

WITH WHOM AM I SPEAKING?

"I am afraid that something bad has happened to me."

The Qur'an starts off no better than Muhammad himself. The prophet's first revelation is a fiasco. But so as not to prejudice the historic beginnings of Islam, I shall let the first Muslims do it for me.

Let's begin with what Allah has to say in his inaugural Qur'an address. This treasure isn't the first surah. It isn't even inscribed in the first fifty. It's buried near the end of the book. 096.001 "Read in the name of your Lord who created man out of clots of congealed blood. Read, for your Lord is the most generous. He who taught the use of the pen that man might be taught that which he did not know." That's the whole shebang. The moment of moments: the birth of Islam. An unnamed spirit, representing an unidentified entity, reveals itself to Muhammad, and all we get is this.

Why would an all-knowing deity ask an illiterate man to read? Why does the spirit tell us that man was created from blood clots when it's not true? If this spirit "taught by the pen what men did not know," where are those words? And why digress to an oral recital when written testimony is superior?

It's not a very auspicious beginning for a religion capable of ensnaring a billion souls. There must be a cogent explanation. Yet the Qur'an makes no attempt to explain the nature of the meeting or the meaning of the message.

There are but a handful of "credible" accounts of what happened that night. Let's turn to al-Bukhari first. In his Book of Revelation we find a Hadith narrated by Aisha, Muhammad's child wife. She was the daughter of Abu Bakr, the man who became the first Caliph. She had yet to be conceived when this event occurred. Bukhari:V1B1N3-V6B60N478 "The commencement of divine inspiration to Allah's Messenger was in the form of dreams that came true like a bright light. The Prophet loved the seclusion of a cave in Hira. The angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, 'I do not know how to read.' The Prophet added, 'Then the angel caught me forcefully and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He released me and asked me to read. I replied, 'I do not know how to read.'" Thereupon he caught me again and pressed me till I could not bear it any more. He asked me to read but I replied,

"I do not know how to read or what shall I read?" Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me, "Read in the name of your Lord who has created man from a clot. Read! Your Lord is the most generous." Then the Apostle returned from that experience; the muscles between his neck and shoulders were trembling, and his heart beating severely. He went to Khadija and cried, 'Cover me! Cover me!' She did until his fear subsided. He said, 'What's wrong with me? I am afraid that something bad has happened to me.' Khadija replied, 'Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you....'"

Allah's name wasn't mentioned in the first Qur'an surah. In fact, Muhammad's god remained an unnamed "Lord" throughout the first seventeen Qur'an revelations. When the Lord was finally identified, his name was Ar-Rahman. It's curious then that this crucial Islamic Hadith elected to contradict the Qur'an and call god Allah. Equally curious, why did Muhammad's wife, the pagan Khadija, swear by Allah when the god who bore that name was one of many rock idols? The answers are simple, different, and revealing. Aisha, the source of this Hadith, didn't reveal it until after the prophet's death—long after Ar-Rahman's name had been incorporated into Allah's character. As for Khadija, Allah held the keys to something she and her husband coveted.

The accounts of what happened this night are consistently inconsistent. And while that's bad as it relates to creation and patriarchs, those were events from another time, another people, another place, and another religion. Now Muslims are without excuse. Islam began in their midst, on their watch, and through their clan. We aren't dealing with things that occurred two to four thousand years B.C. This is 610 A.D. Contradiction is now condemning, for it forces us to recognize that all Islamic scripture was preserved in like fashion—through oral transmission. If these recollections aren't reliable, nothing is.

The second version of the first revelation is found in Tabari and Muslim: Tabari VI:67 "Aisha reported: 'Solitude became dear to Muhammad and he used to seclude himself in the cave of Hira where he would engage in the Tahannuth [pagan religious rites performed in Ramadhan that included fasting] worship for a number of nights before returning to Khadija and getting provisions for a like period, till truth came upon him while he was in a cave. The first form of revelation was a true vision in sleep. He did not see any vision but it came like the break of dawn.'" Muslim C74B1N301 "The truth came unexpectedly and said: 'Recite,' to which he replied: 'I am not lettered.' The Apostle said, 'He took hold of me, and pressed me, till I was hard pressed. He let me off and said: "Recite." I said: "I am not lettered."'" It continues on as before until the Tabari Hadith picks up the nightmare with this line: Tabari VI:67 "Muhammad, you are the Messenger." What follows is convoluted, out of order, and conflicting. "The Prophet said, 'I had been standing, but fell to my knees; and crawled away, my shoulders trembling. I went to Khadija and said, "Wrap me up!" When the terror had left me, he came to me and said, "Muhammad, you are the Messenger of Allah.'" Muhammad said, 'I had been thinking of hurling myself down from a mountain crag, but he appeared to me as I was thinking about this and said, "I am Gabriel and you are the Messenger." Then he said, "Recite!" I said,

"What shall I recite?" He took me and pressed me three times. I told Khadija, "I fear for my life." She said, "Rejoice, for Allah will never put you to shame.""

While there are significant differences between these versions, and insights worth examining, I want to focus on the most incriminating details. In the first version an unnamed angel nearly pressed the life out of Muhammad. In the second, Gabriel is said to have kept Muhammad from jumping to his death. In the third, Gabriel is named again but he does not appear until after Muhammad is comforted in Khadija's bed. Yet the Qur'an says nothing of Gabriel during the first twelve years of Muhammad's mission. We are not introduced until the first surah in Yathrib, which was the 91st chronologically. Since Muhammad alleges that Gabriel was the source of his godly revelation, these inconsistencies devastate his credibility.

That said, I'd like to share the most "esteemed" version of Islam's initial revelation. It's a bit more colorful and comes courtesy of Ishaq's biography, compiled a hundred years before the other sources. Ishaq:105 "Aisha said that when Allah desired to honor Muhammad, the first sign of prophethood was a vision in brightness of day shown to him in his sleep. [In other words, he was dreaming.] He liked nothing better than to be alone. When he left Mecca and there was no house in sight, every stone and tree that passed by said, 'Peace be unto you, Allah's Apostle.' Muhammad would turn around and see naught but trees and stones. [In other words, he was stoned.] He stayed seeing and hearing things as long as it pleased Allah. Then Gabriel came to him with the gift of Allah's grace [the spiritual beating] while he was on Hira in the month of Ramadhan. The Apostle would pray in seclusion on Hira every year for a month to practice Tahannuth as was the custom of the Quraysh in the heathen days. [In other words, Muhammad was a heathen and the Islamic Pillar requiring Ramadhan fasting was pagan.] Tahannuth is religious devotion [to pagan idols]. After praying in seclusion, he would walk around the Ka'aba seven times. [The centerpiece of the Hajj Pillar is pagan as well.]"

Ishaq:106 "The Prophet set off to Hira with his family. When it was night, Gabriel brought him the command of Allah. 'He came to me,' the Apostle said, 'while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, 'Read.' I said, 'What shall I read?' He pressed me so tightly that I was near death. Then he let go and said, 'Read!'" This happens twice more, then... "When I thought I was nearly dead I said, 'What shall I read; only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do the same thing to me again. He said, 'Read in the name of your Lord who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Your generous Lord taught by the pen.'" Then the illiterate man said, "So I read it, and he departed from me. I awoke from my sleep. These words were written on my heart."

Ishaq reports: "None of Allah's creatures was more hateful to me than an ecstatic poet or a man possessed. I thought, 'Woe is me, I'm a possessed poet.'" The worst thing that can befall a man or woman is to be possessed by the devil. He or she loses all sense of decency. To his credit, Muhammad recognized what had happened. To his shame, he damned three billion souls along with his own.

