

IH S3 Imam Dawood Yasin

Dawood: So that's really for me what that journey was. Seeing at its highest, power,

Mira: fame,

Dawood: money, but also seeing the pain. And I think that's something that, again, kinda as you weigh those things, like I said, like so kids, like what's real, what do I want, what's fulfilling?

Mira: I am Mira Kaddoura and this is into Healing Austin edition. On this episode of Into Healing, we sit with Imam Dawood Yasin to explore a journey of transformation from Nantucket and traveling the world as a fashion model to learning Arabic and Syria, and now leading a Muslim congregation in Austin, Texas. In this conversation, he shares how Islam reshaped his life and the power of healing through faith, spirituality, prayer, justice, and surrender.

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Imam Dawood thank you so much for being here.

I'm just so grateful to be sitting here with you. first I wanted to. share a little bit my intention behind why I wanted to have this conversation with you. I grew up in Beirut. I grew up around, Muslim women that really inspired me. And whether it was on my dad's side, my great aunt, my great aunt, they were, like leaders.

And they were, deans and PhD and they were all about education. And my great aunt got, all women the right to vote in Lebanon in 1951, which is, before black women can vote in this country, which was in 1965. So that was on one side of the family. And then on the other side, I had my grandma who had survived the nakba and was a real spiritual woman.

And, she prayed five times a day and. Despite everything, all the, cards that life had dealt her. She was just so deeply hopeful and grateful. And, there's the word that's, she just said that all day long, all the time. And I grew up with like such,

so many, teachings of this religion without really knowing how much it infused into my being and who I am.

So I'm just grateful to be sitting here with you and sh getting into it and really trying to demystify, I think this, practice, this spiritual practice that I think especially in the West has been so like, turned upside down. like I think when I moved to America 20 years ago, I'd grown up in Beirut, which was.

Secular, multi-religious. I celebrated everybody's religion and I respected everybody's religion. And I moved to America and I was like, whoa, what is this? and that was, especially the racism and everything was just such a, little shock to my system actually, because I had lived in such a pluralistic, society.

so yeah. I wanna get into it with you.

Dawood: Yeah, no, that's, an incredible journey and obviously what you're experiencing and what you've seen in those places. And similarly, I've been able to, I've lived in the Middle East for about, 10 years, close to 10 years. Damascus was the most of that.

But again. Yeah, you're talking about this that, I think I get, I think I get it. I think, I really think I get it and, yeah, absolutely. This idea of this, of just, of journeys. And, how do people hold on to seemingly unbearable If you will at times. Like how do you make it through that? What, is it? And yeah. I think, I really appreciate what you said about demystifying this and I think just Islam in of itself for me demystifying it for say, my family or for whomever that was because of, yeah. I mean we, it, yeah. We can, I dunno how much you wanna get into right now, but just to just to unfold some of that.

Mira: Yeah. Like I, maybe let's start at the very beginning. Yeah. Like you, you were a former model, you were a Roman Catholic, you got into the spiritual past, you converted to Islam. Maybe walk us through that journey, right? Yeah. Just let's start at the beginning of all this.

Dawood: Yeah. First there was light.

No, just kidding. I think, so I would say perhaps let's just start like ethnically, because people always are like, oh, you're mixed. You are Egyptian, you are Dominican. You're like, I've got everything.

Mira: you can pass for everything.

Dawood: Yeah. So born, and raised in, in, in Massachusetts, Nantucket Island, actually, which is an interesting kind of history.

My, our ethnically on both sides of my family, my mother and my father are from the Cape Verde Islands. Cape Verde is 10 islands off of the coast of Senegal. colonized by Portugal. so state religion, if you will, then it's Catholicism. So that's how Catholicism kind of enters into our family.

great. great-grandfather comes to the States somewhere around the late 18 hundreds. And we end up on Nantucket, and that's where our family has been and are still there now. so I think that kind of growing up, I guess I would under probably explain it as, or define it as like having a nominal religion, nominal relationship with religion.

but wanted to, wanted to have a deeper understanding of that, which is beyond senses, that which is beyond, what can be explained, perceived, or explained even. Exactly. And so I think that's set me on this journey. And really, I think I was aided my cousin Converted to Islam in the late seventies, but that was also an incredible moment. So you have the issue that's happening. So you had the The had for the Iran, hostage crisis. so burning refugees and death to America, which is really interesting Is really interesting.

There was a woman who was a Buddhist, studied Islam at uc, Berkeley, with the intention of converting Muslims to Buddhism.

And was like floored because she's studying, as I said, and she's seeing these Death to America. Death to America, A la Akbar being translated on, CBS news as death to America, which is really incredible.

Talk about loss in translation.

Mira: Wow.

Dawood: God is great. God is great. Oh, it's translated as Death to America. you see how the seeds were planted. There you go. For a long time. Exactly. So imagine you're seeing that, you're seeing again, this kind of foreign land of turmoil. what good is it bringing to the world?

What has it ever done?

Mira: Oh, if only they knew

Dawood: yeah. Birth of civilization. Yeah. And again, my cousin converts kinda in that timeframe. so that I think eased a lot within my family in terms of questions and, a path because really it, it did transform his life. and I think that's something that really appealed to me was this, I this I think of it in terms of like alchemical process.

That's how I think about it, right? How do we turn from the lead of the lower self to the gold of like spirit and, what. Brings us there and how do we get there? So I think seeing it in someone first, I was like, okay, I'm, interested in that path. So I think that's in a, shortened version of kind of what that journey was like.

but I will add, you mentioned the modeling and other stuff like that, which is really interesting. 'cause I feel like, maybe many, people's oh, I found religion. I was in the gutter, like looking out. no, it was the opposite for me.

I'm, I've lived in, I'm living in Milan and Paris and London and, Tokyo, Germany visiting and end up in South Africa and Cape Town like 19 96, 2 years after Mandela was released as an African American modeling.

So I was like, this is wild.

And, it was a market, African Americans, it wasn't a large market in the us. you're you could do like sports, you could Hey, our football guy or a basketball guy, right? But in terms of A bank opportunity. Yeah. so just something that had you outside of Kind of the what, ex what societal, perhaps expectations would set, those opportunities were opening up in South Africa.

was starting to do quite well there. and then just had a few, had some moments, that really made me question, what is the path?

What is, real? What is desired? What is hoped for. so I think that's something that, yeah. Just getting us, yeah. Getting us into that. Can you

Mira: share like a moment or two of what those, Yeah.

Dawood: two, two, near death experiences, I would say really, because I had seen, so I'm like, so I'm in New York, I moved to New York and I'm like 20, I drop outta college. I'm 20 years old living in New York. And, I just find my way into this space modeling. an agent was out in Nantucket And asked, are you a model? I said, you not yet?

No. Said no. And then I think she said, if I remember correctly, she said, would you like to be? And I said, who wouldn't? I was like 19 at the time, in college. So anyway, that was it. And I was going to school in New Haven at the time, so I just took the train down in New York and started to do that.

So I'm seeing this wait a minute. Like, my grandmother and others used to watch soap opera, so I'm like. I know that person or you'd see these people on, or you've seen them on ads or on the bus in New York, and I'm now in this space with them. And so that was really wild. and so you're getting to, you're seeing what I think society places as it's kind.

Yeah, that's the pinnacle. Yeah. And then all of a sudden it's Oz, you get to see behind the curtain, if this is the pinnacle, like I know that's not what I want. So that's really for me, what that journey was. Like seeing at its highest, power,

Mira: fame, the fame,

Dawood: money, but also seeing the pain.

Seeing like that side of it. And I think that's something that, again, kinda as you weigh those things, like I said, so cases, like what's real, what do I want? What's fulfilling and, so I think that's, that moment that really catches me when I experience these things in South Africa that kind of brought me close to, pretty close to death.

is this it?

Mira: yeah.

Dawood: and so also this idea of, from a, from, a faith position of, my cousin really, encouraging me to, to seek God, if you will.

and, recommending that, you find, you'll find your contentment in there and look at it, in this, in, in Islam as I did, meaning him.

And I think, yeah, that was really, that was the journey. So it was always in my mind. It was always in my mind.

Mira: Yeah. That's fascinating. you touched on this idea of this life that you were living, the fame, the material life, the, the money, the, the people that you are around, right?

how, what's the Islamic lens on that? like how is actually, here's my question. How is Islam kind of a. Antidote to that life.

Dawood: Yeah. Interesting. I would say there's, so there's a hadith read something from the prophetic tradition, a saying of the prophet peace and blessings be upon him.

It says, la and so that wealth richness is not in, possession. Yeah. In having, a multitude of possessions. But, wealth is contentment of the soul. So to me, I think that's the antidote because you're watching this, you're like, you like, like, for real. that guy owns it.

He bought an island.

But he's not happy.

She makes five grand an hour.

And then what? And then what?

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: Why are you calling me at 2:00 AM in the morning?

