Sexual Desires / Fornication & Zina - Nouman Ali Khan (Quran Weekly)

Assalaamu 3laikum, Quran Weekly. I wanted to share with you an ayah and some insights from this ayah, that belongs to surat al-isra', the 17th surah. This is the 32nd ayah. ولا تقربوا الزنا إنه كان فاحشة وساء سبيلا (Wala taqraboo azzinainnahu kana fahishatan wasaa sabeela). This belongs to a passage in the Qur'an that [contains that which] are kind of the equivalent of the ten commandments---you've probably heard the famous phrase. Some sahaba called them the equivalent of what the essential teachings that were given to Musa (as). [It's] interesting [that this passage] belongs to a surah that's also called bani-isra'il, the sons of isra'il.

Anyhow, [in] this particular ayah, Allah says don't even go near fornication/adultery, az-zina. Don't even go near it. He doesn't say "laa taazinu", "don't do adultery" or "don't commit adultery". He says don't go near it. In other words, there is the act itself, and then there is a series of smaller acts that lead to it. It's got a parameter around it, and you can't even go close to it. One has to understand the language of the Qur'an and the sensitivity in which it deals with this subject to appreciate the wisdom of Allah 'azza wa jal and how He is counseling us in dealing with this problem. Allah 'azza wa jal is telling us that there are certain things that in and of themselves are not haram. You're not going to be able to pinpoint it and say "it is wrong". But, when you get involved in it, you're going to get sucked into a gravitational field, and it will pull you in slowly, and surely, little by little by little, and eventually, it'll get you. Eventually it will come at you.

You know, one of the things we learn about shaytaan, that is remarkable to me, is that he is extremely patient. He won't get you [in] one shot. He will come at you and he will put a little bit and a little bit and a little bit and a little bit, until he destroys your character. He won't come and make you do the wrong thing right away. Even in the story of Adam (as) and Hawa---insha'Allah one day we will do that story and some of the wisdoms from that story in the Qur'an---the way he approached them in surat al-a'raf is really interesting. He was relentless. It wasn't just one time. We assume that he just came and say, "Hey, tree! Doesn't it look good?" and he is gone. No---he was extremely relentless. And he kept at it and he kept at it, and he built this idea in them until they would think that it's their idea. And when people start listening to the shaytaan---this is in the same surah, Allah says إن عبادي ليس لك عليهم سلطان (Inna AAibadee laysa laka AAalayhimsultanun) [17:65]; my slaves, you're not going to have any authority over them. In other words, people who really submit to Allah, he will not have authority over them. But others? الشيطان يعدكم الفقر ويأمركم بالفحشاء (Ashshaytanu yaAAidukumualfaqra waya/murukum bilfahsha), surat al-baqarah [2:268]; he will command you to do shamelessness.

In other words, when you listen to him a little bit, you grant him a little bit of power. When you listen to him a little more, you grant him a little more power. And if you keep on listening to him, he gets to the point where he can command you. You will find myself [saying] "I can't even help myself, brother Nouman. I can't even help myself. I don't even know. I don't know how to turn the computer off. I don't know what makes me do that every night. I don't know what makes me do this or that. I don't know what makes me go there; go to that chat session; go and log into that horrific website; go watch that filth. Why do I end up doing that? Why can't I lower my eyes when I am in an elevator? When I am walking down the street? I can't even help myself. I don't know what to do." That's when you know, shaytaan has got a pretty good hold on you; he's got a pretty solid hold on you. And you've been sucked into a really vicious cycle. It's just getting worse and worse. And you're not addressing it, and it's making the problem worse. And it's destroying your spirituality altogether.

Your relationship with Allah depends on the heart being clean. Every time you are exposed to filth, more dirt, more blackness, more covers, are poured on top of your heart. And it keeps on pouring and it keeps on pouring, to the point where you're listening to the word of Allah, and you can't even get yourself to shed even a single tear. It won't come, because your heart has been made so hard because of all the exposure to filth, all the sin that your eyes are taking in all the time. And you don't even care anymore. You know, a good heart, when it sees something inappropriate that doesn't coincide with the commandments of Allah, it is disturbed. It's not attracted, it's disturbed. It says "No, that's wrong." Immediately, the conscience kicks in, the alarm goes off.

But when you're at the point---when you're by yourself, and you feel no guilt doing it, you just don't feel anything, you don't feel that it's wrong; [when you're at the point where] before you stare at a sister, you look around [thinking] "is anybody else watching?" and then you take a good look---that means the fear of Allah is completely gone. The only fear you have is that of the seen; there is no more fear of the unseen. What a horrible spiritual state to be in! Allah says يعلم خائنة الأعين وما تخفي الصدور (YaAAlamu kha-inata al-aAAyuni wamatukhfee assudoor) [40:19] --- He knows the stealing of the eyes. That little glance you caught? He knows that one, that little glance you took. What to speak of the stare? And He knows what our chests are hiding.