Ishaq:106 "I will go to the top of the mountain and throw myself down that I may kill

myself and be at rest." There was no doubt in his mind. During the violent encounter with the spirit in the darkness of that cave, Muhammad had been possessed by the Devil. He wanted to commit suicide—something that Satan could not allow. He had big plans for his prophet. Ishaq:106 "So I climbed to the mountain to kill myself when I heard a voice saying, 'Muhammad, you are Allah's Apostle.' I raised my head to see who was speaking and lo, I saw Gabriel in the form of a man with feet astride the horizon." How, pray tell, would our terrified and possessed poet distinguish between Gabriel and Lucifer? And since the first revelation was sinister, that's a problem. Bukhari:V9B87N113 "The Prophet said, 'A good dream is from Allah, and a bad dream is from Satan.'" By his own account, this was a bad dream.

Ishaq:106 "I stood gazing at him and that distracted me from committing suicide. I couldn't move. Khadija sent her messengers in search of me and they gained the high ground above Mecca so I came to her and sat by her thigh. She said, 'O Abu'l-Qasim, where have you been?' I said, 'Woe is me. I am possessed.' She said, 'I take refuge in Allah from that Abu'l-Qasim. Allah would not treat you that way. This cannot be, my dear. Perhaps you did see something,'" Khadija said, wheels of commerce turning in her head. "'Yes, I did,' I said," playing along. "I told her of what I had seen [while I was asleep]. She said, 'Rejoice, son of my uncle, and be of good cheer. Verily, by Him in whose hand is Khadija's soul, I have hope that you will be the prophet to this people.'" With that, the Profitable Prophet Plan was born. "She gathered her garments and went to her cousin Waraqa bin Naufal [the Hanif], who had become a Christian. He read the scriptures and learned from those who followed the Torah and the Gospels."

Tabari provides some additional insights: Tabari VI:70 "He went to Khadija and said, 'I think that I have gone mad.' 'No, by Allah,' she said. 'Your Lord would never do that to you. You have never committed a wicked act.' Khadija went to Waraqa and told him what had happened. He said, 'If what you have said is true, your husband is a prophet.... After this Gabriel did not come to him for a while and Khadija said, 'I think that your Lord must hate you.'" This is followed by yet one more variant: Tabari VI:70 "In the beginning of the Messenger's prophetic mission he used to spend a month every year in religious retreat on Hira. This was part of the practice of Tahannuth in which the Quraysh used to engage during the Jahiliyyah. Tahannuth means self-justification.'" That's intriguing. Muhammad practiced a Jahiliyyah ritual rite, an ignorant pre-Islamic form of pagan worship. What's more, the very definition of Tahannuth—self justification—became synonymous with the prophet's personal agenda.

So much for Muhammad's claim of having being prevented from doing any pagan act by Allah. Islam began in the midst of a pagan ritual.

The deeper we dig into Islam's initial salvo, the worse it gets. So hold your nose if you must, because it's time to poke around. We know that Muhammad was a recluse—a wannabe prophet who preferred solitude to people. The fact he spent so much time alone in caves instead of at home being a parent and husband or at work being productive is troubling. Yes, he was being religious, but even that is problematic. As an idolater, he practiced the heathen Tahannuth

rituals—fasting, self-justification, and meditation—during the pagan holy month of Ramadhan. He disappeared into caves for spiritual awakening, calling out to a Black Stone named Allah. And he was ultimately possessed.

The “read” versus “recite” debate is interesting in itself. Modern Muslims, in trying to solve the obvious problem of why an all-knowing spirit would ask an illiterate man to read, say that the word really means recite. But that’s worse. Why would Muhammad say he didn’t know how to recite, especially when that was what he was best at? And why would the spirit of Islam ask a man to recite if he taught by the pen? Even the word “recite-read” is prickly. The original word is qara, from which Qur’an was derived. It was first used by the Syrian Christians to mean preach, not read. Even the Arabic words ma aqrau can mean either “I can’t read,” or “what shall I read.” But that’s still a problem because Muhammad wasn’t given a scroll to read.

Since we have discussed Allah’s ignominious inaugural address, let’s move on to the Prophet’s less than heroic response. According to every account, he was scared spitless. Imagine that: you’ve just invested the month of Ramadhan hanging around in a cave for the express purpose of communing with the spirit world and one comes and scares you to death. In the earliest versions he is said to have been so distraught he wanted to commit suicide. The whole encounter not only sounds demonic, the wannabe prophet said he was possessed.

The revelation over, the newly minted messenger slid down the barren slopes west of Mecca, scurried across two miles of desert dunes, and entered the narrow valley town, where he immediately cuddled up to mama (and make no mistake, his wife was the closest thing to a mother he’d ever known). Panicked and tormented, the forty-year-old Muhammad cried out to his sixty-year-old wife, “Cover me,” crawling into a fetal position against her thigh. He thought he’d been molested by a jinn, possessed by a demonic spirit, in the dark of night. He said, “I do not know what has happened to me. I fear for myself.” “He poured out his mental confusion,” and according to Ibn Ishaq, said, “I’m afraid I’m going out of my mind and being possessed by an evil spirit.” Score another point for those who say that Islam is Satanic.

In my opinion, what Khadija did next set the forces in motion that ultimately condemned three billion souls, enslaved over a billion women, and plunged the world into chaos. She founded Islam. Yes, Khadija was the founder of Islam. Muhammad was her first convert. In a twist of sadistic irony, the most liberated and prosperous woman in Islamic literature built the cage in which all Muslim women are trapped.

Calming her husband and employee down she said, “Rejoice, cousin, and be of good cheer. You will be the Prophet. Allah will not bring you to shame....” Muhammad thinks he’s just gone mano-a-mano in a wrestling match with a demon and Khadija says it isn’t so. “It can’t be. Be happy. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you.” “I hope that you may be the prophet of this community.”

Allah was just one of 360 stones gathering dust in the Ka'aba. Together with Hubal, Manaf, and the gang, they were the mustard on Mecca's hotdog. No Ka'aba, no hajj. No hajj, no festival. No festival, no money. Khadija was a businesswoman—in business to make money selling her wares to the pilgrims who piled into Mecca each year to visit their gods. She wasn't going to let anything foul that up. Not only did she tell her employee/husband that he was wrong, that it was not a demon, she said that her god, the pagan lunar deity, the biggest and blackest stone in the Ka'aba, would never allow him to be molested by an angry spirit—no way! Then, in anticipation of what was to come, she began her public relations campaign. She told her recluse husband that he was a swell guy, charitable, sociable, and trustworthy. He was the perfect candidate to be the Social Chairman of a Fraternity.

Bright and successful, Khadija was on a mission. She came up with a profitable prophet plan. She had prospered in a man's world, but had no real power. In fact, she was embarrassed. Having been widowed twice, she had proposed marriage to Muhammad, an employee half her age. It was scandalous.

To gain permission, she had had to get the patriarch of her family drunk at the betrothal feast. Once he was successfully intoxicated, Khadija was able to coerce the consent she required. The odd couple was married, but all was not a bed of cactus flowers. Their sons died in infancy. It was a terrible stain in a culture that, like Islam, attributed misfortune to godly disdain. Khadija's husband was an absentee parent to their remaining daughters, and AWOL when it came to working in the family business. He was an illiterate recluse with a penchant for lone vigils in barren, dusty, lightless caves, which in a small town of perhaps 5,000, was gossip fodder. He was hardly making her look good. You just know that the girls were talking behind her back.