Miserable. Weeping. So how, what, and that's this thing, right? If the children of Adam were given a valley of gold, they would not be content until they had a second.

And so that just means, and, nothing will fill the desire of the children of Adam, except for the dust of the grave. Meaning that this is insatiable. Yeah. You'll continue to want better,

Mira: more, bigger, all of that. Yeah.

Dawood: With a society that exploits that.

Mira: Yeah. O

Dawood: So it's inherent and you have to work against it, but then you have one that's looking to exploit and exploit in the most severe opportunistic manner at the demise of human beings.

So to me, when you say like the antidote, I'm like, where's the value? Oh, is the value in me, and what I produce? And So that's this idea then of I won't be content. I'm, I can't fool myself that if all of you have more than me. Are not content.

And,

Mira: the contentment doesn't come from the outside.

Does not come from the outside. Yeah. Yeah.

Dawood: So that brings that inward journey then.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah. It's so interesting 'cause we're seeing, we're seeing it now live right in society, this like hyper capitalist where people are starting to literally not be able to force stuff, Like where they just are constantly on this hamster wheel of working harder and longer and harder and longer and they're miserable and it's like the bottom's falling out a little bit.

Dawood: Yeah. you're being nice I think, a little bit is, you know, that's, that I think it's a lot of, bit. It's a lot of bit and, I have a thought. Please, this is what this is for. my thought is, if you're, look, if you look at, if you look at like the Dust Bowl.

And you look at the Great Depression and then you look at like prohibition being lifted at that time. One of my thoughts is that it's, to prevent the type of social upheaval that would come out of those two realities, let themselves medicate.

Mira: Oh.

Dawood: And so I think that's a lot of what we're seeing right now, in my opinion.

I think this, again, I'm, gonna go out on this limb and just say, I think this kind of proliferate proliferation that we're seeing of, weed in the way that we do right now, this is from someone that, that did smoke for quite some time. But if you're looking at, nine or 5% THC at the time that it was happening, when to 95% THC right now, and to all of the other things to escape us out of, as I said, the type of social upheaval that would happen.

I think if there was real introspection as to, to pull me away from this, consuming, Path of consumption, if you will.

Mira: Yeah. That, that if I just buy that thing or get that thing, that I will finally be happy that all my, whole body will just, rest

Dawood: and, I'm doing the, I'm making these decisions in altered states.

That's right. That's the kind of the other part that I'm making. Like I'm not whole, I'm not healed. I'm not, in enough, in a state of, stasis, if you will, of, balance. I made imbalance and now I'm making these decisions in a state of imbalance. Oh, So that's a thought that I have.

Mira: Yeah. it's so interesting when I think of so many of the teachings of this religion, there's all these things that kind of bubble to the top for me. for example, one of them is the ethics. Yeah. There's so many ethics, like built into this. religion into the spiritual path. Maybe we could talk about that.

I know you've even talked about it in terms of nutrition, maybe that's like a concrete example you can give, but like, how is ethics built into this, into the spiritual path?

Dawood: Yeah. It's interesting, because I think that many people, again, this is the idea of misconceptions that many people, perhaps when they think about Islam, it's just, we're, just talking about this kind of dogmatic approach and it's just a bunch of Sharia law, right?

I guess that's a term. It's I just really wild right now when you see on the, like on the news leadership level Texas opposes Sharia law. So you oppose prayer, you oppose charity, you oppose fasting, you oppose. That That's Sharia law. And if you look at, if you look at the text, oh no.

So it's wild. so what you think, but they

Mira: don't know. They don't know. Yeah. They just think it's this word they don't know they're unfamiliar with and then it's Somehow seen as something bad, but they don't know if they just did a little bit of reading.

Dawood: Yeah. And, that's the interesting thing.

IP did a study one time. It was like, something like this was like during the 2014, I think Peter King, New York Ground Zero Mosque, that timeframe. and

it was like 56% of Americans hold an unfavorable opinion of Muslims, but 72% hold a favorable opinion of when they know a Muslim.

Mira: Wow.

Dawood: so again, just and this, that's a beautiful thing. That's an, that's, part of the ethics of Quran. Like we've created you, We've created you, from tribes and nations lead to ou, so you'll come to know one another

And not despise one another. So this idea, right?

It's that's why I say it's easy to hate someone when you don't know them, or it's much difficult. It's much more difficult to hate someone once you know them. and so I think that, and that's what I think that pluralism that you spoke about In that time of your, of your family.

I know my Jewish neighbor, I know my, like we know each other. And these are the stories that we heard, right?

Your children would be at my house or we would send food to each other around the bar. Those are the stories. Stories I grew

Mira: up hearing from my grandmothers, and I'm

Dawood: saying I heard it as well too, from people living in the region.

Yeah. myself. So again, and I think that is something that just rings true with inside of the human spirit, but then we're pushed into, believing, all alternative narratives. But this idea about ethics, Yeah. I mean it's, really, something incredible. I think, just thinking about at a higher level, that, I'm going to now care about the people that, like, where did this food come from?

and, one time I heard, a scholar who was visiting from Yemen, actually, he was speaking at Yale. I thought it was really interesting. So he, was saying that, he said in terms of food ethics, and he said there was a time that we knew the person who owned the land.

We know the, where the seeds came from. We knew the hand that sewed the seeds. We know the well of the water came from. We know the hand that poured the water on there. We know the hand that yielded the wheat. That harvested the wheat. We know the hands that, crushed it. We know the hand.

So all the way through, he said, we knew where the wood came from. That built the fire.

And in that chain, everyone was a person of piety.

So when you think about ethics in that way, I'm not looking to outdo you and not, if you wanna talk about that in terms of, open market capitalism or free market capitalism, another like that exists inside of Islam to a degree.

But this idea is that not at the cost of human beings. And so I think that's where this kind of ethics, happens. I, just, I can't wrap my head around this exploitative system. A friend of mine, his sister was a elementary school teacher for, I don't know, a close to 40 years. And in 2008, watches her entire portfolio wiped out.

Mira: So

Dawood: that's where I feel that ethics now. And this idea that, you're, held to something beyond just this realm. it's, okay until I get caught. Yeah.

Mira: Oof. Yeah. Yeah. isn't that, it seems like very much embedded in capitalism,

Dawood: unfortunately.

Mira: Yeah. And it seems in a way, while I hear you speak, it makes me think, so many people are like starting to wake up to the, all the negative aspects of capitalism, or at least hyper capitalism, the exploitative part of it. And I feel this is very much, a way to see the world that isn't, that, that feels a bit more just,

Dawood: and, and even you, like I said, aspects of, that exist with inside of Islam, we're not, it's not a full socialist know, economic, approach. However, again, I think it's not at the cost of people. and so I think that to me, like you're talking about this idea of ethics and so you see it like, as you mentioned in food, I kinda, we gave that example, but, the treatment of the environment. The treatment of, So the, so understanding, same thing that, that, these things have inherent value because God created it, like

Mira: Like

Dawood: we stop there.

And it's that law that obligates me to that it's actually love Love of what the creator created. And so I think this is something when you think about ethics in terms of how we approach things and water usage and Right. So you find this idea, this is a ethical approach to water conservation, where we're told, we wash five times a day to pray.

don't waste water even if you're in a river.

Mira: And it took

Dawood: me years to really like to really get at that. Really think about it. And I was standing in a river, I was getting the Sierras in, in, in, California, and I was like. It's about not wasting even when one has abundance.

Mira: No.

Dawood: that's the ethical standard. that's what we're call being called towards. Yeah. Yeah. So not just in a time of, we need to scarcity. Yeah. Yeah. Not in scarcity, but that to me is incredible. Yeah. When there's, when one can, if you will, waste, waste. Because we have so much Yeah.

That, no, even in that time. And so again, that's, this kind of, this calling and, the beautiful thing about that is it's just, it's you against yourself.

It's you against yourself.

Mira: Yeah. know, Yeah. You where you've, you're not doing so well, Yeah. Or you're cheating. Or you're lying. Or you're, yeah. Yeah,

Dawood: And then, do you have the discipline to actually hold yourself accountable? Because no one else, and that's, and I, heard someone say this one time, I heard someone who was a, they weren't Muslim, they had Muslim business partners, and they were fasting.

He said, look, if, this person who can eat at any time, then yeah, I'm, I find that I, would be willing to pursue doing business with this individual because, in this opportunity, they're choosing to hold themselves to a higher standard. Let's start off there as a baseline then. Instead of looking at where I can of explore, what can I get, what can I get from this? yeah.

Mira: it's so interesting because I feel like, my grandmother never. My ne, even though she was like a real, devout spiritual woman, she never imposed any of it on anyone.

And there was something about the way she did life that was so inspiring to me, Yeah. And yeah, that's whether it was the giving to somebody less fortunate. Yeah. Or it's funny that now like mutual aid has become a thing because people are waking up to like, how, maybe giving to nonprofits doesn't get the money to where it needs to be.

