulaymān a gift, and see what his reaction would be: if he accepts the gift, then it means he is a man who loves money – I’ll give him as much as he wants; if he refuses the gift, then he is a man of principles. [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“When the Queen had read Solomon’s letter, she said: “O you nobles! Give me your opinion on the problem with which I am now faced; I would never make a weighty decision unless you are present with me. They answered: ‘We are endowed with power and with mighty prowess in war – but the command is thine; consider, then, what thou wouldst command.’ Said she: ‘Verily, whenever kings enter a country they corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject. And this is the way they always behave. Hence, behold, I am going to send a gift to those people, and await whatever answer the envoys bring back’” [27:33-34].

²⁸ Scholars

²⁹ Correct or authentic hadith

So Bilqees sent a gift to Sulaymān with a messenger of hers. What was the response of Sulaymān? He told the messenger to return with his gift because God had given him better wealth than He had given her, and he would send an army which they could not afford to fight. [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“Now when the Queen’s messenger came unto Solomon, he said: “Do you people mean to add to my wealth? But that which God has given me is so much better than all that He has given you! Nay, it is only such as you that would rejoice in this gift of yours! Go thou back unto them that have sent thee! For, [God says:] ‘We shall most certainly come upon them with forces which they will never be able to withstand, and shall most certainly cause them to be driven from that land of theirs, despicable and humbled’” [27:36-37].

But Sulaymān detected something. He knew that when this message reaches her, she, along with all her men, will submit to the rules of Allah. But he wanted to prove his power to her, and the miracles which God had given him. So he called upon his soldiers who stood up in a row in front of him, and said, O people, who among you is capable of bringing me her throne from Yemen – to the area of Shām, where Sulaymān was – before they come to me as Muslims? Two persons said they could do that: one of them was a jinn and the other an *ins* – a human being. The jinn said I am capable of bringing her throne before you finalize your session and leave that place. On the other hand, the *ins*. . . . And that will show you that the *ins* is stronger than the jinn. Sometimes people say that the human beings utilize the jinn to accomplish tasks for them. Must be the opposite! The jinn should utilize the human being because the human being is more powerful. The story of Sulaymān tells us that the jinn told him he could bring the throne of Bilqees “before you finalize that session”. On the other hand, the *ins* said he could bring that throne to him before “the blink of his eye”. See the difference between the jinn and the *ins*? But the characteristic of such a human being is that he is *learned*, the one who has knowledge of the books – education and *knowledge*. So this human being carried out the order, and brought the throne, and when Sulaymān saw that the throne of Bilqees was actually in front of him, he said this is a test from my God, testing me if I’ll be thankful or not: if someone [is not thankful God does not need his thanks, but if he is thankful, he is thankful for himself. [Imam quotes Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“When Solomon learned the Queen of Sheba was

coming he said to his council: ‘O you nobles! Which of you can bring me her throne ere she and her followers come unto me in willing surrender?’ Said a bold one of the invisible beings³⁰ subject to Solomon: ‘I shall bring it to thee ere thou rise from thy council-seat – for, behold, I am powerful enough to do it, and worthy of trust!’ Answered he who was illumined by revelation –

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ

– ‘Nay, as for me – I shall bring it to thee ere the twinkling of thy eye ceases!’ And when he saw it truly before him, he exclaimed: ‘This is an outcome of my Sustainer’s bounty, to test me as to whether I am grateful or ungrateful! However, he who is grateful to God is but grateful for his own good; and he who is ungrateful should know that, verily, my Sustainer is self-sufficient, most generous in giving!’ [27:38-40]

Now the throne is in front of him. What did Sulaymān say to his people after that? He told them to make a few changes in her throne, so that when she comes, we’ll know if she can identify her throne and be guided to the right way. When the Queen arrived, Sulaymān asked her:

“Is that your throne?” She looked at it, and, because she saw that it was a little bit different, she said:

“It looks like it.” [Imam quotes the Arabic verses. The translation is:]

“And Solomon continued: ‘Alter her throne so that she may not know it as hers: let us see whether she allows herself to be guided to the truth or remains one of those who will not be guided. And so, as soon as she arrived, she was asked: “Is thy throne like this?” She answered: “It is as though it were the same [and yet not quite the same]!” And Solomon said to his nobles: “She has arrived at the truth without any help from us, although it is *we* who have been given divine knowledge before her, and have long ago surrendered ourselves unto God! And she has recognized the truth although that which she has been wont to worship instead of God had kept her away from the right path: for behold, she is descended of a people who deny the truth!”

To receive the Queen, Sulaymān had built – what is called in Egypt a *saloon* – a French word; they call it living room in English. He built a big living room to receive his guest. The living room floor was made of crystal. So when the Queen of Sheba came, he said to her: “Please, enter, have a

seat.” When she entered the room, she thought that she was stepping through water; so she pulled her dress up a little. Our people, who try to criticize somebody by any means, right or wrong, say, oh, you know, Sulaymān made that especially to see her legs. She pulled her dress up and Sulaymān said to her: “Don’t worry this is...this is a floor made of crystal. The Qur’an put this in a very nice language. [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“After a while she was told: ‘Enter this court!’ – but when she saw it, she thought it was a fathomless expanse of water, and she bared her legs. Said he: ‘Behold, it is but a court smoothly paved with glass!’”

Amidst that situation, she had to admit, she had to acknowledge the power behind Sulaymān – the power of God. [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“Cried she: ‘O my Sustainer! I have been sinning against myself by worshipping aught but Thee: but now I have surrendered myself –

وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

– with Solomon, unto the Sustainer of all the worlds” [27:44].

I have mentioned on many occasions that the message revealed to all the prophets is called Islam. Even the message of Sulaymān and the religion of Bilqees was Islam when she said: وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Now when you read Chapter An-Naml, and you read that story yourself, and you think over it, you will know what it is all about. And we’ll continue our stories from the Qur’an, but, you know, lately some of the Egyptian actors and actresses abandoned their careers and, as a result, some of our Muslim brothers, there, applauded them, saying, “God guided them to the right way.” Why? Because they are attired in hijab, and have imprisoned themselves inside their houses. They don’t go out. And, personally, I say this is a loss. Those actors and actresses, with their knowledge in the area of acting, could turn all these Qur’anic stories into movies characterized by Islam, since we know what the effect of the mass media and television is on everyone’s mind. Imagine if we put the story of Sulaymān in a movie, acted and produced in a way commensurate with Islam. I think those actors and actresses who “converted” to Islam will do Islam more service if they continued in their careers but changed the focus of their acting from the nonsense to the Qur’anic stories.

³⁰ Jinn