So to turn the tables on them, Khadija tells her husband that he's the prophet of his people—Allah's guy. As "God's Messenger" he's important, and so is she. The lucrative custodianship of the Ka'aba, the even more lucrative administration of the hajj, the religious tax, was Muhammad's birthright, she implied, but fate had dealt him a savage blow. Now, Khadija knew, opportunity was knocking. She and he could have it all, everything they coveted—prestige, money, power. All they had to do was convince the Meccans that Muhammad was Allah's Messenger. Since Allah was just a rock, no one would ever be able to dispute their claim. What was Allah going to do—roll over, crumble, actually speak? "No way. It can't be. Be happy. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you." Khadija even tells her hubby that he's prefect for the job: truthful, generous with her money, and for a loner, he's caring and entertaining. But it must not have been enough. Prophet Man just laid there quivering.

What little we have heard thus far makes no sense when attributed to a divine revelation. However, it makes perfect sense when we view the Qur'an in the context of a self-aggrandizement scheme—the self-justification of the Tahannuth. If I'm right and Khadija was trying to proselytize Muhammad, recruit him into her Profitable Prophet Plan, what do you suppose she'd do next? Get someone "religious" to validate her claim, perhaps? Yes indeed. Let's return to the Hadith. Bukhari:V1B1N3 "Khadija then took Muhammad to Waraqa bin Naufal. He was the son of Khadija's uncle [and the brother of a sorceress]. He was the only man in town who had embraced Christianity in the pre-Islamic Days of Ignorance. He used to write the writing with Hebrew letters. He would write from the Gospel in Hebrew as much as Allah wished him to write. He was very old and had lost his eyesight.

"Khadija told Waraqa, 'Listen to the story of your nephew, my cousin!' Waraqa asked, 'Nephew, what have you seen?' Muhammad described whatever he had seen. Waraqa said, 'This is the same one who keeps the secrets whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would expel you!' Muhammad asked, 'Will they drive me out?' Waraqa replied, 'Yes, anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility.' A few days later, Waraqa died and the divine inspiration was paused for a long while."

Ishaq tells us that Khadija went alone to Waraqa. Ishaq:107 "When she related to him what Muhammad told her he had seen and heard, Waraqa cried, 'Holy! Holy! If you have spoken the truth, Khadija [And what are the chances of that?], there has come unto him the Namus, the spirit who appeared long ago to Moses. Tell Muhammad to be of good cheer, for he is to be the Prophet of his people.' So Khadija returned to her husband and told him what Waraqa had said. As a result, his fears were somewhat calmed."

Tabari's account is presented in Muhammad's voice: Tabari VI:68 "Then she took me to Waraqa and said, 'Listen to your brother's son.' He questioned me and I told him what had happened. He said, 'This is the Namus [from the Greek word "law"] which was sent down to Moses, son of Abraham....'" The dialog repeats that found in Bukhari until this line, spoken by Muhammad: "The first parts of the Qur'an to be revealed to me after Iqra were: 'By the pen and that which they write. You are not a mad-man. Yours will be a reward unailing, and you are of a great nature. You shall see and they shall see.'" Muhammad's quotation is an incomplete variant of the 68th surah. But the Islamic scholars who have reordered the Qur'an chronologically believe that the 68th was the fortieth surah handed down, not the second. Montgomery Watt, the translator of this volume, agrees, saying, "The 68th surah was unlikely to be early, since it implies that Muhammad had been charged with being a madman possessed by jinn." This error by Muhammad at the very outset of his Qur'anic career is horrendous. It means that even he couldn't remember when his "revelations" were given to him.

That aside, I have a bone to pick with Waraqa. Moses met directly with Yahweh, not some cave-loving rascally spirit named Namus. Moses asked, "Whom should I tell the Israelites is sending me?" My Bible says that God

answered him directly and said, "Yahweh," which means "I Am." In fact, the Bible never mentions Allah, a word that means "oak tree" in Hebrew. And Yahweh's name is repeated 6,868 times—something that would be hard to miss if old Waraqa actually knew Hebrew. But what did Waraqa know about this? It's irrational to think someone would translate the Gospels (which were written in Greek) into Hebrew, a dead language at the time. Aramaic maybe. Or Arabic, if it existed in written form in Mecca, but not Hebrew. Besides, Moses is chronicled in the Torah, not the Gospels—so it was the wrong book.

And Waraqa was the wrong guy to be translating the written word; he was blind. But blind or not, the old man, a mere seventy-two hours from death, served Khadija's purpose. She used him to convince her fellow Meccans that Allah had a messenger. Her man was the next Moses, a prophet to her people. So how does a new religion spring to life on such shaky ground? If the facts are so obviously fallacious, how could the revelation be truthful?

What I'm going to say next will appear scandalous at first blush. I believe Muhammad murdered Waraqa. The Hanif was the most revered holy man in Mecca. After Khadija had used him, he became a liability—someone who could and would profess that Muhammad's claims were untrue. When you finish *Prophet of Doom* and discover how many men Muhammad assassinated for the same reason, I believe you'll share my view.

Next we learn that even Khadija was troubled by Muhammad's dark adventure into the spirit world. Tabari VI:73/Ishaq:107 "'Cousin, can you tell me when this visitor comes to you?' Muhammad replied, 'Yes.' She said, 'Tell me then, when he comes.' Gabriel came to him as before, and Muhammad said, 'Here is Gabriel who has just come to me.' She said, 'Yes? Come, cousin, and sit by my left thigh.' He came, and she said, 'Can you see him?' 'Yes.' 'Move around and sit by my right thigh.' He did so and she said, 'Can you see him?' 'Yes.' She said, 'Sit in my lap.' He did so, and she said, 'Can you see him?' He replied, 'Yes.' She was grieved, and flung off her veil and disclosed her body while the Apostle was sitting in her lap." Alternate one says, "Khadija put the Messenger inside her shift next to her body." Alternate two proclaims: "I heard that she made the Apostle come inside her shift." Both end with: "Then she said, 'Can you see him?' 'No.' At that she said, 'Rejoice cousin. By Allah, this spirit is an angel and not Satan.'"

The implication is that the mystery spirit was an angel, not a devil, because he was too modest to look upon an old woman's body. But angels don't lust, and pre-Islamic women didn't wear veils. Yet in fairness, Khadija was a sixty-year-old desert dweller—a peek under her shift might have frightened the Devil.

Khadija wasn't the only one who couldn't see Muhammad's shy spirit. Bukhari:V4B54N440 "The Prophet said, 'Aisha, this is Gabriel. He sends his greetings and salutations to you.' Aisha replied, 'Salutations and greetings to him.' Then addressing the Prophet she said, 'You see what I don't see.'" And he would have been hard to miss.

Bukhari:V4B54N455 "The Prophet informed us that he had seen Gabriel and he had 600 wings."

The identity of Muhammad's dark spirit aside, there was another nagging

problem—radio silence. There were no visions, dreams, demonic encounters, or wrestling matches—nothing for nearly three long years. The menacing cave critter was nowhere to be found. Every day Muhammad went to visit the spirit at the Ka'aba but the mighty Allah couldn't even muster a simple "howdy," or "read," or whatever rocks are inclined to say when their pen pals stop by for a visit. It was embarrassing. He was a messenger without a message. Anguished, Muhammad contemplated suicide a second time. So what do you think happened next? Right you are: ProphetVision.

Muslim:C74B1N304/Bukhari:V4B54N461 "While talking about the period of pause in revelation, the Prophet said, 'While I was walking, all of a sudden I heard a voice. I looked and saw the angel who had visited me at the cave sitting on a chair in the sky. I got scared of him and ran back home and said, "Wrap me in blankets, Khadija." And then Allah revealed the Verses of the Qur'an to me. 'O Muhammad, the shrouded one, wrapped up in garments, arise and warn the people against the Lord's Punishment, and abandon the idols.' [This candidate for revelation number two is a divergent recital of Qur'an 74:1.] After this the revelation started coming strongly, frequently, and regularly."