And the mutual aid has to be, it seems like the last two years has made that rest. I grew up around mutual aid, right? that's what we did. We always gave Money, food, this, that. that's just what we did. Because if you've been given the privilege of whatever, you should always share that, with, others.

Dawood: Yeah. I mean that, that's an incredible. Ethical standard that again, that we'd hold ourselves to. And then, no one's looking, can I hide, whatever amount that is. Or

Mira: can I give to this nonprofit and get a tax deduction? It's not because of what I can get. And I think that's so different.

Yeah. when it's like you're giving an expecting nothing in return,

Dawood: it's beautiful. Again, that's a Quranic concept. like we, we only feed you for the, for, the sake of God. we don't look for any recompensing nor even any type of gratitude

Mira: experience.

Dawood: so that's how you go into this?

If, because I understand that my recompense will be with God.

And that God's assistance is with those who assist his creation. So, again, there is this kind of selfishness But not selfishness. And this realm, if something comes back, that's fantastic, but if it doesn't, I'm looking beyond this.

Now working beyond this?

Mira: Yeah. I wanna get a little bit into Shaah just because I feel like I wanna just demystify that here. Because I feel like people still don't know exactly what that is. Maybe just tell us.

Dawood: Yeah. So the Shaah really is, so you have to look at, a legal, a code of, law.

And that code of law is in actually certain areas. and, worship. And, it's an area in economics, it's an area, it, marital family law, we would say. So you have commercial law, family law, inheritance law. So this is all Sharia. and where it de derived from, it derives from. really four sources.

The first primary being the Quran, if you find the ruling in there. If you don't, then you move down to the second tier, which is, the prophetic tradition, which is Hadith. And if you don't find it there, you look at if, was there some sort of consensus that exists amongst the scholarly class. And then, also if you don't find in any of those three, then you can make an analogy.

so those are the four kind of, sources where, law comes from. And then that legislation is, Muslims are bound to it now. within that there is things that want is absolutely bound to and then there are certain things that if there's the ability to do it as well too.

Okay. So this is something that, you know, charity. 2.5% on, of your wealth. After your meet, your needs are met, we'll say, okay, so that's, Sharia law. Like I have to give charity.

fasting in Ramadan, that's Sheria law, but also, child, in a divorce for example, where that's also Sharia law.

And so it has an incredible perspective in certain, or breadth, if you will, in terms of what encompasses, but it encompasses our lives. In all aspects.

so I think that's in a, shortened, yeah. Can you give us an example of

Mira: how, for example, the economic, how is that different?

The economic laws, how are they different than the laws that we see in say, capitalism? Like how are

Dawood: Yeah, so I'd say at the, at probably the clearest is that a non-interest based, economic system is, at the root of, is at the root of it. and give us an example,

Mira: like what does that mean?

Dawood: for example, at the easiest level, it is one cannot make money off of the passage of time.

It has to be, so there is, so for example, it, there are formulas now and how people are working around that to purchase a home or to purchase a car or to do other things such as this.

Whereas, a calculation may be met off of an APR or something like that, and then that price is placed on the entire cost of the home, for example. But I can't continue to, indefinitely hold you to, or indefinitely to a marked amount of time that again, it's only the interest of the passing of time that allows that, that transaction to occur.

I would say also that there is a prohibition of what one can earn. So you can't earn from things which are unlawful You can't earn through, alcohol, for example. You can't earn through, weapons manufacturing, other things such as this. Yeah. So these things are, and even in your stocks, so for example, that's something within Syria law as well too.

So again, that's what's really, which is wild, right? Because now you see this, whatever billion, a hundred billion dollar purchase that is.

Mira: Yeah. It's almost like it's, you can't, make money off of systems of harm. Would that be correct? That would

Dawood: be correct. Yeah. That'd be correct.

Yeah.

Mira: Yeah. That's so interesting.

Dawood: And I don't know, I'm, what does the world look like if we

Mira: take

Dawood: out the systems of harm, right? Yeah. And, again, I think this is something that we have that, that, as Muslims that we think about, right? So if that. Sure. Yeah. Economic, model is placed on pornography's out.

gambling is out drug and alcohol is out and weapon manufacturing on the level that it exists right now as a business model.

What happens to the global economy at that point?

So it's interesting because, one of my teachers said there, there's nothing new under the sun. It's just a different iteration of it.

Mira: And

Dawood: really in Mecca, that was the, that it wasn't ideological because they even said to the prophet Mohammed, we'll take one year. You worship our God. We'll take one year. We worship you God. So it's not ideological.

It

was a disruption of their economic base because now you're gonna stop the flow of pilgrims coming into Mecca and giving their offerings.

Yeah. So it was really, you're disrupting the epi and that's what we've seen here,

Mira: huh?

Dawood: Gaddafi. Oh, really? You want to go move to a gold standard?

That's not gonna happen.

So I think that this is, again, nothing new under the sun. It's just a different iteration.

Mira: Yeah. Fascinating. And this could totally be off the topic, but I'm trying in my head too.

Trump just went and met with the Saudis and they made this whole like all the deals, right? Yeah. Yeah. And I just cannot, like for the life of me, like how do I, how does all this that we're just talking about Yeah. Kind of reconcile with Palantir Technologies. Yeah. And

Dawood: yeah. I just

Mira: can't, how are those two things?

Like they, they talk about themselves as a mob, Saudi being a Muslim nation, and it's like, how, do I reconcile those two things, like investing in technology that harms, but then saying you're a Muslim nation. Like those two things don't seem like they. Can exist together.

Dawood: No, I agree. I agree.

It's something that has to be addressed.

and it's interesting, and I understood this in this way. If I'm wrong, then may I be corrected, but I understood that pre oil, that Saudi citizenship was taxed, which means that you had taxation, so you had representation.

Post oil, there's no need for your tax money because the amount of money that we're making off of this, we don't need your money.

Mira: Oh.

Dawood: So now there's no taxation, but there's also no representation. Oh. So therefore we will just move forward with policies in the manner that we see fit, and we will allocate funding in a manner that we see fit. And if one, opposes that, then we have means in which we will respond. And again, so how do you know?

I heard, once that the obligatory tax, if it was, Paid by the Prince's.

Mira: Ruling class.

Dawood: Ruling class, that global poverty would be.

Mira: Yeah. Of course.

Dawood: Or, hunger. I couldn't believe it was either poverty or hunger. I can't remember. I think three to five years.

Mira: Oof. Yeah. And we have all the food to feed all the people.

Yeah. We just don't,

Dawood: yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And again, that goes to that point, what drives you ethically to do, to make those choices. Yeah. I, remember one time that, a friend was on a panel who was talking about this with, but that the issue was not about, food, scarcity But really about, about food distribution.

Mira: Yeah. And

Dawood: again, how, can you, I don't know. I'm like, how do you, how can you, sleep?

Mira: Totally.

Dawood: How can you and somebodys starving. How can you, yeah.

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: And you have the ability to change. literally you have the ability to change it.

Mira: Yeah. I know. It keeps me up at night. Like when I cook, I'm literally like, and I infuse this food, and by feeding others, can I send some of that energy to those starving? Yeah. 'cause it's

Dawood: yeah,

Mira: it just, I can, if a random stranger knocks at my door Yeah. They would be fed. Yeah. I don't even have to know where they come from, what religion they are.

Nothing. They would be fed. So the idea that we can withhold food from somebody that needs it is just beyond me. I'm gonna get really

Dawood: emotional. No, I completely agree. I grew up similar. That was something inside of our home that was, there was always a pot of food on the stove. And people were welcome to come in and, share.

So again, I, and that's why I think that kind of, as I saw certain things that were happening that, the Islam was calling, that was asking of me, there were things

that I'd already seen in my life that, that just. Hey, this is amazing. it just enhances that. And again, I don't get to choose it now.

I'm holding myself to this standard because God is asking me of me to, do this. I think that's really, that, that kind of, that where it really, it opens up, it opened up for me in an, entirely different level.

Mira: Yeah. interesting. I wanna go to a little bit social justice, because it's come up a little bit.

I heard you say somewhere that, and I never thought about it this way, but you said something like, churches are segregated. And I was like, huh, I've never thought of that. And when, you're in a moss or in a mustard, there's people from all walks of life coming there. And I was like, I've never thought about that in that lens.

Dawood: Yeah. I think there was a, friend of mine who, was, Christian, said, and he was a college chaplain. He was saying like, the most segregated hour in America is on Sundays during church time, because. racially and whatever, people will go to their, church, black people go

Mira: to their black

Dawood: churches and Korean people and go to their Korean, churches.

And so it's interesting because coming into this space and, in, in, the mosque that, not to say that we have like perfectly Yeah. Of figured this out far from course, far from it. However, the type, the representation that you'll see is actually phenomenal in terms of the amount of people, in that space worshipping together.

