Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuh. Alhamdulillah ….(Arabic)….I was told I have about 30-35 minutes (I have added the 5 myself) for this talk, Insha’Allah wa ta’ala. I am going to try to keep my conversation focused to a college student audience. I don’t want to cater this as a general talk, but I wanted to kind of focus it to a student audience, Insha’Allah wa ta’ala, on the subject of appreciating the Qur’an, and I’m cognizant of the fact there may be even some non-Muslims in the audience, and so I’ll try to avoid Arabic terminology in this conversation; and, at the same time, if I do use some Arabic terms, I will try my best to translate those terms and make them easier to process. Okay.

So I want to start with a very straightforward phenomenon, and that is that the Qur’an for most people, Muslim and non-Muslim, is a veiled text. What that means is it’s very difficult to just pick up and read and process. And the reason for that is…there are several reasons, and the primary reason for that is it’s being introduced to most of the world, Muslim and non, in translation. Most Muslims do not have qualifications or training in classical Arabic, the original language of the Qur’an, and so either they are reading the translation of the Qur’an in Persian or Urdu or, you know, Somali, or, you know, even Chinese, Cantonese, English, French, German, etc., etc. And, like any literature, there is a lot lost in translation; there is quite a bit lost in translation, especially older languages, because older languages had something, what the Prophet called jawami al-kamin, the ability to encompass a lot of meanings in very few words. So even if you translate, for instance, one line for another line, like a line of Arabic to a line of English, there is a lot more nuance in the Arabic line that is completely lost, so you got kind of a droplet of the meaning that was suggested in the Arabic text, and you got very little of that communicated in the English text or whatever other translated text. There is an additional problem, and that is that in old languages, they had their own figures of speech. They had their own, you know, sort of things they said that they didn’t mean literally, they meant them figuratively. And that’s not just true of ancient languages; it’s true of our languages also. Okay? You know, for instance, in English, when you say someone to someone, ‘That is extremely cool. That is so cool.’ That can’t be taken literally, unless you live in, you know, Boston or something; but, generally, when somebody says it’s cool, it’s nice. You know, it’s not to be taken literally. And these are things that are dependent on context, so even though the English language has been around for a while, if you said to somebody, ‘That is cool,’ to somebody a hundred years ago, they probably wouldn’t understand you the same way. Right? So, language isn’t just about translating a word from a dictionary; it also evolves in a context. So the original context of the Qur’an is very particular, and a lot of times those figures of speech that are in and of themselves very beautiful and very deep and very contextual, they get translated literally in our translations, and then we read them and we just scratch our heads and go, ‘What’s this talking about? What does this even mean?’ You know? So this is probably, I would argue, the biggest problem in Qur’an education or awareness even or literary appreciation, for Muslims and non-Muslims. It is, in fact, a veiled text. And to un-veil this text…..so now you say, well, translation doesn’t suffice, what else can I do? What else can I study or maybe access to maybe try to understand this book better? Well, you’ve got 2 options before you, right? One option is to become a student of classical Arabic, which is probably not an option for most people. You know, some very driven, motivated individuals like myself, 10 or 12 years ago, I decided I wanted to learn this language and take it seriously, and, you know, Allah blessed me with opportunities that made that easy for me, but I can’t say that that is going to happen for everybody, right? And those opportunities aren’t necessarily going to present themselves to you. So the primary access is probably not going to happen for most people, the primary access means you’ve access to the language or you’ve mastered it, or you have a degree of proficiency in it where, when you read it, you kind of know what’s going on. Well, then, the only other access is secondary. Secondary means translation, whose limitations I just tried to present to you. But then there is an additional body of literature that seeks to help people understand the Qur’an. That literature, that