The second revelation is found in the 93rd surah, not the 74th. It speaks specifically of the multi-year hiatus in divine inspiration. How are we supposed to believe anything Islam's prophet says when he can't keep his own story straight? Further, there are two "enwrapped" surahs, not one, and neither is consistent with Muhammad's recollection. Besides, if Gabriel was sitting on the floating chair, why did Muhammad run home? We're told that he was suicidal because Gabriel was nowhere to be found. He shows up and his messenger flees? No way. And if it really were Gabriel, why do we have to leave Mecca and endure ninety surahs before we're introduced to the alleged source of these recitals? The Qur'an's legitimacy is entirely dependant upon its source.

Then it gets worse. We are asked to believe that Allah, who has been too busy being the top dog of the Ka'aba to chat with our hero, finally tracks the panicked prophet down. He tells a grown man, hiding under the covers, that he wants him to go out and warn people. And why is Allah so angry? Why does he need to punish all the little blood clots? He and his prophet are just getting warmed up. We haven't even been introduced. If this is God speaking, why doesn't Muhammad know his name? Remember, all of the early surahs use the title "Lord." And when the spirit finally gets around to introducing himself, he says that he's Ar-Rahman.

Maybe we've got the story wrong. Let's check out another Hadith to be sure. Muslim:B1N307/TabarMI:74 "I asked Abu Salama what was revealed first from the Qur'an. He said: 'The shrouded one enveloped in the cloak.' But I knew better and said: 'Wasn't it "Recite?"' Jabir said: 'I am telling to you what the Messenger told me. He said: "I stayed in the cave for one month and when my stay was completed, I came down and went into the valley. Somebody called me. I looked but I did not see anybody. I was again called but saw nothing. I raised my head, and there on the Throne in the atmosphere he was sitting.

I began to tremble because I was afraid of him.' These were [Caliph] Uthman's words, but the correct version is, 'I was terror-stricken by him. Then I came to Khadija and they threw water on me and Allah sent down this: 'You who are shrouded, arise and deliver a warning, your Lord magnify, your clothes cleanse.'"" At this point all we know for certain is that Muhammad was a pathological liar, he had a poor memory, he was depressed and suicidal, and that he claimed to be demon possessed.

Maududi, one of the most famous Qur'an commentators, explains: "After this first Revelation, no Revelation came down to the Prophet for quite some time. The long suspension was such a period of deep grief and distress for him that he started going early to the tops of the mountains to throw himself down from them. But whenever he stood on the edge of a peak, the Angel Gabriel would appear and tell him that he was Allah's Prophet. This would console him and restore his peace of mind." As the author of an esteemed Qur'an commentary, I have elected to place his comments in bold to clearly distinguish orthodox Islamic thought from my own.

The Hadith upon which this embarrassing confession is found proves that Islam's lone prophet was suicidal. Tabari VI:76 "The inspiration ceased to come to the Messenger for a while, and he was deeply grieved. He began to go to the tops of mountain crags, in order to fling himself from them; but every time he reached the summit of a mountain, Gabriel appeared to him and said to him, 'You are Allah's Prophet.' Thereupon his anxiety would subside and he would come back to himself." Muhammad explains: "I was walking one day when I saw the angel who used to come to me at Hira. I was terror-stricken by him." If he was comforted by Gabriel every time he wanted to commit suicide, why did his image terrify him? Why didn't the spirit impart a message if he met with his messenger on these occasions? And why are none of these encounters mentioned in the Qur'an?

Let's open our Qur'ans to the 73rd surah and see what Islam's spirit had to say. 073.001 "O you who have been wrapped in your garments! Who said, 'Cover me, cover me. I'm afraid of the angel.' Keep watch all night except a little. And recite the Qur'an as it ought to be recited, in slow, measured rhythmic tones. Surely We will soon entrust you with Our weighty Word. Surely the night is the most devout way when the soul is most receptive and the words most telling. During the day you already have a busy schedule, an occupation with ordinary business duties." Muhammad's spirit friend wants him to spend the night reciting the Qur'an. Since eighty words have been revealed thus far, that's a pace of eight words an hour. But that is trivial compared to nocturnal devotion. The Qur'an was revealed in darkness, and night is the best time to ponder its meaning. Satan is the Prince of Darkness, and evil loves the night. We have stumbled upon another clue.

073.008 "But keep in remembrance the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him whole-heartedly." How can one remember the name of a Lord who has not yet been named? "Lord of the East and West: there is no ilah but He: take Him therefore for (your) Disposer of Affairs. And bear patiently what they say and avoid them with a becoming avoidance." That would make Muhammad the only messenger who was told

to avoid his audience. A Hadith says: ^{Ishaq:115} "Now Muhammad did not want his secret to be divulged before he applied himself to the publication of his message." In other words, he needed time to create enough of these rhyming surahs to make his claim seem believable.

^{073.011} "Leave Me (alone to deal with) the rejecters, the possessors of ease and plenty. I respite them a little. We have heavy fetters with Us (to bind them), and a roaring furnace (to burn them), and food that chokes, sticking in the throat and a painful torment." While we haven't been introduced, Muhammad's spirit seems all too familiar. The Bible speaks of the Lord of the fire, of a spirit that chokes the life out of men, binding them to sin. Muhammad's Lord is the spitting image of Satan.

Before we press on, I'd like to bring your attention to the fact that nothing religious has been revealed thus far. The Qur'an is but a paragraph long and its prophet has been told to avoid discussing it. Therefore, Muhammad is being rejected, not his message. This rejection preceding "possessors of ease and plenty" tells us that the wannabe prophet is tormented by his relative poverty. Covetous of what belongs to others, his inward anguish turns sadistic. The heavy fetters, roaring furnace, and choking torments are a way of lashing out at those he envies. At this early juncture there is no other plausible explanation. Either Muhammad was deeply disturbed, wanting to torture men without justification, or his deity was unjust and perverted. As such, the "Enwrapped" surah unravels Islam's moral authority.

Portions of the 93rd surah were revealed second, chronologically. ^{Ishaq:155} "The revelations stopped for some time so that the Apostle was distressed and grieved. Then Gabriel brought him the 'Morning,' in which he swore that he had not forsaken him and did not hate him." The following insight is from Maududi: "The surah's theme is to console the Prophet and remove his anxiety, which had been caused by the suspension of revelation. By swearing an oath by the morning and night, he was reassured. Then, he was given the good news that the hardships he was experiencing in the initial stage of his mission would not last long. Soon, Allah would bless him so abundantly that he would be pleased." This is nonsense. Muhammad hadn't suffered any hardships on account of his mission thus far because there had been no mission. All that had happened was a bout in a cave with an angry spirit, a nonsensical revelation, some panic, Khadija's scheme, a blind man's blessing, and a little boasting around town. But Muslims, needing an excuse for their Prophet's morose and suicidal behavior, were willing to contradict Allah's revelation to give their hero an alibi.

Let's dive into the surah so you'll see what I mean. ^{093.001} "I swear by the early hours of the day, and the night when it covers with darkness. Your Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor doth He despisith thee." Whoa. Time out. Why the King James 17th century English? Do you suppose the words "thy, hath, forsaken, thee," and "doth despisith" are being used in these translations to make the Qur'an seem Biblical? Just speculation on my part, but for readability sake, I'll endeavor

from now on to make the "Lord's" words more intelligible.