And that was something, a friend of mine whose convert, she, was a lawyer and, I was able to guide their family to make the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca. and I remember her standing at the, at the Kaba, at the, in Mecca and she looked at this and she just said, this is.

How, could anybody stop this? Meaning that like the global representation that is here right now is just, it literally, it's everybody from all over the planet. Which is really interesting because Yeah. God has blessed me. I've been able to, lead groups for about nine years, almost 10 years.

on Yeah. Yeah. In Mecca. and many times groups will stop us because they are from Turkey or they're from Algeria, or they're from Palestine, or they're like, wherever they're from, that's their homo. generic, a group. And they look at us, they're like, they're so diverse.

Yeah. Someone's from Africa. There's someone from, there's Arabs. There's that is the best of America. Yeah, I agree. I completely agree. I completely agree. That is what like

Mira: the dream of this country is meant to be that.

Dawood: And, it. Need not only be religion that brings Yeah. People together in that way.

Of course. And I think that's the hope of what it means to be here in this way. Which, yeah. I've lived in some places that are pretty homogenic. Yeah. And, you feel that.

Yeah. You

feel that. And I think that here, although it's being pushed in that way right now, I, I, like that's the hope that we can get out of our own ways and be able to, and then be able to get to that place.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah. you've said that, Islam allows you to be the best version of yourself. Tell me about what you mean by that.

Dawood: Yeah. I think that, earlier this idea of So if you think about like in sports for example, like when you have to, like I say, dig down deep or whatever it is, there's something inside of you that tells you, Hey, I can't do this anymore.

What is it that allows you to say, we can keep going? And I think for me, that's what, I'm thinking about in terms of it allows me to be the best version of myself because one, those parameters are set of how I can function. And two, there's just been incredible examples, whether they are examples that you've read about or even examples that you've seen of what that is.

So I think that, so two things I would say. One is that there's this kind of, how can I say it? Inescapable reality that you're functioning in. And you hold yourself. It's like a standard you, hold your, yeah. Standard. It's a standard. Yeah. You hold yourself to that, standard. Now will you meet it every time?

No, absolutely not. 'cause we're human, right? And we're in these human, bodies and human. Exactly.

Mira: We're gonna fail. Exactly.

Dawood: However, there is the ability then to rectify that at each time. So I think there's something there to, to assess, what prevented me from doing it? Was it fear?

Was it, and if so, what? Fear of what? and so as I think about that kind of what does it mean to be this best version of myself, also I think, what is your North star? what does your best version look like? And that's something that I think about at times. Like my best version now is. trying to, eat less, trying to consume less, trying to, be fair and just, to people that I'm in contact with and people that I'm not in contact with.

As well, right? I don't want to, of course, to the best of my abilities be a part of an exploitative system. in food or in clothing or other things such as that. And it at times it hard. Yeah, it's hard. Yeah, of course. And if, I think the people that figured that out are the Amish, to be quite honest with you, are doing it the best.

but I think that, and I talk about that idea of being that best version of yourselves. I have found for me, what is that north star that I think that if I am able to tro on this path, tread this path, then that makes me. The best version of myself Of emotionally, spiritually, physically, because of all those things.

Because, okay. The best version of myself is that I'm fasting every Monday and Thursday. I'm fasting on the white days when the, moon is full, which is something from our tradition as well too, that now

Mira: Oh, I did not know that.

Dawood: Yeah. Which is really interesting. Can share something wild at you please.

Because

Mira: I love, I do I, love cyclical anything. Yeah. And I love that we're, just honoring the moon and all that

Dawood: stuff. So moon, full moon will bring what's called like a, king tide. So water, like the Yeah. It rises and it also drops. Yeah. So we are 75% water.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah.

Dawood: And the fasting is prescribed for what?

Mira: The cleanse so cleanser cleans right? This vessel.

Dawood: Yeah. It cleanse the vessel, but it also reduces like the caprice inflammation. so on a, yes, on a physical level, but on a metaphysical level, it cleanses and reduces like the carnal desires.

Mira: Huh.

Dawood: So if that moon is putting pressure on that water and that water is rising inside of the body and that rising brings up the carnal desires, then the response to that would be to fast.

And that's where the werewolf comes from.

Mira: Oh, wow. That's

Dawood: my thoughts,

Mira: huh?

Dawood: on the full moon, the werewolf is out. So in terms of lore, is it just human beings that are, full on, given into their carnal desires? Huh. And that's what the werewolf is. But anyway, that's just, yeah, that's my own theory as well too.

Mira: Wow. So

Dawood: again, just connecting that, that, idea of reduction. And it's really interesting because Islam talks about that. It says that, In our tradition that the devil, if you will, but this, these, negative forces, energies, right? Yeah. Runs through the veins of the children of Adam, so restrict them through fasting.

So again, that's, idea. we

Mira: all have the propensity, we all have the ability to harm,

Dawood: right? Absolutely. Yeah. abolition talks about that a

Mira: ton, right? It's like we all have that ability. We're in these human bodies, but how do we lessen the harm?

Dawood: Correct.

Mira: How do we try to minimize our harm?

Dawood: And so I think that,

Mira: and repair, obviously, when we've done harm,

Dawood: right? And, so I think just getting back to that idea of the best version of oneself. So again, so I think about that, like physically, right? And then again, we talked about charity and giving and these types of things. And so for example, someone is at the light and they're asked, they're, have a sign.

And, one of my teachers, he was saying, maybe you have a \$1 bill. You have a \$10 bill in your pocket. Or you're, he's actually, if you're walking by them and you're like, one 10, I'm too shy to pull both out. And he sees the 10 and

Mira: then

Dawood: I give him the one and you're a miser.

and, and so our teacher was like, no. you have to fight that because it's, because in that moment it, we believe like the devil's trying to give you out to get you away from

Mira: giving,

Dawood: So, you're lost. If you 1 10, 1 10, 1 10, you run that through your mind and you walk away, you end up giving nothing.

You lost, right? These kind of negative energy wins. So in that place, it's stopping and being like, it's okay. Embarrassment is okay. If I don't give the 10, it's okay. Maybe I give the 10. I don't know. But my point is, this is what I'm saying. Like these are the things that have brought to my life in terms of that's my north star.

That's the standard that I'm looking at. That's the giving is better than

Mira: not. Giving

Dawood: makes, giving, giving is better than not giving. But also being able to have a framework to look th to work through those things. And then two, understanding, that one gives and one will receive, right?

Which is really interesting. So true. Which is really interesting. There's a prophetic tradition once again, that wealth does not diminish through charity, right? Which is great, because now, and that's this thing, when I feel about the tradition that you're, there's these constant paradox, right?

wait, I'm watching my bank account decrease of just giving wealth, but my profit is telling me that it doesn't decrease. And so it's this idea again, that we're dealing in metaphysics. Yep. And again, and I, and others have seen that,

Mira: also, wealth is not just measured by finance, financial, right?

if you give, maybe the number might decrease, but what you gain is right. Much bigger than just the number right? I would love to, I'd love to hear an example of you talked about financial, just you personally in your life. Like how, these teachings help you become the best version of yourself.

giving concrete examples in what you feed yourself, how you go about economically. I would love to just get examples. Yeah. Like tangible examples Yeah. Of how you lead your life.

Dawood: So one, I would say that I try to live completely debt free. So credit card debt or other debt such as that because it's connected to that system, which is a, interest based system.

So that's just a standard that I have for that. from, economics. I would say, can I ask you a question about the debt? Yeah. Just

Mira: because I find it interesting. So a lot of people can't buy a home without Taking out a mortgage or in your position. Is it more about renting or is it more about Saving the money and then buying what you can afford.

Dawood: So a little bit of both. up to this point I've rented, because of that position and not feeling comfortable, it, there are now what we call Islamic financing options that exist, that are avoid interest. So it's a dollar for dollar amount that one can, receive a loan for.

So you borrow 4 25, you pay back 4 25 the, that exists. that's, where I'm at right now. And, hopefully we'll turn that corner soon and Be able to, because there's nothing wrong with, even, creating wealth for, one's children Or whatever that may be grand. Whatever it is. so that's the standard on, on, on, wealth, on food. I would say that, really looking at. One, trying to look at and source and, be cognizant of systems of where we're purchasing from, trying to do our best. that we can, in that, much easier when you have fewer children. of

Mira: course.

Dawood: I have three, so I know. Yeah, I have five. Oh, wow. Yeah. but, and then with that I think is, so my big jihad, I said the J word, I, maybe we should explain what that means too, because that's a big, Yeah.

Again, that's a big one, right? Big ERs. So really at the root of it, jihad is, to struggle. So now, taken to this, which is really interesting, it, holy war, which it doesn't translate. So here we go. Translation once again. You're, you, translate that as Holy War.

Holy War would be har Yeah. It's would be Holy War, which doesn't exist. There is no word for that in the Arabic language.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah.