body of literature is called tafsir in Muslim discourse. The technical, academic term is exegesis, right? Text analysis. And so these books of tafsir are written in foreign languages also. So in English you will find some books of tafsir dedicated to explaining the contents of the Qur’an, contextualizing the ayat, the verses, the surat (surah is the term for chapter, but they are not the same, so I will stick to the term surah). These units of the Qur’an and these statements in the Qur’an are explained and contextualized in detail, conversation, etc. But personally, myself, I am still not satisfied with where we are in producing good, heavy literature and, you know, accessible literature and deep enough literature in the English language, which is probably the most universal language in the world today. I don’t think we have done our job as Muslims in producing good enough literature on the Qur’an in the English language. That is my personal opinion at this point. And one area that particularly hasn’t even gotten attention in any language, even in Arabic much yet, is the genre of literary appreciation. So, I’m going to spend the rest of the few minutes I have with you guys just to give you an idea of what does it mean to engage in a study of literary appreciation of the Qur’an, approaching the Qur’an as literature, just as literature. You just want to …. You’re looking at this ancient text with no….forget your religious background or your philosophical inclinations; you are just looking at this text from the point of view of literature. Of course, the Muslim looks at it for spiritual guidance. The Muslim looks at it, you know, as the Word of Allah, the divine Word that connects to us, that makes us shed tears in prayer, etc., etc. But for the rest of the world, a least, we should have some way of them also connecting with this text in a meaningful way and kind of unveiling some of these things and removing some of these veils that are keeping people from a direct understanding of the text. And so, before I go on, one last tangent, and that is what if we *don’t* do this? What if we as Muslims, some of us at least, don’t take up this task and don’t produce this kind of genre, this kind of literature? Well, then what you get are the kinds of quotes from the Qur’an you see on CNN or on Fox, or whatever else, where a verse of the Qur’an is quoted. Personally, I’ve lived in Texas for the last couple of years and one of the things I do as a hobby is that I listen to Christian talk radio. I really enjoy it. Anyways, especially as I travel in the Bible belt, traveling in Louisiana, Arkansas, etc., etc., I just find a nice good ol’ Christian talk radio station and listen in. And a lot of times the conversation happens to be about Islam and how evil it is and demonic it is and how evil the ‘Koran’ is. And then they will even quote verses from the ‘Koran’ to show us how evil it is, right? And those kinds of things are not just found on the radio now; there are YouTube videos about this stuff, there are blogs dedicated to it, there is all this, you know, literature about how corrupted the book is and how evil its teachings are, etc., etc. And I can argue that, outside of the biases, a lot of the problem is that people feel like they read the translation of the text and they are ready to say, ‘I know what’s going on. I know exactly what is taking place here.’ And they *don’t.* They are so far from what’s actually taking place in the text, it’s laughable. Like, I listen to that stuff and I laugh, and then I cry, right? I cry because there is somebody listening to that stuff and actually saying, ‘Yeah, that’s what it says. You know, that is in fact what it says.’ So instead of producing tafsir literature, because tafsir literature is mostly written for Muslims (It has a lot of Muslim terminology, so if a Muslim reads it, they might know what this means and that means), but when a non-Muslim reads that, they are not going to know what that is talking about; they are really not going to understand what that kind of literature is talking about. So there are some good efforts that have been made towards this end, a handful that personally encourage me, so I would like to at least introduce you to one of them. One of them is called Select Passages from the Qur’an, by a Professor Mir from Michigan State University originally. Select Passages from the Qur’an. It’s a book dedicating itself to analysis of certain passages in the Qur’an from the literary point of view for a general audience, not for a religious or Muslim audience, but for a general audience, and that is important, because at least it’s a start. At least it gets us started in appreciating it somewhat.