Let's move on, now that we doth verily know that the Lord doth swearith but hath not forsaken. Although it beith a mystery why he doth despisith thee not and why he lovith the darkness. But here's a clue: Satan is the Morning Star, the Prince of Darkness. 093.004 "Surely what comes after is better for you than the present or that which has gone before. Soon will your Lord give you so much you shall be well pleased. Did He not find you an orphan and protect you? And find you lost and perplexed and show you the way? Did He not find you poor and made you rich?" Times can't be so bad that God has to bribe prophets. He can't really think that the blood-clot revelation was direction. Muhammad could barely find his way home. And if the Lord had already enriched Muhammad, why is his present so bleak? Or better question, since Muhammad had the childhood from hell, how was he protected? Is God's memory failing? Or is Muhammad's spirit endorsing Khadija's Profitable Profit Plan? "He found you poor and made you rich?"

Y V Z M

This is a good place to give you my interpretation of the Gospel according to Khadija: "Stick with me, kid, and I'll make this prophet gig profitable." I can't prove it mind you, but it makes more sense than this coming from God.

Having married money twice and climbed the social ladder of Mecca, Khadija was in trouble. Her fortunes were dwindling while her absentee husband/employee sulked in caves. Having made a fortune selling trinkets to hajj pilgrims at the pagan fairs surrounding the Ka'aba, Khadija knew all about religious scams. So she had motive, means, and opportunity. What's more, her behavior was consistent with my theory.

According to Aisha's testimony in the Hadith, and Ishaq's in the Sira, Khadija was the real founder of Islam. Muhammad believed he had been possessed by a demon. He was scared to death. She converted him to Islam, usurping her nearly dead cousin's credibility. Remember what she said: "No, never. It can't be. Be happy. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you. Truly, I hope you will be the Prophet of this people. Allah will not bring you to shame."

Let's review the facts. The caravan business Khadija owned owed its prosperity to Allah's recently restored pagan rock shrine. It stood not more than a hundred meters from where this conversation took place. Mecca provided one of the few wells, shallow as it was, for caravans moving goods from the ports of Yemen to Syria. While that was good, no one becomes rich caring for folks passing through town. So the Ka'aba became Mecca's meal ticket. Muhammad's great, great, great grandfather, Qusayy, had gained control over the idol temple and organized an annual pilgrimage to the shrine. He collected a tax from every Arab attendee. While a religious tax was a profitable idea, and one that made its way into Islam, the series of economic fairs Qusayy

arranged surrounding the hajj proved to be his most capitalistic venture.

Papa Muttalib, Muhammad's grandfather, the one who sacrificed camels to the Ka'aba's idols at a sorceress's urging, ultimately gained control over the concession to feed and water the pilgrims. He became the recipient of the religious tax, something that made him even richer. As the Ka'aba's custodian, he pocketed big bucks charging Arab chiefs rent for housing their sacred stones. He charged them more for visitation rights, and still more for their gods' care—feeding, watering, and dusting services. The combination served to make the merchants of Mecca rich—by Bedouin standards, anyway.

Khadija was a beneficiary. So she told Muhammad, "Better than being the Ka'aba's custodian; you are Allah's Prophet. And that's more prestigious and profitable than being a recluse, my dear." A Hadith entitled, "Khadija the First to Believe," contained these incriminating lines: "Muhammad was to tell them of his Lord's bounty to himself: 'Of the bounty of your Lord let your discourse be.'" This was followed by: "Thereupon the Messenger began to proclaim Allah's bounty to himself."

Ishaq's Sira reports: ^{Ishaq:155} "Khadija was the first to believe in Allah and His Apostle. By her Allah lightened the burden on His Prophet. He never met with contradiction and charges of falsehood but he was comforted by her when he went home. She strengthened him and belittled the opposition." Khadija believed in Allah before Muhammad did because Allah was her meal ticket. And while she conceived the prophet idea, she had to endure a great deal just to keep "god's messenger" going. His "contradictions" prompted "charges of falsehood." We have already discovered these echoing throughout the Hadith. So Khadija "belittled the opposition." This made her the inspiration for the Qur'an's overwhelming propensity to condemn Muhammad's opponents, threatening them with doom.

Testimony in support of the Profitable Prophet Plan can be found throughout Tabari's History. ^{Tabari VI:82} "During the Jahiliyyah I came to Mecca and stayed with Abbas bin Muttalib. The sun rose while I was looking at the Ka'aba. A young man [Muhammad] came up and gazed at the sky. He turned to face the Ka'aba. Soon after, a woman [Khadija] and a youth [Ali] came and stood behind him. The young man bowed and the woman and youth bowed; then the man stood erect, followed by the woman and youth. The young man prostrated himself, and they did the same. Abbas asked, 'Do you know what this is?' 'No,' I answered. 'This is Khadija, my nephew's wife. He has told me that his Lord has commanded them to do what you see them doing. Allah's oath, I do not know anyone on the face of the earth but these three who follow this religion.' I asked Abbas, 'What is this religion?' He answered, 'This is Muhammad bin Abdallah, who claims that Allah has sent him as His Messenger with this religion and that the treasures of Chusroes and Caesar will be given to him by conquest.'" This is an incriminating confession. It is an admission of guilt—proof that Islam was created by a wannabe pirate.

I'd like to linger on this Hadith a moment. I'm surprised the Islamic scriptures would confess to the Profitable Prophet Plan so openly. This is the first explanation of the motivation behind Muhammad's "religion." And we're

told that it was conceived to steal treasure by way of conquest. While this is confirmed countless times in Medina, we are still in Mecca—just three partial surahs into the Qur'an. And Tabari's Hadith does not stand alone. Ishaq reveals a similar Tradition; only his is more direct. Ishaq:113 "When I was a merchant I came to Mecca during the hajj pilgrimage. While I was there a man came out to pray and stood facing the Ka'aba. Then a woman and a boy came out and stood praying with him. I asked, 'What is their religion? It is something new to me.' Abbas said, 'This is Muhammad who alleges that Allah has sent him with it so that the treasures of Chusroes and Caesar will be open to him. The woman is his wife Khadija who believes in him.'" The original motivation for Islam was greed. The Profitable Prophet Plan has been confirmed by the Hadith, Sira, and Qur'an. A false prophet composed situational scriptures for money.

However, the con got off to a rocky start. Muhammad impugned his credibility. Rome had long since been plundered, so the last Caesar had been sandals up for centuries. And you may be wondering why Muhammad would covet Chusroes' treasure. I did some digging and found that he was Khosru Parvez, a Persian King and contemporary of Muhammad. In 626 A.D., adjusted for today's dollars, he had stashed away over \$2 billion in silver and gold. His annual income exceeded \$700 million. Relative to others of his day, he was the richest man alive.

In Bukhari we find another confession of guilt: Bukhari:V4B52N267 "The Prophet said, 'Khosrau will be ruined, and there will be no Khosrau after him, and Caesar will surely be ruined and there will be no Caesar after him, and you will spend their treasures in Allah's Cause [Jihad].'" And, Bukhari:V4B56N793 "The Prophet said, 'If you live long enough the treasures of Khosrau will be opened and taken as spoils. You will carry out handfuls of gold and silver.'" Then, Bukhari:V4B56N795 "I have been given the keys of the treasures of the world by Allah." Money was the motivation behind Islam.