You know why I brought up this particular ayah---"don't even go near zina"? ولا تقربوا الزنا إنه كان فاحشة --- it has always been considered a lewd, shameless, vulgar act. وساء سبيلا --- and a horrible path. Allah describes it as a path---a horrible path. In other words, a path has steps. You have to identify which step you are in. For each of you, there is a process, there is a cycle: You're in a room by yourself; [it's] after school, you have a couple of hours before your parents get home; you're among a bunch of friends that don't have any standards. You have to identify: What leads you into this sin every time? And you have to cut it in its tracks. You have to stop going down that path.

What's amazing to me about this ayah [is] where it's situated. Right after this ayah, Allah says don't murder people, ولا تقتلوا النفس التي حرم الله إلا بالحق (Wala taqtuloo annafsa allateeharrama Allahu illa bilhaqq) [17:33], don't kill any innocent persons. Allah mentioned this crime first, and murder second. Can you think of that? We think of murder as this huge crime, right? But Allah says, when you violate the dignity of a human being, that's فاحشة. Looking at a human being in that way is violating your own and their dignity. And when you kill a person, you have violated their right to life. So there is [this] spiritual murder فاحشة, and then there is this physical murder قتل --- there are two kinds of murder here. Allah mentions the spiritual murder first.

Our standards have gone so low [that when] a movie comes out, you see a couple of trailers, you tell yourself "there is just this one bad scene in it, it's OK. It's PG 13, it's not R." [But] what used to be R ten years ago it's now PG 13; what used to be PG 13 is now PG. They put filthy scenes in everything now. And we don't even care about the spiritual price we're paying. It's affecting our prayer, it's affecting our du3aa2, it's affecting our character, it's affecting our family life. It is. And we don't care. We just think "Hey that's life bro, come on, live in the times. It's alright. It's just what it is now. What can you do?" So many of you don't care what kind of pictures you put up of yourselves on your Facebook pages. I stopped going on Facebook for a reason. I don't say that Facebook is haram or whatever, but for me personally, I couldn't do it anymore. I just couldn't do it. We would put up something at our Bayyinah thing, like an announcement, or for socializing--- the things I saw were so disappointing, like [I would think to myself] how can you do that? You're Muslims. How can you post pictures like that? Have dignity for yourself. Have dignity for your family. Guard your gaze. Start with your eyes. Zina of the eyes?--- and everything else goes from there.

Insha'Allahu ta3ala, I wanted to talk to you about this subject at length and do little small snippets and maybe portions from the Qur'an that deal with this subject. But the last thing I will tell you today insha'Allahu ta3ala is something about the word فاحشة (faaHishah) which I am translating as shamelessness or lewdness or vulgarity. The Arabic language has roots that are close to each other: وحش and فحش (wahash and fahash). wahash actually means wild animal; fahash means someone who acts like a wild animal. Shamelessness is described as behavior close to animal behavior. Allah has dignified us as human beings. The punishment on Adam (as) was that his clothes were removed---our mother's and our father's clothes were removed. That was a punishment from Allah. And immediately, they recognized that they need to cover themselves. They didn't learn to cover themselves from a society. It wasn't society that taught them to be shameless. Nowadays, anthropology professors will tell you, "You know, it's society that makes us dress in clothes. It's a sociological thing, [that] “We learn to dress and cover ourselves over history. But naturally, we're just supposed to be the way we are, like all other animals." [But] Adam (as) didn't learn anything from any society. He was given a consciousness, and the moment his clothes were removed, he's trying to cover himself; our mother's trying to cover herself.

We're supposed to be a people that guard ourselves with covering, and we dignify others by not looking at them. Even if they don't have dignity for themselves, we should have dignity for them and not look, because they are, in the end, a creation of Allah. Even if they are a disappointing creation of Allah, they are a creation of Allah. And we have more respect for ourselves and for humanity in general to not to look at [other human beings] as animals look at other animals. May Allah 3azza wa jal make us spiritually healthy and alleviate us from this growing and ever-increasing spiritual problem, and that is to not be able to lower our eyes. And may Allah not allow us to be in company and in situations and involved in activities that lead us more and more towards this horrible, horrible path. May Allah 3azza wa jal clean our way or ease our way to a purer and healthier spiritual life. Baarakallahu li walakum, wassalaamu 'alaikum. Qur'an Weekly.