But I don’t want to talk entirely in this conversation with you guys in theory; I want to lead you towards the end of at least what is an example of what it means to appreciate the Qur’an in a literary way. You know, in every old language, in every old body of language or literature, there is something of parables, and they have a lot of parables and examples and stories. The Qur’an is full of parables; it is absolutely full of parables, and some of them are, if you read them in translation, very confusing. So I will share with you a parable from the Qur’an, or maybe 2 if we have time, okay? And, as I recite the Arabic, I will try to translate it into English so that everybody can follow along, okay? “Thumma qasat quloubukum-mim ba'di, dhalika fahiya kalhijaarati au ashaddu qaswah.” Then your hearts became hard like stone, or even harder in terms of stiffness. “Wa inna minal-hijaarati lamaa yatafajjaru minhul'anhar.” Even out of stones there are ones that burst open and, you know, rivers gush forth. Okay, so, the first part was your hearts became hard like, what? Just to see if you are awake…..They became hard like what? Stone. Even harder. The next discussion, same aya, same verse: Even out of stones there are those that gush forth with water coming out, rivers come out. “Wa inna minhaa lamaa yash-shaqqaqu-fa-yakhruju minhul-maa.” Even out of stones, there are those that crack open and water is found. So the first kind of rock burst open and rivers came out, entire waterfalls you can imagine. The other kind of rock, the verb used in Arabic, yash-shaqqaqu, means something hits it and it cracks open and there is water inside, like on the outside you wouldn’t know there is water inside this rock. Then something hit it and it cracked, and when it cracked, water started trickling out from deep inside this rock, something totally unexpected. That is the second kind of rock. And then it says, “Wa inna minhaa lamaa yahbiTu min khash-yati-LLah.” Even out of rock, there is one, the kind of rock that just falls from the fear of God, from the fear of Allah. Rock falling is basically a thing like a landslide, you can imagine, just rocks trickling down a mountain, right? How many kinds of rock were given in this parable? Three, right?: Rocks that burst open, rocks that crack and water is found inside and the third one, a rock that falls off of a cliff. And yet, the entire discussion wasn’t about rocks. The discussion was: What became hard? Hearts became hard. And then they became like rock, and speaking of rock, there are 3 kinds of them. Actually, what we are learning here, according to this bit of wisdom from the Qur’an, is that it’s not talking about 3 kinds of rock. It is talking about 3 kinds of *hearts*. It is talking about 3 kinds of people, 3 kinds of spiritual tendencies. These things were very understandable to the original audience, because they used this kind of imagery all the time.

I want to hold off on explaining this parable a little bit. I will give you another parable. This is not from the Qur’an; this is from classical Arabic, one of my favorites. There was this poet in ancient Arabia, pre-Islamic Arabia, a very famous poet. People loved his poetry, and yet he was extremely poor. So people loved him, but he doesn’t have anything to show for it, basically. So, one day he is reciting this poem at home about how generous he is, which is kind of ironic; you kind of have to be wealthy before you can be generous, right? So, he is making poetry about his generosity, and his wife tells him, ‘What are you doing? We don’t even have food to eat and you’re making poetry about generosity?’ And he turns to her and he makes another poem to her; he just kind of, on the fly, recites a bit of poetry to her. And he says, (Arabic). Imagine, this guy is in a fight with his wife, and he turns to his wife and he says, ‘Heavy rain doesn’t get along with a house on top of a mountain.’ ‘What? I always thought you were crazy. Now I know you’re crazy.’ Heavy rain doesn’t get along with a house on top of a mountain. (Same Arabic), based on this piece of poetry. What he meant by that is something interesting; it’s imagery. Imagine a house on top of where? A mountain. And also imagine what is going on? It’s raining really heavily. Okay. Where does the water go? Does it flood the house or does it trickle to the bottom of the mountain? Does the water stay on top? It trickles to the bottom. He is saying, look, wealth comes from God, like rain comes from the sky, and people who are higher up in their spiritual level, in their ethical character, are higher up; it’s like they live on top of a mountain. And so when wealth does come, they keep giving it away. And so let it form the puddles on the bottom. The people who are down there, drenched in wealth, they are lowly people. I am way too high to get rich, right? But he says all of that by saying, look, house, heavy rain don’t get along. So they spoke in this kind of code, you know? And it’s really fun to decipher the code, to figure it out. And then, they had this thing with people who could figure it out, they called them arab. You know, one of the meanings of arab, the word arab means depth; this guy is deep, he got it. And the one who didn’t get it, they call him (Arabic). He is impaired. His mind isn’t that sharp. So they spoke in these riddles.