In this light, let's examine the remainder of the second revelation of the Profitable Prophet Plan. 093.009 "Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness, or oppress him. Nor repulse the beggar. As for him who asks, do not chide him. But as for the favor your Lord has now bestowed upon you, Muhammad, announce it!" This also sounds suspicious. Islam's first two religious covenants are specific to Muhammad. He was an orphan, treated with harshness. He was oppressed, probably molested, as we shall learn later, and had to beg. He was chided as a child and as a man. These things haunted him. It was why he had his god tell those who treated him poorly that it wasn't nice. But he would get even because his dark spirit was going to make him rich and them poor. Then in a less-than-godly blunder, Muhammad's Lord tells his prophet to announce their business relationship before introducing himself or telling us anything about his nature or purpose. He even contradicted himself. The 73rd surah told Muhammad to avoid such announcements.

If you think I may be a little too cynical here, just wait. Each of the next

twenty surahs serve to confirm my theory, one already rife with confessions.

Before we go to the “Lord’s” fourth Qur’anic gift to Muhammad, let’s look at how the Prophet said these insights came to him. Once again, Aisha, the fifty-year-old Prophet’s six-year-old wife, is the source of Islamic enlightenment. She said, Bukhari:V1B1N2 “‘Allah’s Messenger! How is the Divine Inspiration revealed to you?’ He replied, ‘Sometimes it is like the ringing of a bell. This form of Inspiration is the hardest of all and then this state passes off after I have grasped what is inspired. Sometimes the angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I grasp whatever he says.’ Aisha added: ‘I saw the Prophet being inspired and (noticed) the sweat dropping from his forehead on a very cold day as the Inspiration was over.’”

Since the Hadith claims Muhammad only saw Gabriel on two occasions, how did he come upon the remaining 112 surahs? Bukhari:V6B60N378 “Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord is a liar...and the Prophet only saw Gabriel twice.”

In Islam’s creation account, we were told that Allah had given up on oral communication and wanted everything in writing with angelic witnesses. Now he turns to an illiterate man and communicates by means of a gong. The god of a billion people ought to be more capable than clanging bells, blood clots, and having to bribe a despondent messenger. Yet that’s all we’ve got thus far. Perhaps things will turn around with the next series of revelations.

Unfortunately, no one seems to know what came next. Muslims don’t even know how the surahs were pieced together. Early and late revelations are jumbled haphazardly. So the best we can do is to attribute a collection of surahs to the formative period. The 96th surah is a great example. The first third represents the first verses revealed. The remainder was “received” years later when the prophet began to prostrate himself at the Ka’aba. We’re told that Abu Jahl, Muhammad’s archrival and nemesis, taunted him. Maududi reports: “After his appointment to Prophethood, and before he started preaching Islam, Muhammad began performing the prostration prayer facing Allah’s House the way Allah taught him.” Surprisingly, this performance was never described in the Qur’an. Its absence is perplexing. Allah took time to give Muhammad permission to partake in incest, thievery, womanizing, the slave trade, and mass murder, but never bothered to explain the nature of the religious performance. “Watching the technique, the Quraysh assumed that he had adopted a new religion. The other people were watching it with curiosity, but Abu Jahl in his arrogance and pride threatened the Prophet and forbade him to worship in that way in the Ka’aba.”

Maududi, endeavoring to explain the 96th surah, brings us this Tradition: “Does Muhammad set his face on the ground before you?” When they replied in the affirmative, he said: “By Lat and Uzza, if I ever catch him in that act, I will set my foot on his neck and rub his face in the dust.” Since the Ka’aba was called a mosque—or “a place of prostration in Arabic”—way back in Qusayy’s day, Muhammad didn’t invent face-to-the-ground bowing. “When he saw the Messenger in the prostration posture, he tried to set his foot on his neck. But suddenly he turned back as if

in a fright. Asked what was the matter, he said, 'There was a ditch of fire and a terrible apparition between me and Muhammad.' On hearing this the Prophet said: 'Had he come near me, the angels [demons] would have smitten him and torn him to pieces.'"

This is intended to be another proof of Muhammad's calling. But it's lame. The notion that Muhammad's most annoying rival, after publicly threatening the prophet, would admit to seeing a divine sign protecting him, is ludicrous. If it occurred, he might run, he might apologize, he might become a Muslim, but Jahl would never confess to being foiled by the prophet's deity and then remain an adversary. Unless, of course, he saw the fire as a symbol of the Devil's influence in the prophet's proclamation.

Other scriptures from Bukhari and Muslim report: "The Prophet was performing his prayer at the Ka'aba. Abu Jahl passed and said, 'Muhammad, did I not forbid you to do this?' And then he started to threaten him. In response, the Prophet rebuked him severely. There upon Jahl said, 'On what strength do you rebuke me?' 'By Allah. My followers in this valley exceed yours in number.'" This time the scene was recast without the embarrassing reference to the pit of flames. But that hardly gets the revisionists out of the fire. It would be some time before Muhammad would reveal his god's name. And by their own admission, there were only three Muslims in a town of five thousand.

With the Hadith providing the necessary context, let's see what Muhammad's spirit friend had to say. 096.015 "Let him beware! If he [Abu Jahl] does not desist, We will seize him, smite his forehead, and drag him by the forelock, a lying, sinful forelock! Then, let him call upon his henchmen for help and summon his council of comrades. We will call on the angels of punishment to deal with him! (or) We will call the guards of hell. (or) We too would summon the braves of Our army." This "scripture" was so bizarre, I elected to give three different translations of the killer angels. "God" calling them "tools of punishment, guards of hell, and an army of braves" sounds demonic. Further, the depiction of a spirit seizing a man, smiting a man, dragging a man, is consistent with Satan. It didn't take long for Islam to get nasty or for Muhammad to reveal the source of his inspiration.

The surah ends with: 096.019 "Nay, beware! Do not obey him. Pay him no heed: but bow down in adoration, and draw near." So in this, the first surah revealed, the Qur'an's equivalent of "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Muhammad's unnamed Lord tells his lone prophet not to obey an unnamed boy. How profound. He threatens punishment and calls on an army of hell's angels to drag his victim off so that he can personally oversee his torture. Then he tells his messenger to approach a pagan rock shrine and bow down in adoration. This is some god. This is some book. This is some start.

74th surah is similar to the last two revelations, so let's review it next. 074.001 "O you who are covered up in your cloak, arise and deliver your warning! And your Lord do magnify, while keeping your garments free from stain! And uncleanness do shun, nor expect in giving, any worldly gain. And for the sake of your Lord, be patient." Once again

our hero is hiding under the covers. Yet his seizing, smiting, and dragging Lord wants him to deliver a warning. That's quite a picture. But so as to pretty it up, the "Lord," ever fascinated with meaningless details, tells Muhammad to dress for success—to keep his clothes clean. And he listened, according to Will Durant. In his *Story of Civilization*, he says Muhammad "was vain. He gave considerable time to his personal appearance—perfumed his body, painted his eyes, dyed his hair, and wore a ring inscribed 'Muhammad the Messenger of Allah.'" Later Hadiths will confirm each of Durant's charges.

Vanity aside, I find that the "don't expect any worldly gain" verse hilarious considering that it followed Allah's promise to make Muhammad rich. We are only a few hundred words into the Qur'an and we have another contradiction. While Muhammad's claims of divine inspiration are disputable, there is no dispute over his wealth. Islam made a profit.