Dawood: So this idea about struggling against oneself, my big struggle, what I took on about 13 years ago was to eliminate sugar from my Oh wow. From my diet. And you talk about inflammation, you talk about these types of things.

so no sugar. Sugar for the last

Mira: 13 years.

Dawood: Yeah. there, there have been slips.

Mira: Oh.

Dawood: But, and are

Mira: we talking about like added sugar? Are we talking even fruit

Dawood: pro? Sorry. So processed, processed sugar. Okay. Added sugars to things that's in. But like fruit is all good. Fruit's good. Yeah, yeah. And even for a.

For a sugar substitute using a date, sugar or monk fruit or molasses or honey. Those are pretty much the area that we function in. but to try our best to, and we've done it as a family,

Mira: that's amazing. To try

Dawood: our best to, to right time is gonna do to this thing what it's going to do. So whatever I can do to, aid in, and not, accelerating, excelling, accelerating that process, then let me do that.

And so that, and really looking to, to carbohydrates as well too is something a reduction in terms of breads and, gluten-free. And so this has been the journey for about 13 years in that space. Now I say that why? Because there's something which is okay, we worship, but there's something. C like a sweetness of worship.

And that sweetness of worship, I'm sorry, is hard to work through when you can barely get up and get down. if I need to prostrate, but I struggling because my back is inflamed and my hips are inflamed and my knees are inflamed, and now I'm that 55-year-old uncle sitting in a chair for his prayers because I can't fight and struggle against the lower self to reduce these things that I know are causing harm in my body.

So that's been a space that I've approached in terms of, food. so yeah. About that in terms of economics, food. Yeah. Can I ask you a question about

Mira: how do

you, because I know how I talk about food in general with kids and stuff And even sugar, to limit it.

how do you talk about, 'cause you've been doing it since your kids were young. Yeah. How do you talk about it with them? we, 'cause obviously they're exposed, there's birthdays. Yeah. There's stuff that they go to. Yeah.

Dawood: Yeah. and how do you teach them to discern? Yeah. And I think that's part of that challenge of the discipline as well too.

And it's really interesting and I'll go back to it, but just to, so my wife and I agreed probably about two years ago, like on the, so the end of Ramadan after fasting for a month, they're able to allow them, they can get some donuts and, Snickers and Reese's Cups and these types of things.

It's wild because they'll eat like wine and they'll, they're too much. Yeah, it's good. My kids too. I'm good. So that's been really too sweet. Yeah, exactly. That's been really incredible in that way. But I think that really, it's getting them to see that just because everyone else is doing it doesn't mean that it's the best for you.

And that's the kind of framework that we've put that we've put in front of them. and then I think it's incredible because now even when they have a choice, our, eldest daughter, she's out and working now, she's 22, and pretty much holds herself to that, same standard.

Now again, I think that, once you begin, and also education has been, when the Harvard Journal of Medicine talks about addictive properties stronger than heroin and cocaine, sugar for sugar. Yeah. that's something that we share with our children. It's not some kind of, alternative no position.

this is your science. Yeah. And you're seeing it right here. and it's very real. And and also seeing people that can't say no.

And what that does and what they actually have seen. the, impact of that on other people's lives. And so that also ties into discipline.

I think discipline is a big thing. Like self-discipline is a big thing. as well. So trying to get them to look at it in a holistic, way.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah. And then how about the, so there's the physical, how about like emotional?

Dawood: yeah. The emotional is something that, there's this concept in Arabic called tough.

We tough, we is almost like a giving up, if you will, or giving over things are because they cannot be any other way. If this were to be something else, it would be But it's not. And so it's to bring, I bring myself to this place of I have to accept things as they are, not as how I want them to be.

And that's been incredibly liberating for me.

Yeah.

And so I think that's something again, that Islam brought me to that I have to, I, can't allow myself to, as I said, to want something that's not, I can, want that, so to speak. But I have to come to the reality that it's, it isn't,

yeah.

and so that's something that I think in terms of how it's grounded me in, in, in that way. And, it's not easy. Yeah. No, of course not. It's not, easy to see what we're seeing right now. In, in, and in to see, oh God. Yeah. It's not, easy. And I have to stand in front of my congregation of 500, 600 people every Friday and talk about this.

Mira: Yeah. Oof. Yeah, it's, it brings me to surrender and the role of surrender. like this is a little sweet story for my grandma, but I, I was in high school or I was in college, and I'd say to my grandma, pray for me to do well on this test. And she would say, no, I'm not gonna pray for you to do well on this test.

I'm gonna pray for what's good for you. For your highest good. Yeah. I'm not gonna pray for you to do well. And that taught me a lot about there's like these forces at play that are so much bigger than us. Yeah. That we can want certain things, but there's things, and I remember that test in particular, I ended up failing that test and it was one of the best things that happened because it put me on this other path.

Yeah. And it's what's trusting that? Even the hard things, and real at this point in time, it's super hard with what we're seeing in the world, right? Yeah. Trusting that there has to be all this suffering or all this terrible stuff is ha There, there must be something better coming.

Like how do, how, maybe my question to you is how do we surrender and trust that like this is all Yeah. because it's hard. It's hard. It, yeah. Especially when you see so many people suffering on a daily basis. Yeah. Right now. Yeah.

Dawood: Yeah. there is, there's a, again, I believe that the Quran is God's word, literal.

And so when I read a verse that says, perhaps it is that you detest something and it is good for you, and perhaps it is that you love something and it is harmful for you, God knows and not. And so when I think about that, let's go back to now,

God knows, and not God in our. And this tradition is the all knowing. So all knowing is what all knowing is.

And it's that part that is just incredibly liberating for me. He knows what was and what is, and what will be and what was not. Were it to be. That's what's incredibly liberating for me. And so, now I attach the knowledge to wisdom and I taught and I attach the knowledge and the wisdom to, I only want good for my creation.

But this is something that I've said and, I was, when I was asked that question earlier about, the price that one pays. What if God's love language or not? What in my understanding is that God's love language is different than our love language. There's this incredible story in the Quran about the prophet Joseph.

he's, it starts off from a place of envy. His brothers are envious of him because he feels, they feel that their father loves him and his brother Benjamin, more than they do of, themselves. So they create a story and they bring him out, and then they, falsify his death and they throw him in a well.

And then he's taken, brought up from the well, and he's, brought to the home of the King of Egypt at that time. he's falsely accused of sexual, impro or I immorality. he's prisoned for some time. He's released from prison, and then he becomes, given the position over, the, distribution allocation of their food and grains.

And that makes it to the king of Egypt. Now, if you go to the beginning of the story, God describes it. Koran, as we will, convey to you we were going, we will, narrate to you the most beautiful story. I like 90% into it. You're like, where's the beauty?

Betrayed by bro, your brothers, your blood brothers thrown into a, falsely accused of a said sexual, immorality with the king's wife.

Falsely imprisoned as a result of it. where's the beauty? But all of that is a process that one goes through, or Moses being placed in, what is happening to the children of Israel at that time and placed in a basket and sent down a river.

So what does this look like?

And, that's, so that takes me then to have confidence that as God brings people through situations, that they may not be the manner in which we want to go through them.

But they always end up landing on their feet, if you will.

that's how I, that's how I continue to see this. And again, if you look at the what and Muslims have endured, throughout time, historically we'll say, but even as recent as now, it's really incredible in terms of the human.

Spirit. Spirit, yeah. And the ability to endure. and so I place my place, my, my, trust. place my trust in that. And I think much better translation of what you said of tough weed even. It is this idea of surrender, that I surrender my, my, my actions, my beings to, to God. And that's why I said coming to that realization, that acceptance of reality.

I would, I want it to be something else. I would absolutely want it to be something else, but it's not. So I have to move forward with this and I have to accept it the way and surrender to that.

Mira: Yeah. Like some people have, said, how do we stay hopeful in these times?

Yeah. What would you say to that

Dawood: we've endured through this and that it's not for. Waste. I honestly say, and I'll say this, I've said this in my congregation as well too. I don't know that I can answer that question for you.

Other than that, I have just seen what has happened before and where, it has come out from an end.

and that it's, temporal, it's not eternal. And that this abode is an abode of tribulation. It's not an abode of an angel, of a kind of purely peaceful realm, as much as we would want it to be. and at the end of the day, metaphorically speaking, that there is, justice. We may not meet justice here.

And this is actually, this is one of my, not, maybe not in this world.

Mira: ev everybody's try, a lot of people are trying, but yeah.

Dawood: Yeah. and, one of my teachers said this is an Algerian, like Bedouin like desert. Man who says if, this concept that justice is not met, then Hitler does what Hitler does, and then takes a cyanide pill and removes himself from the world, and there's no justice for the people that were the recipients of that evil, then this is a horrible place to exist.