So let’s go back to this parable for a minute. Three kinds of rocks represent what? Three kinds of hearts. Okay. So there is a person who is thinking about God, a purpose in life. Why am I on this earth? Where am I going to go after I'm dead? You know, why is there injustice in the world? They are asking themselves these deep, philosophical questions. That is not most of us, but there are people like that, who ask themselves, genuinely ask themselves not what's for dinner, but what am I doing here. What is truth? What is justice? They ask themselves these deep, philosophical questions. You call them geeks and weirdoes, you know? History calls them philosophers. You might even have friends like that, who are really like nerdy. They are thinkers. They don't really like to go to the party. They don't want to hang out, you know? Every time you see them they're reading a book, or they're just gazing into the stars, just lost in thought, you know? Those kinds of people who are always lost in that kind of deeper thought, so when the solutions to those problems are brought to them, it clicks. Is there any hesitation before they just gush out and say yes, this is it? This is what I was looking for. Immediately, there is an excitement, just like a rock that, what happens to it? Water just gushes out. Water, by the way, in the Qur'an, is representative of a purity. Water represents purity. And water also represents faith. Water also represents faith. So water inside the rock is faith inside the heart. This person had a faith inside of them. They were looking for something to confirm that faith. Revelation came, and it clicked with what was already inside of them. The rock just burst open. Okay.

Then there is another kind of person. This kind of person isn't exactly a philosopher. They're hyperactive. They can't sit still too long. Maybe that type of person sitting in the audience right now, texting a friend or updating their Facebook status. I saw you. (Laughter). No, I didn't. I'm kidding. I had to call you out. If you felt called out, the joke is on you. Okay, so....you know, they're hyperactive; they constantly have to do stuff. You might have a friend like that: 'Hey, what are you doing? What do you want to do? Do you want to go somewhere? Want to get some pizza? Can I come over? Do you want to come over? I gotta do something.' Jittery. Can't sit still. Busy in life. These are not the kind of people who think about what is the purpose of life. Why create these heavens and this earth? You know, why does my soul beg for a deeper meaning? They don't ask themselves these questions. They ask themselves when will the pizza get here, right? They are busy in the day-to-day of life. That doesn't mean that they are not spiritual creatures, that they don't have a soul, you know, that some water is not in their hearts. It's just harder to get to. It's harder to get to. But, do you know what happens with people like that? A traumatic experience. A near-death experience, sickness in the family, death in the family, loss of a friend, something really strong happens in their life, and they are shaken and that rock finally cracks, and what comes out? That faith that was always there; now it comes out. There are lots of people in the world like that, who go through a traumatic experience and after that they straighten out.