The next verse continues a trend that may be the most demented ever conceived in religious genre. Paraphrased: "God hates us and can't wait to introduce us to a hell he has made for our hospitality." While heaven and hell are concepts he borrowed from Judeo-Christianity, Muhammad takes them well beyond Dante's inferno. 074.008 "The trumpet shall sound a day of anguish for disbelievers. Leave Me alone to deal with the creature whom I created bare and alone! Leave Me to deal with those I granted wealth and sons." As diabolical as it sounds, this is Islam in a nutshell. We are told that anyone who doesn't believe Muhammad is destined to be punished by his god—up close and personal. The Islamic god's hands-on involvement with anguish is the antithesis of Judeo-Christianity in which hell is defined as separation from God. In Islam, the dark spirit wants to be left alone to supervise the torture. The next time someone suggests that the gods of the Bible and Qur'an are the same, remind them of these verses.

There are a thousand deeds that could have been mentioned in this early surah, like love, not committing murder, telling the truth, being faithful in marriage, not coveting what belongs to others, but all we get is what irks the would-be prophet. 074.015 "These men are greedy and desire that I should give them even more. By no means! For they have offered stubborn opposition to Our Signs and Our revelations." There have been no signs and Muhammad has yet to share a single revelation. He's still hiding under the covers. So what we are getting here is a peek into the prophet's covetous and tormented soul. He's so insecure, so paranoid, he believes he's going to be rejected.

Leaving this delusion, we return to sadistic. "Soon I will visit them with a mountain of calamities, imposing a fearful doom and a distressing punishment." 074.019 "For these men thought and plotted; so woe to them! They shall be cursed for their plots." While we have been exposed to a series of plots, this is the first in order of revelation. It is particularly troublesome because Muhammad's spirit is so eager to curse man; he threatens before he teaches. With that, I'd like to propose another theory. There is a reason the Qur'an was assembled out of order.

When it's realigned chronologically, its credibility evaporates.

^{074.021} "Again, woe to them; may they be cursed for how they plotted. They looked around, frowned, and scowled with displeasure. Then they turned back and were haughty with pride. They said: 'This is nothing but magical enchantment, derived and narrated from others. This is nothing but the words of a mortal man!'" In this passage, the Qur'an debuts its most repetitive themes. Muhammad and his message would be attacked for a host of reasons including their lack of divine credibility, their satanic or demented tone, and for their obvious plagiarism—stealing the script from prior sources. Those who recognized this, as most did during Muhammad's day, were cursed and doomed to be roasted by Islam's god.

The surah continues with this twisted rant: ^{074.026} "Soon will I fling them into the burning Hell Fire! And what will explain what Hell Fire is? It permits nothing to endure, and nothing does it spare! It darkens and changes the color of man, burning the skin! It shrivels and scorches men." Yeouch! Muhammad's spirit is getting a little hot under the collar. Sure there's a hell, but this Satan wannabe is way too into the details. And as for stubborn opposition to "Our signs and Our revelations" — he's kidding right? Opposition to what? Blood clots, reading, reciting, being nice to orphans? And what signs? There haven't been any. No miracles, no prophecies, not even any new material. So why the temper tantrum?

This surah jumps back and forth, as does much of the Qur'an, from first person singular to plural, so the problem might be schizophrenia. "I" and "Our" are routinely used in reference to Muhammad's demonic spirit. While this duplicity is irritating, there must be more to this. Islam is only beginning; Muhammad has just been called, and he has yet to preach. His god remains unnamed. So why visit creation with a mountain of calamities, impose a fearful doom, fling men into fires that darken the skin, scorching and shriveling? And what's up with god being bothered by people plotting against him? That's like me taking on the American military with a peashooter.

The Qur'an's mean-spirited outbursts make no sense in the context of a religious prophet. But if Khadija was the inspiration behind Muhammad, it's another story—the story of a scheming profiteer "belittling the competition." The Merchants of Mecca chafed at the preposterous allegations of the self-appointed prophet, because they controlled the religious scam and didn't appreciate his claim to their property.

For those who have an appetite for hell talk, be of good cheer. The Lord provides: ^{074.031} "We have appointed nineteen angels to be the wardens of the Hell Fire. We made a stumbling-block for those who disbelieve and We have fixed their number as a trial for unbelievers in order that the people of the Book may arrive with certainty, and that no doubts may be left for the people of the Book, those in whose hearts is a disease." According to the dark spirit of Islam, angels are hell's wardens, and he uses them as stumbling blocks to foil mankind. And while that's demented, it pales in comparison to the claims that the people of the Book—Christians and Jews

—are diseased and that they will arrive in hell with confirmed reservations.

During radio interviews, I am routinely called a bigot when I expose Islam. Yet I never speak unkindly of Muslims, only of the doctrine that drives so many to murder and mayhem. It's Islam that's "unkind." The Qur'an isn't debating scripture, doctrines, or even deeds; it's condemning human beings. As such, the Islamic god is a hateful, intolerant racist—a bigot.

The 31st verse of the 74th surah continues with this line: "And for those to whom the Scripture Book has been given, and the believers, there should be no doubt. The unbelievers may say, 'What does the Lord intend by this?' The Lord will lead astray whomever He pleases, and He will guide whomever He pleases: and none can know the armies of your Lord except He, and this is no other than a warning to mankind." This is confusing. Who should be without doubt—Muslims or Infidels? The Qur'an wouldn't be a book for decades. The Hebrew Bible had been a book for nearly two millennia. The Gospels promise heaven to those who accept the Messiah as their Savior—no doubt. The Qur'an only promises paradise to murderers—martyrs, in their parlance. All other Muslims remain in doubt until their scales are weighed. And as for god being pleased to lead folks astray and having an army—"what does the Lord intend by this?"

The lack of clarity may be intentional. Muhammad's deity admitted that he toys with people. God playing with men's souls is embarrassing. Creating stumbling blocks and leading folks astray is demonic. Swearing by the Moon (capital "M") is incriminating. It reveals Ar-Rahman's and Allah's origins. 074.032 "No, truly: I swear by the Moon as a witness, and by the darkness of night as it wanes." Loving the "darkness of night" suggests that the spirit of Islam is Lucifer. He is called the "Morning Star," and his abode is hell. "And by the dawn as it is unveiled, surely Hell is one of the greatest signs and gravest misfortunes, a warning to men." The gravest misfortune—hell—was created expressly for him. With a deceiving and demonic spirit at the helm of the world's fastest growing religion, no wonder we're in such a mess today.

The surah winds down with this: "To any of you that chooses to press forward or lag behind, know that every soul will be held in pledge for its deeds except the Companions of the Right Hand. They will be in Gardens of Delight." The first part of this verse is standard mainstream religion, at least non-Christian religion: man will be judged by his deeds. The second part is senseless, desperate—even contradictory. Having collected fewer than a handful of followers, Muhammad was willing to offer a free pass to paradise to anyone who was willing to be one of his companions. But at what cost? The rest of the Qur'an is unambiguous. Islam is a religion of works, one in which Muslims are judged based upon the comparative weight of the good and bad things they have done during their life. This verse expressly contradicts that doctrine when it says that the Right-Handed Companions aren't accountable. Both cannot be true, which makes one a lie. In that salvation is at stake, this contradiction is catastrophic.

074.040 "They will question each other and ask the guilty, 'What led you into burning Hell Fire?' They will say: 'We were not of those who prayed or fulfilled our devotional obligations; nor were we of those who fed the wretched. We used to wade in vain disputes. We used to deny the Day of Judgment, until death overtook us.'" The conversation between those in the "Gardens of Delight" and the inmates of the "burning Hell Fire" is told so that Muhammad's Lord can squeeze in a little "religion" in the midst of his tirade on retribution. With Islam, devotion is an obligation, not an expression of love. Further, men have been condemned for not doing something that has not yet been specified. But showing that he is a master of the obvious, the Lord adds prayer to his list of good things. There are now five "do's" in the Qur'an. Unspecified prayer and ritual have been added to orphan happiness, wretched beggar support, and cleanliness. And on the "don't do" list we have vain disputes.