And I, that's, so I hold onto that. I try to share that with people, and again, I, understand that it's difficult at this moment to make that through, but I think if we look, take it as near as civil rights and Jim Crow in this country, as I said, as being someone who's African American, hearing the stories of who, and, I'm living in the north.

we're in Boston where it's, the seat of the you Quakers and others that are, there to, aid in, in the abolition supporting abolitionist movement. I don't live in the South. I didn't grow up in Mississippi. I didn't grow up in South Carolina. I didn't grow up in So, if we look at that and again, what the human can endure and, go through, and that spirit just gives me hope to continue going through. I don't know. it's hard. It's really hard. I get it.

Mira: sometimes maybe because I grew up in Beirut and there was, war when I was young.

Yeah. And, Yeah. Some days I'm like, I don't wanna endure anymore. Yeah. do we ever get to rest? Yeah. and not keep, I have this joke where I say, I'm a professional endurer because I can endure anything. Yeah. But some days I'm like, I don't want to anymore. Yeah. this idea of that we're just constantly have to push and push.

Yeah. It's some days we just wanna rest,

Dawood: And I think that's okay. Absolutely. I think it's okay. It's okay to retreat whatever term that we want to use for it, but I'm just saying it's okay to, have that time. I'm exhausted right now.

I am, I'm exhausted. I'm, I can't, and this is one thing, just personally, so I was at Dartmouth at the time when the Haiti earthquake happened. I just remember one of the professors there saying that, he, was encouraging people not to continue to look at the imagery that was being, because he said that it borderlines, voyeurism Oh, really struck with me because the impotence, that one feels of consuming this like imagery over and over and over again.

it's absolutely taxing on, on, on, the soul. And so from that time, yeah, I don't watch, I don't watch these. These videos and these things like that, as soon as that stuff pops up or it comes into, mommy social media, I'm, I, just, personally, I can't allow that to come in on top of everything else that is happening.

That one, will read to know about, what is going on. And, again, that's just, that's some advice that I have that I've shared with people. But I also get it

because then when a woman tells me, I've had 27 members of my family killed, or this young boy that I just met the other day recently graduated college and said, 63 members of my family have been killed.

I'm just looking to see that maybe someone who's missing walks by and I see them in one of the images that's put this way. I get it.

Mira: Yeah, I get it. And also it's for me it's like also how do I balance, like witnessing also, like sometimes, if I don't. Witness what's happening.

it's easier to sometimes maybe turn away from, the horror, Absolutely. And sometimes I feel like I just owe them to witness what's happening, Absolutely. And honestly, all of what's happening lives in my bones. I don't even have to look at it. I know. I know it.

Dawood: No, And, I think that, and what you're saying here is not, is absolutely, I'm, I think, I feel like I'm saying it just in a different, manner. And for people to, to, be able to feel that, maybe I don't have to, like, you said, physically watch this.

and not for the idea, like you said, of separating oneself from it to act like it's not there and that, because that would contradict everything I did. No, it's, it is there and it's happening.

But I think that, again, viewing this, viewing carnage is really what I'm talking about. I don't know what it does, what it, what, benefit from that I gain from that.

And not that I have to gain benefit from it, but it's a gain benefit to be able to move forward and what I need to do and, and, support in a way that, that, we can we have a large, yeah. A large, population of Palestinians In our, in our congregation.

Absolutely. And Syrians and Libyans, and now Pakistanis and Indians and everything else that is Unfolding in these areas.

Mira: How do you hold the pain of your congregation knowing that so many people are suffering and witnessing suffering?

Dawood: I, don't know. I don't know if I have an answer to the how. but I think I understand the why. and that comes from probably not wanting to do it, but finding myself in this position again and again.

For what reason? I don't know. But I think that, maybe there's just been the blessing of being able to listen. but it's something that I've been asking myself a lot. If we talk about now this idea of somatic healing, right? And what does it mean to hold that, from others and, not let, it affect you.

I think that perhaps the only way that I've been able to

be able to move forward with that is, is actually releasing it through being out in, God's creation.

I, Texas, I haven't really worked that out yet. I'm, in my second year or approaching my, second year now, but in California, it was the Sierras, it was the, it was just as much as I could get out into the natural world and really ask God to take it from me.

because yeah, it is a burden.

There are things that you don't want to know. I wish you didn't tell me that. And then you can't, obviously out of confidentiality, you can't share that with anybody. So where does it go? And I've learned that if you just continue to hold that, I feel that's where

Mira: all the illness, comes from.

Yeah. To give it back to the creator, the

Dawood: cancer, the, yeah. if that's the, if that's the exchange,

Someone experienced it, someone shares it to me, God, please take this from me. Yeah. And if that's what the process is, then, and I think of it in terms of like purification. So if you're purifying water and you bring it through a filtration system, you have this terracotta filter.

Yeah. And it is pressure that will filter out the impurities to give you pure water. And if again, we are 70 plus percent Water that maybe that's the cycle that happens for my own purification. That, kind of. Water that needs to be filtered through from somebody else is released. It enters into me and then the pressure of kind of life allows it to be filtered in and hopefully shared with others in a way that's beneficial for them.

Mira: I forget where I saw you mention this, but it was some, based on some research where you said, there's been like research done about data that proved that more in, in places where there were more Muslims, there was less murders.

And I don't know where I saw you say that. Yeah, that was, but I was like blown away 'cause I'd never seen kind of data like that.

Dawood: Yeah. He is at u he's at uc. Berkeley, huh it was, He, gosh, I can't remember the name of the book right now, but yeah, he's a professor at uc, Berkeley, that, that, committed a lot of research.

It kind of combat

Mira: the,

Dawood: this narratives that are, thrown out there, which now it's like that

Mira: Muslims are somehow

Dawood: violent. yeah. Like, inherently violent. Yeah. That's the thing. It's, and, that's, gosh, I, just I try not to look at those, like at imagery, I try not to read comment section as well too.

I find those two to be do this very triggering. Yeah.

Mira: Yeah. they just, it's just, it's like the worst of humanity. Yeah.

Dawood: it. the thing is I think if you enjoy okay, like I enjoy debate. I enjoy but like rational discourse Yeah. When you move into just like lies and just, it's it's hard to deal with that, Yeah. And so it's really interesting because once you start to like you said, pull, this back. It's geez, we didn't, know. You know what, I think this whole thing as well too, and, again, I may perhaps I stand uncorrected, but last I knew, you talk about like welfare recipients who, are with the demographic in the country, that is the, highest per capita, right?

It's, not people of color and that data is there. And so again, it's something again, I'll, I, could easily find out, I, recall his, who that is, maybe even just send it to you. But yeah, he did a really interesting study. quite in depth on just looking at that and also re recidivism, right?

So you have a lot of Muslims that are converting inside of, while being incarcerated, and you look at like recidivism rates of those that are incarcerated and, embrace Islam and, those that don't, those numbers are Are there, there's something there about that. And again, this is that not everything is perfect, obviously, right?

But just that there is data that is showing that, is that, is, that is moving towards that.

Mira: So,

it seems like your life is very much, I heard that your wife is a, or training to be a midwife, which is a healing path on, in and of itself. I birthed with a midwife, my third child, so home birth, all that.

Dawood: Yeah. Yeah.

Mira: maybe tell me a little bit more about your. Healing path alongside also your family? Yeah. Just like how, as a family you've Yeah. yeah.

Dawood: So I would say definitely to that point, all, five of our children were born at home. with a midwife. and part of that was to avoid the system, the well, the system, and also to be able to control certain things that you would want to happen.

So within the Islamic tradition, the call to prayer is called, in a child's ear at birth. And, and It, this is something that's really important for us. Like a child is coming into this world, like that's the first thing that we'd like the child to hear. So it's one of the things we ask the midwives, that, they weren't Muslim, that, that who are midwives and absolutely respectful and that, or just, just things like that you get to control, like the amount of light you get to so the environment. So, the environment is, becomes yours. but then also, there were certain practices that we had in terms of that, like there was certain, there's a chapter of the 36 chapter of the Quran, it's called ene, and it's known as the heart of the Koran.

So this is something that we read, like once we found out that my wife was pregnant, we read it like every night. and then read it through birth, like during, labor. I'm sitting right next to my wife and reading this, during that time. So these are things that kind of help.

And how does, can you tell

Mira: us a little bit what that, chapter's

Dawood: about? Yeah, so it deals with three things. It deals with, If you will, calling to, to God. It's oneness, if you will, monotheistic, approach, to one's, accountability and then also kinda the reality of afterlife.

So the kind of three, the three, if you primary sections that or themes that are found in that, chapter. and actually that was the first chapter that I heard of the Koran obviously. DA is not my birth name.

so I did, actually change my name. David was my name and David is Daud.

And which actually found out from a friend of mine that David, from in Hebrew, is the beloved of God, which actually Daud is from Wud in Arabic, which is from the beloved of God. Oh. So

Mira: the same thing again,

Dawood: etymological root. She has the same, etymological root. and then Ya was the first chapter that I heard of the Quran.

I just, I just, I, just wept.