‘I found God afterwards. You know, before that I was a different person, and then this thing happened and, oh, my god, I changed.’ The Muslims in the audience are familiar with the story of Umar, radiAllahu anhu, a companion of the Prophet. Pre-Islam, basically *the* description of a party animal. If he wasn't womanizing or hunting or horseback riding or killing dudes, he didn't know what else to do with himself. Busy. And for 6 years he is in the same city as the Prophet himself and doesn't know what Qur'an is for 6 years. You ask yourself, 6 years in Makkah and he doesn't know what Qur'an is? How did that happen? Well, because he was kind of busy. And even the way he became a Muslim: He heard his sister had converted. He was furious. He storms into his sister's house. She hid the scrolls that she had written of the Qur'an. She hid them. 'What are you reading?' She refuses to show him. He hits her across the face. He is a big guy. So when he hits her across the face, her face bleeds. And when it bleeds, he softens up, like what am I doing? ‘Okay, okay, just show me what it is. I want to read.’ You know that traumatic experience was a little bit of what? A crack. That was enough. That traumatic experience was enough for him. That's 2. Two rocks, and both of them had what inside them? Water. One came out easily, and one came out with a little bit of a force. Okay. How many kinds of rocks were in the parable? Three. Who remembers what was said about the third kind of rock. It falls from the fear of Allah. Was there any mention of water in the third kind of rock? That's interesting, huh? So the first 2, water is gushing, and the third one, just falling is mentioned. The outward state, the outward motion is mentioned, but the inner state hasn't been mentioned. What's inside is water, and in 2 cases the water did come forth. In the third one, the water, maybe it's there, maybe, but it hasn't come out yet. It hasn't come out yet. But on the outside at least this water is falling from the fear of God. This alludes to another beautiful teaching in the Qur'an. Most Muslims here will know there are 3 states of faith. There is ihsan (I won't translate yet). Ihsan. What else? I am going from the top to the bottom. Ihsan, Imaan, Islam, the famous hadith of Gibreel, right? Islam, starting point. You graduate a little farther, you develop in your faith and you have what? Imaan. And then you eventually have Ihsan. Now let me translate for the rest of the audience here. Islam is basically the acceptance of faith. You have come to the conclusion that you are going to submit to God. You made your declaration of faith. It's your starting point. That doesn't necessarily mean you have felt the sweetness of faith in prayer, that you have felt connected to Allah, that it has moved you to tears, that the water has come out of your rock yet. But, you keep worshipping God, and you keep trying, and you keep trying to stay away from things that stiffen your heart, you know? And eventually you will start tasting the sweetness of faith, and that's imaan, when you can truly feel the power of the faith. It's a spiritual experience. And then if that matures, you allow it to mature and not fluctuate and allow it to grow, then the third state, which is described as excellence, ihsan, is reached. Ihsan was described by the Prophet, (Arabic): That you should be enslaved, worshipping God as though you can see Him. That's an interesting statement, worshipping God as though you can see Him. We know we can't see God, we can't see Allah, but, you know, I'll give you an example that's easier to understand. You guys, how many people here have jobs? Okay. Oh, not all college students are useless; wow, that's pretty awesome. Okay. So, if you have a job, you're sitting at your desk, you're doing work and maybe alt-tab and maybe ctrl-tab and a little bit of YouTube, ctrl-tab a little bit of Facebook, ctrl-tab a little bit of something else, but your boss walks by. Back to Excel. Then, you know he took the elevator. Oh, back to YouTube again or whatever. If you know the higher power is just watching, you can see him, he's close, your behavior changes or no? It does, doesn't it? If you want to appreciate what fear of God means, you know…..There is a guy who doesn't care about traffic laws or whatever, he blows by stop signs, but he sees the cop and all of the sudden a spiritual fear takes over and he abides by the law because......that's taqwa for you, right, fear of consequence. He will stop. If you see the authority in front of you, there is going to be a different reaction. And this is not just out of fear, even out of respect. Maybe you're talking with your friends and you are speaking kind of inappropriately, and your mom walks into the room, your teacher walks into the room, someone you truly respect walks into the room. You know, when we are around people that we respect a lot, we watch ourselves more. You know, we don't just say anything that comes in our mouth. Our behavior changes. Ihsan is when you