The surah culminates with these bizarre verses: 074.048 "No intercession of any intercessors will avail them." Whoever collected these surahs wants us to know that there is no savior. Christ was just kidding about that salvation thing on the cross. However, by saying this, they injured their prophet's credibility, for he claimed to be an intercessor. 074.049 "What is the matter with them that they turn away from admonition as if they were freighted asses!" Asses indeed. Twenty-six centuries earlier, Yahweh told us that Ishmael's offspring, a heritage Muslims claim, "would be wild asses of men." 074.052 "Each one of them wants to be given scrolls of revelation spread out! No! By no means! They fear not the hereafter. Nay, this is an admonishment. Let them keep it in remembrance! But they will not heed unless the Lord wants them to. He is the fountain of fear. He is the fount of mercy."

Stop the presses; clang the bell. That's flat out amazing. Five revelations into Islam and the Lord has just contradicted himself a third time. And this, like the others, is at the core of Muhammad's mission. Didn't the Islamic god teach the use of the pen so that he could teach man what they did not know? Didn't he give scrolls to every Adam, Abraham, and Jesus? Now he says that when men ask for scrolls of revelation they will be told, "No! By no means! No scrolls for you." Mecca, we have a problem.

Oh, and I almost forgot. What do you think about a "god" who says, "He is the fountain of fear. He is the fount of mercy." Beyond the schizophrenic duplicity, imagine spending eternity with a deity that calls himself the fountain of fear.

For those who may be troubled by the Biblical references to fear, fear not. The root of both the Hebrew and Greek words used for "fear" mean "revere" when used in the context of our relationship with Yahweh.

Moving on to the 94th surah, the next chronologically, Maududi explains: "No sooner had Muhammad started preaching Islam than the same society which had esteemed him, turned hostile. The relatives and friends, clansmen and neighbors, who treated him with respect, began to shower him with abuse. No one in Mecca was prepared to listen to him; he was ridiculed and mocked in the street, so the initial stage was very

discouraging. That is why surah 94 was sent down to console him."

Before we dive into the surah, I'd like to share a Hadith from Ibn Ishaq to demonstrate how reluctant Muhammad was to discuss the relationship he had formed with his demonic spirit. Ishaq:117 "Three years elapsed from the time that Muhammad concealed his state until Allah commanded him to publish his religion according to information that has reached me. 'Proclaim what you have been ordered and turn away from the polytheists.' [Qur'an 15:94] 'Warn your family, your nearest relations.' [Qur'an 26:214] When these words came down to the Apostle he said, 'Allah has ordered me to warn my family and the task is beyond my strength. When I make my message known to them I will meet with great unpleasantness so I have kept silent. But Gabriel [Lucifer] has told me that if I do not do as ordered my Lord [Satan] will punish me.'" This Hadith is injurious to Islam. The surahs it references (15 and 26) were not among the first fifty revealed, so the timing is impossible. Further, Khadija was the first Muslim and Ali was the third. Muhammad's only other family members were daughters, and in Islam, they don't count. So what "great unpleasantness" was he afraid of? Moreover, imagine a revelation so feeble, the prophet has to be threatened to deliver it. Muslims deserve something better than this.

094.001 "Have We not opened up your chest and removed your burden which left you hopeless?" Muhammad claimed that the Sharh Sadr occurred on three occasions. According to Islamic theory, his chest was cut open by the angels; his heart was removed, washed, and then reinserted. Tabari VI:75 "'Messenger, how did you first know with absolute certainty that you were a prophet?' He replied, 'Two angels came to me while I was somewhere in Mecca.... One angel said, 'Open his breast and take out his heart.' He opened my chest and heart, removing the pollution of Satan and a clot of blood, and threw them away. Then one said, 'Wash his breast as you would a receptacle.' He summoned the Sakinah [the Hebrew Shekhinah, or God's presence], which looked like the face of a white cat, and it was placed in my heart. Then one said, 'Sew up his breast.' So they sewed up my chest and placed the seal between my shoulders.'" While none of this occurred, Islam doesn't escape the operation unscathed. If God wished to cleanse a man's spirit of sin, he wouldn't do open heart surgery.

094.004 "We have exalted your fame, raising high the esteem in which you [Muhammad] are held." While I'm convinced that Islam was all about exalting Muhammad, this verse should be troubling for Muslims. First, theirs was the only egotistical prophet. Second, every Qur'anic verse revealed during this period says Muhammad was ridiculed, mocked, and tormented by his neighbors. Either god hasn't been attentive and doesn't know what's going on, or he has a rather demented view of esteem. But Muslims miss the foolishness simply because the first surahs revealed are at the end of the book. And by the end of Muhammad's life, he had plundered his way to prosperity.

The "Opening Up" surah ends saying: 094.005 "With every difficulty, there is relief. Therefore, when you are free from whatever you're doing, make your Lord your exclusive object." In context, this is absurd. Muhammad had nothing else to do. In fact,

he had made a career of ditching responsibility. As soon as he became an adult he married money and started hanging out in caves.

The self-proclaimed prophet reluctantly began to recite dribs and drabs of the Qur'an publicly. But while the poetry may have sounded decent, the message was indecent. Collectively, almost universally, the people of Mecca became outraged. According to the Qur'an, Muhammad's friends called him: a "liar" and a "magician." They accused him of being "possessed by devils." His kin called him an "insane plagiarizing poet." He was characterized a "sorcerer," "lunatic," "farfetched forger," "fool," and "specious pretender."

I was not the first to see Muhammad as a money-grubbing, self-aggrandizing, plagiarizing fraud. His own clan, his own family, his contemporaries, saw right through his act. "The unbelievers said: 'He is a deceiving sorcerer, turning many gods into one deity.'" "There must be a motive behind the Qur'an. It is surely a fabrication." "They laugh at the Qur'an and say, 'Should we abandon our gods for the sake of an insane poet?'" "Allah has not sent down anything. You are only speaking lies." "When Our clear revelations are read out to them, they say, 'This is nothing but a fabricated lie. This is nothing but pure sorcery.'"

"What sort of Prophet is this? Why was no angel sent to him?" Then, from surah 21: "Yet they say: 'These are only confused dreams. He has invented them. Let him therefore bring a miracle to us as the earlier prophets did.'" Muhammad was called a fraud more than a hundred times in the Qur'an. At least twenty times, his clan accused him of being the only prophet who couldn't do a miracle.

In the 11th surah: "They say of the Prophet, 'He has forged the Qur'an.'" From the 10th: "We find you full of folly and a liar to boot." Then in the 9th we see the completed equation: "There are some among them who talk ill of the Prophet. For those who offend Allah's Apostle there is a painful punishment. Have they not realized that anyone who opposes Allah and His Prophet will abide in hell forever?"

Before we turn the page on Muhammad's opening Qur'anic salvo, I'd like to share my perspective on Islam's beginnings. I believe the Hadith and Qur'an. I believe Muhammad was running away from responsibility, as they claim. Solitude became dear to him. He was searching for God in all the wrong places. As a result, he encountered a demon. It terrified him, just as it would have you or me. Then it possessed him. Panicked, he ran home and confessed, but his social-climbing wife would have none of it. Khadija said that the demonic spirit was Allah. Ironically, she may have been right.

She founded Islam by bequeathing the family business, the Ka'aba Inc., Qusayy's religious scam, to her recluse husband and employee. "The Lord" became Muhammad's ambition. The Qur'an became a tool, one used to claim his prize. God was created in Muhammad's image. He was tortured, illiterate, covetous, delusional, and demented.