Mira: I

Dawood: just wept. I didn't know a single letter and like anytime that I would hear it just, the hair would stand on my body. I would just have like electricity running through. And so that's, that kind of connection, to that. And, Unbeknownst.

Then I came to find out later that it was considered the heart of the Koran.

so yeah, so that's, that. And I think for, for, children or life and, wife and these types of things, again, really trying to, bring out the best part of our, faith in a way that is not, kinda have them, understand that we believe that this is, something that is, a beautiful way of life for them.

And leaving it at that. And understanding that there are. Mysteries, understanding that there are realities that we can't, comprehend. And having that be the guide that takes us through this, and, upholding those things, and

supporting, others, whether they be family or whomever that are not Muslim or so, just something that, that, I think really, allows them to, here's another thing.

As an African American convert, there's a whole other side now of what does Islam look like for that, right? Because when we think about Islam, we think about it's foreign, it's, but no it's not. I'm, I am, I'm fourth generation here, and so my Islam is going to look different. even choices that we made for our children's name.

So our first daughter's name is Hsa very. Arabic name. We have a reason for that, but then we notice it's a little bit hard for our family. They're not Arabic speaking, So, next daughter is Miriam after my grandmother. and then Lena after my wife's great-grandmother, which obviously is an Arabic word as well too.

and then our third four, fourth daughter,

Mira: I love your four daughters. Yeah. Fourth daughter. Oh, blessing.

Dawood: we named her Hope. Am I Or just Hope. Hope. Oh. And but we did it for that reason, huh? Because what we found is that look, my, my family are, they're African Americans living in, New England.

And so if Islam is going to make sense to them at any way, then, yeah. Here's a, name. And, so I actually wanted her to, be named Sky. but I lost that argument with my wife because we have some at, That's a, that you'll find. A woman's name would be se And so my thought is in why can't we just translate into English directly from Arabic?

And we're all good, but, yeah, somehow it didn't, doesn't work that way, Which is interesting because other languages, Persian, Urdu, you'll find names that people will have that are not Arab, and no one bats an eye at it. And now all of a sudden you come and you say your name's hope.

or Eleanor, right? Imagine Eleanor. That's Eleanor.

Mira: Eleanor. Yeah.

Dawood: Yeah. Or this is my son, Alfred.

Farid. and so again, bridging that gap, that, that, being able to be a bridge between, cultures in that way is, sorry, children are our hopes for that, right?

Hope pun intended. And then we have a son, a named Abel.

Mira: Abel.

Dawood: Abel, yeah. after Adam, right? Cain and Abel. And just also someone within our family who was a really just happy man. And, who, whose name was Abel and just really enjoyed company with him and how he would make people feel.

So That's beautiful. That's

Mira: who that is. so a lot of people are struggling right now, I think. What we're currently witnessing in this country, what we're currently witnessing in the world on our phones every day. a lot of people are struggling with anxiety, with depression, with just the weight of the world and really having a hard time seeing a way out.

And I feel even some people are like, even this, idea of God, right? They struggle with that. They struggle. Like, where is God if all this terrible stuff is happening? And one, one thing before I get into to you answering this question, even if you could, some people are even turned off by the word God, because I think, religion in general has been either weaponized or used to push certain agendas, politics and religion colliding.

So maybe just start by saying, what does God mean to You you've talked, you've touched a little bit on, it just means all of creation. we've, used the word. God to like label that, but what does that even mean?

Dawood: Yeah.

Mira: And then how, do we, for people who are like losing hope, right?

Or not seeing how to get out of this, w what would you say to them?

Dawood: Interesting. could we do a whole nother could do another, could you another podcast? Yeah, totally.

Mira: We need a whole other hour for this one. Yeah.

Dawood: So I think the first question, what is God? again, I'll, perhaps put my theological cap on and just think about this, about, a supreme being that

exists outside of time and space. Because I think about this, I think about first principles. And if you think about first principles, determines that there has to be matter.

And now we're stuck.

And in theology it's called Infinite Digression. So I'm here because my mother's father is here, and their mother and father is here, and their mother father, like at one point it doesn't work.

So if you think about this in this concept of that's why for me it's easy to accept this idea. And again, as I asked my cousin, what happens if you're not right? When I was a young boy and, as could asking about his Islam, your cousin who converted to Yeah. To converted. And, he said, look, I've, tasted enough of this world and I feel like I'm living a righteous, I, like the way that I live right now.

And so this idea that, I feel that we're. this, idea that matter didn't exist and then was brought into existence. It's almost like we have to accept that as dogma.

Like a scripture almost. there's no questioning that. But yet you didn't answer the question

Where did matter come from?

And then I feel like not only where did matter come from that where did the space come from that mattered then was brought into

So then it created everything. Yeah.

Mira: where did it all come from? Where

Dawood: did it all come from? So I think to me, like that's this idea then of, and, then I think that as I, think about this then, I can't give it to just chaos.

Mira: That

Dawood: there is intelligent design. If you look about just like that the planet's. Are in orbit, but then the manner in which they are in orbit. Or something as simple as photosynthesis. Those trees are giving off oxygen right now that we see. Why not the reverse? Why aren't they taking an oxygen and letting out CO₂?

And our respiratory system is so when I look at these, it's too, for me, it's too much to be Yeah, it's too

Mira: intelligent too. Yeah. There's, a wisdom there. There's a wisdom

Dawood: there. And so to me, that's how I, that's what I'm thinking of when I think about God. That God, yes. A creator. The all wise, the all knowing, the all hearing, the, all seeing these types of, this, idea, the all, just the one who, says that my mercy outweighs my wrath.

So it's not this kind of, heavy handed, I'm waiting for you to make a mistake so I can, Blast you punish, you'll punish you. that's not the, what I understand from what is explained in terms of, religion. and, really, it's interesting here because we think about it in terms of theology, you have God's pleasure.

So therefore it seems like the opposite would be anger,

Mira: but

Dawood: it's not, it's actually justice.

So from a theological position, you have God's pleasure and the opposite of that then is his justice.

And so to me, like that makes sense. I'm not an angry God, you're not, your actions anger me per se, in the way that we, you're anthropomorphizing God's giving him emotion, so to speak, in those types of things.

And so that's this kind of convoluted way of trying to make sense and tie this all in. that's when I think about in terms of God, in terms of making sense, it's an incredible question. So this idea of why does evil exist in the world if this is an all merciful God, right?

And really I think what it comes down to is we can either have it one of two ways. We can have a way in which God, determines our actions, or we can have a way in which we have free will, or we have a way, actually, sorry, there'd be a third option where he determines some, and we have free will in some.

The understanding of this is that God set these, created this and set things into motion, if you will, and gives the ability for human beings to make, to have free will, to make choices. Now, it gets a little bit tricky in that God is not

uninformed of what the human being will do because of what we mentioned before.

That he knows these things. So your actions are existing. With inside of God's knowledge.

You're not doing something and God is informed.

So therefore these actions that we see in the world, per se, from human being, natural disasters, something different.

And, that's a whole kind of different

Mira: Yeah.

But man made harm answer, but

Dawood: manmade harm is from human beings, free will. And so if you have the free will to choose that, then you have the concept of what I said, of God not being angry with you, but you have to deal with God's justice. Then because the parameters have been set in terms of how we are to

Mira: act

Dawood: now, will we live in a perfect world?

No. But the kind of disregard of those things like that to me is the point that, I think would reduce that incredibly in terms, in term, in terms of that. And, that's what I find now. And, like you said, even with inside of religion, I get it, But I think that's the human experience. And I think we, at times, we wanna shift that responsibility to God and not accept it within ourselves.

And so even if we began to say, okay, what about national disasters? Then there's a verse in the Quran that talks about that says, that, tribulation manifests itself on the land in the sea from what Man's Hands has brought, to give them a taste of what their hands have brought, but in hopes that they'll return like that they will stop doing what they're doing. So again, do we now just shift this to do I just take any responsibility in these types of things?

And again, we. Say, okay. Like scientifically that this is the cause of this and this is the cause. And that's absolutely true. But again, if we go back to this idea

that metaphysically there are other things at play, if we talk about karma, if we talk about these types of things, we have to be able to apply it equally in all spaces.

And so that's something that I think about in terms of, that as well. again, doesn't make it any easier. And I don't know that maybe again, is it definitive?

Mira: No. do you feel that being able, the going on this healing journey, you have to tap into this wisdom, this intelligence, this life force that's bigger than you, bigger than this material world, that there, that is such a powerful way to be on a healing journey?

Dawood: Do I think there's a level of, accountability. That one is. That one will achieve when there is a tying into that, Being, if you will. and it's something that I think has happened throughout history, has the ability

Mira: to But

Dawood: there's also exists what exists inside of the human being.

Have the propensity to go in either, direction. I do think that, that, does bring out the highest form because what has been shared of what human beings will do, comes from the one who knows his creation. And again, I, use the masculine, but in Arabic, you know this, right?