realize God is constantly watching. And not just out of fear, but out of respect, out of love, out of consideration, out of appreciation. I'm going to watch myself. (Arabic). To be in that state all the time is pretty amazing. That would be called excellence, the highest state of faith. Now, let's come back. A person who is just starting out may not have tasted the sweetness of faith yet, just like a rock that hasn't experienced what yet? Water coming out. So the rock that had the most water is a heart in a state of ihsan. The rock that has a little bit of water at least is in a state of imaan. And at least you should have what? Islam. And in Surah Hujraat, in the 49th surah, what does Allah say? "Qaalati’l a’raabu aamanna.” Listen to this, it's beautiful. He says the Bedouins, some people who became Muslim, claimed, ‘We have faith; we have faith in our hearts.’ (Arabic, continuation of the aya). Tell them, no, you don't believe. You don't have faith yet. (Arabic). Tell them, you just accepted the faith. You just started out. (Arabic). And imaan, that sweetness of faith, hasn't yet entered your hearts. That water hasn't yet entered your rocks. That's the third state. That's why the third one doesn't mention water. It hasn't happened yet. Beautiful. The parable is beautiful. And, interestingly enough, towards the conclusion of this parable, this parable belongs to the second surah, Baqara. And the first half of this surah, this chapter of the Qur'an, is a discussion with some people from the children of Isra'el, the Israelites that were living in the city of Madinah. There were some Israelites who were living in Madinah, and this is a conversation between the Muslims and their first interaction with what the Qur'an calls the people of the Book, Jews and Christians. And specifically this conversation was with Christians. And in Arabic rhetoric, you study that when you give an example (because God here is giving an example), when you give an example it is important that your example be relevant to your audience. And we learn in our tradition, in Muslim tradition, that this particular example was in the midst of a conversation happening with the Israelites. Why is it important to mention that? Because the Israelites in their experience have a beautiful story of water coming out of rock. Moses strikes the staff. Water comes out. That is mentioned in the second surah. It's easy to visualize. It's easy to think about because it's something that is fresh in the mind of those who belong to the faith, who have experience with that revelation. So, even the parables that are given are specific to an audience. They take into consideration who is being spoken to. It's a beautiful thing.

All of this stuff, unfortunately, is not easily accessible in English literature. What I just told you, I read in Arabic books that were written maybe 800 years ago, that even an average Arabic-speaking student, if he tried to read those, would just say I don't know what it's talking about. It takes a while to decode that stuff. But I think it's really, really high time that we start producing this kind of literature that makes Quranic studies more accessible to people. I really think it's high time. And I'm sad that it hasn't happened yet, or not to the level that I think it should happen, but there are some good efforts that have taken place, which I really do appreciate. If you are looking for....I know it's going to come up in QA, because my time is done....If you're looking for a translation of the Qur'an, it's very hard for me to recommend translations because of what I started with. Despite that, if I was to recommend a translation of the Qur'an at gunpoint, I would have to recommend the Oxford University Press translation of the Qur'an by Professor Abdel Haleem, published by Oxford University Press. For those of you who don't know who Professor Abdel Haleem is, he is the one who signed, who mentored the Ph.D. paper for Professor Tariq Ramadan. And he has written several papers on Qur'an as literature, and he has also published a translation. Of the translations I have read, I find his probably closest to the text. And I had the honor of meeting him a few weeks ago in London. I went to his house. Alhamdulillah, I was really pleased to get a chance to meet him. You know, he is about 90 years old. He has been studying the Qur'an for 70 of those 90 years, and he said the craziest thing to me. I was so depressed after he said it. So, I'm sitting there, because I had these questions I wanted to ask him in my own studies of the Qur'an, and the first thing he says, he goes, you know, after all these years, I think I'm finally beginning to understand the Qur'an (Laughter). And I'm like take it back, please don't say that. You know? I mean, the man has studied as adab, he graduated, you know, in balaaghah, in Arabic rhetoric, and classical Arabic studies and Quranic studies. He has been doing research in the Quran for 7 decades. And then he says, 'I think I'm beginning to get it somewhat.'

This is, I believe, surah number 77, the 77th surah of the Qur'an. It mentions some of the beauties of paradise, of heaven. And it talks about drinks 3 times. This particular passage talks about drink 3 times, progressively; it talks about drink, then there is some other stuff, then it talks about drinks in paradise again, then it talks about some other stuff and then talks about drinks again, a third time. I want to set this scene for you, because I want you to appreciate what is happening in this beautiful, beautiful surah. Did you guys ever go to a barbecue, a get-together in somebody's backyard? There is a little, you know, one of those Costco tables. You've got the plastic cups from Wal-Mart. You've got the, you know, brand-less soda, and you basically go help yourself, right? You go grab yourself a cup. Everybody is having a good time; they are drinking or whatever. It's not like they have those expensive champagne cups and like exotic bottles....it's a barbecue, you know, it's plastic bottles, plastic cups, paper plates. That's how we do, right? It's simple. One of the first discussions in this surah: (Arabic from Quran). The righteous, no doubt about it, they are going to be drinking out of cups. They are going to grab cups and, hey, help yourself. Self-service. Okay. That's one scene. Now that's a barbecue. Let me tell you, have you ever been invited to like a really fancy wedding or reception or one of those fancy halls? You know, where they have those, you know, nicely covered tables and vases on every table and glasses placed upside-down, and guys dressed like penguins coming in filling your drink and all that other stuff. Exotic setting, isn't it? And this time do you have to go and help yourself for a drink or it's served to you? It's a more elite setting, and part of that is you don't even have to get up; the guy comes and fills it up. Sir, would you like some more? Ma'am, would you like some more? As he keeps pouring it. By the way, cups already placed, or they come later? The cups are already there or placed there? They are already placed. Qur'an says, (Arabic from Qur’an). Cups already placed, 1400, 1500 years ago. We still have that, huh? But anyhow, a few verses later (Arabic from Quran). They will be given to drink in cups. A few verses ago, the beginner's service was like a barbecue; you go and get a drink. Now what is happening? You are being given to drink, the passive form of the verb is used, suggesting you don't even have to get it yourself. Your cup is filled for you. Elite service. That is the second time drinks are mentioned in this surah. How many times did I say drinks are mentioned in this surah? Three times. How much better can it get? This is pretty good already. The third time around, subhanAllah (Arabic from Quran). Their Master, their Lord, God, will serve them a drink, a purified drink. Allah Himself will pour the drink. He will give them to drink. So, when somebody asks me, 'What do you get in paradise,' I say drinks. SubhanAllah. Allah takes something so simple, a drink, and He makes it something so spiritually rewarding. I am going to be drinking from Allah Himself. Allah will offer me the drink Himself. Drinks are enough. Drinks are enough of a motivation. This is one of the powers of the Qur'an; it takes things that are all around us, that you would take for granted, and just makes them so magnificent. You really just don't look at them the same way again. You don't look at them the same. I could talk about this stuff forever, but I won't, thankfully. So, Insha’Allah wa ta’ala, I will stop here, and if anybody has any questions, if I can entertain them, if I am qualified to, I will. If I'm not, hopefully I can point you to a resource that can, Insha’Allah. I can go on with questions, right? Okay. Cool. Any questions, not all at once? Yes?

Audience member: 'I really enjoyed the short piece of Arabic poetry that you shared with us, and I was wondering...it seems like that would be a good practice, if we started with poetry to try to get a good grasp of ....'

NAK: Of the Qur'an? I have a recommendation for that. A lot of our work has been done for us. You know, classical poetry was scattered. It was all over the place. And a lot of it had to do with just any subject at all. A lot of it is about, you know, I can't kick the habit; he is addicted to alcohol. Another guy lost his girl, and he is writing like 20 lines of poetry just about that or whatever. It's very scattered poetry, subject-wise. But, a really great resource on a collection of classical poetry and Arabic idioms and expressions, is ....there are 2. One of them, I can think of the name off the top of my head, is called Verbal Idioms of the Qur'an, by Mir. It is an academic book. It is boring. It is going to be difficult for just laypeople to read, because a lot of it is in transliteration, but it is a fantastic resource, probably one of the best I've ever seen, on collecting classical poetry that is directly tied to certain verses of the Qur'an. Like, we will find the same expression used in poetry and the same one being used in Qur'an, so it was familiar to the Arabs. So he collected about 430 such cases in this book, so it's a fantastic resource on that subject. Other questions? Really? Going once. Going twice. Okay. BarakAllahu feekum…(Arabic). Thank you so much for listening attentively and not having any questions. As-salaamu alaikum.