There is no, it's not gender. Gender. There's no gender of go of with, God. Yeah. Just the masculine is used because that's what was used in terms of him. Him, yeah. that's another, that's, explaining himself. That's, another

Mira: interesting thing that There is no gender, even though we default to the masculine, but there is no gender, It's like a, and I always go, I'm like, I'll say, you know what, if it was a, what if it, this whole thing is female? Or feminine, but yeah, we maybe because of patriarchy and everything else, we default to the male gender. But that is not, that is not true.

Dawood: No. Because now, that's a violation of a theological principle that lae God is unlike his creation. So you can't attribute, you can't bring attributes of the creation to the one who, he's not bound by time nor space nor directionality or light gender or light or dark or gender or anything such as this.

Yeah. so that's this ability to be outside Of of, what, and now that's another thing that I think about. Very simple. One of my teachers just said this to me that the

one who sets the laws must be neither able to benefit nor be harmed by them. I just thought that was incredible.

To have a, legal system.

Because now we see what that looks like. in both directions.

Mira: Yeah. it's interesting that what, I just remembered like a lot of people, when I use the word Allah, people think that's like a Muslim god.

Exactly. And I'm like, no. Yeah, exactly. Allah just means God or the creator or the higher, the per the, I can't even say the person because it's not a humanly being. that created all the entity that created it all, and it's There's even confusion there that Allah somehow is like this mu Muslim god, which is really, and it's no, Christians call Allah, and Jews call Allah like where I'm from.

Yeah. Like every, all the religions call God Allah, because that's what the name of God is in Arabic.

Dawood: Yeah. My, my Quranic instructor, when we, when I was leaving Damas, he gave me a Bible in Arabic. It's clearly written Allah, for the entire, all throughout.

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: So that's really, wild, isn't it?

But it's all the distortions, right? Like Allah, you're worshipping the other God, Christian saying that. So then what do you say about your Arab Christians? Oh, wait. Have you not thought about that yet?

Mira: Yeah,

Dawood: And but again, but just take this, let's just take two things. Let's just take Spanish and French are the, are Spanish speaking people forget even.

Christians, we'll say Christians. 'cause it makes the argument much easier. But are, Spanish speaking Christians saying Dios? is that, a different God, A Spanish God Is di

Mira: do a French God. A French

Dawood: God?

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: so this is this, which is really interesting.

There's a lot that explains this in the beginning of Jefferson's, Koran, I don't know if you've read this. Thomas Jefferson, head of Quran and he talks about that just this, where this is coming from. And, in the beginning of it, he talks about this, is something that's happened.

it, was talked about. Muslims and actually Catholics were, placed in a similar category because of allegiances to other than the Christian Judeo God.

and so it's, very telling in there because then it moves, into the easiest of that claim, which is linguistic.

and which is just so absurd. It goes back to, the beginning we were talking about translating Allah Akbar's death to America. It couldn't be furthest from the truth. Yeah.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah. It

Dawood: glorifying God.

Mira: it's the, it fits the, like propaganda, the lies percent, the agenda of vilifying, dehumanizing a group of people, like that's all it is.

They're controlling a narrative in order to harm a group of people. And they do it to Muslims just like they do it to African Americans. It's

Dawood: no, absolutely. and, so it's really telling, I feel like, because at the root of all of that. In my opinion, and what we're talking about on this podcast is it's 'cause you're unhealed.

That's my opinion. Oh, I, you're I, I can't think of it at any other way. You're, not allowing yourself to be healed. Yeah. Wholly,

Mira: you're just holding onto all that, all the, things that either you've been told or you've been led to believe and you're holding onto those and somehow those

help you belong somehow or help you reinforce your story versus letting these things get healed and you becoming free.

Dawood: Yeah. And then is it connected to a scarcity mindset, what you do you know what I mean by that? Yeah. So it's like, what would happen if you opened yourself up to learning

Mira: about this? These people? Yeah. This or that or the, yeah. And

Dawood: then what does healing look like? And because, Then, it's perpetrated, it's continued, cycles.

Cycles, yeah, of course. So then, how do you break that cycle? Yeah. Like your fear committed or you will be,

Mira: committ will be put on your kids and your kids will stay in that victim mindset or that like fear mindset or, yeah.

Dawood: And so I think to me, like that's, what my hopes are in terms of healing.

So it can come to that place and, I would love for it to be like through Islam, but if you find it in another tradition and that's, yeah, that's on. That's incredible. But the idea is, at first, like, that healing has to happen then. Yeah. It's almost like the

Mira: most powerful thing we can do is just heal ourselves.

I, like,

Dawood: forget about doing all these things in the world. Just that's the thing too. I feel like that almost becomes a distraction. I'm gonna be quite honest with you, and working at, with, college age students being in the academy for 17 years. This whole idea like, you're gonna change the world and save the world.

It's naive. I'm sorry. Y say when I, I was young and I thought I was gonna change the world, now that I'm older and mature, like I found out I have to change myself. And I think that the, the soon, because to me, what is the world? The world is how we act in it.

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: So, in essence,

Mira: the inside flex on the outside, inside Infl on the outside,

Dawood: right?

Yeah. So, move inward and, heal and, let's give how novel an idea that is. let's like, what, would that, look like? What would that look like?

And then what are the accountability that I hold myself to if I violate that?

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: yeah. Yeah.

Mira: I wanna talk about it. Just, my last two little things I wanna touch on is one, when I was, I wanna say 14 or 15, I used to go, we used to go every, We used to have a lot of like rituals and traditions, and we had these elders in the family and we'd always go visit them. And one of them was my great aunt, and she was a, double PhD dean of a university.

she wrote books, as this ama incredible Muslim woman, She has books written under her name, and I remember she would let me go into her library. And I remember once at 14 or 50 and my parents are having coffee with her and I'm in her library.

And I remember like pulling out this book and I was so fascinated because it was about pleasure in Islam.

Dawood: Okay.

Mira: And I was like, wow, like I've never even heard of this or thought of this or, because you think like religion comes to maybe like constrict or give you, and I was like this whole Atlas Pandora's box open.

I actually, it's the still one of my treasured books that I have in my room and it just talks about like pleasure almost. In a certain context, being blessed, like Having pleasure be, when I think about maybe different, belief systems or, where pleasure is, may be seen as something that's wrong or something that needs Yeah.

Yeah. So maybe talk to a little bit pleasure and Islam, because I remember being like, whoa, this is a whole world,

Dawood: It's a great, it's a great question, and I think that many people struggle with that I've come to find over the years of the work that I've been involved in, is that I feel that concept is like, somehow, suffering is, the only way or something?

No. it, suffering, allows me to know that I am being, that I am, that it establishes the foundation of my relationship with God.

And so therefore, if I am, receiving pleasure, that maybe that relationship is severed. And I'm like, no. Now obviously we're not talking about extravagance and these types of things, but if that's, if that were the case, then how do you square what God says in Quran and ask for the bounties of your Lord extort?

share them. Share them. and, that's something that I feel really is something that, we need to look at because we're stuck then in this place. So victim is victimhood is, one thing as well. But I think, but the second is also this idea that we're, we, cannot experience happiness and joy and these types of things, cave.

Yeah.

like, it's not true. It's not true. Yeah. it's this idea that you'll have, two pa, like there'll be two paradises so to speak, right? Gen 10, the Quran talks about that one in this world and one in the next. And or the home being a place of Sina, right?

Like this place of, tranquility and joy and happiness. Yeah, because I just, I can't accept the fact that, that, reality would be that God wants everyone just to be miserable. Do you know what I mean? Yeah. And then come to me and then you'll be happy. yeah. Okay.

Yeah. No, how, would you be able to sustain that? Yeah. How would you be able to sustain that? If, you know that were the perpetual state Yeah. Perpetual state. That

Mira: pleasure only comes in an afterlife. In an

Dawood: afterlife.

Mira: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I find it really interesting 'cause I, remember even saying to my husband, this, which I don't think he knew, and it's like even just how much, like in the context of marriage or partnership, how even just like.

the, coming together of partners is actually like, it's a cel, it's like a celebration. It's like a joyous thing. Yeah. It's not a thing to be shamed or a thing to be looked down upon, or it's not a sin or it's not all these things. And I remember being like, whoa, that's such a different approach.

No,

Dawood: absolutely. And I think that this is something that, that, that is established foundationally inside of our tradition. So there's a context again, it's a Hadith that talks about that, that, there's a reward that is given when two, a married couple are, together intimately, right?

And the companions were dumbfounded. They said, oh, messenger of God. there's a reward for that. And he says, yes. Why? Because when the opposite is the case, right? When there's illicit relationships that happen, it's punishable. Meaning it's a, it's, a, it's sinful in front of the eyes of God.

So God is not just going to like, Hey, don't do that because it's sinful. He's also telling you, Hey, do this because it's pleasurable. It's pleasurable

Mira: and beautiful and all that. Yeah.

Dawood: Yeah. and one, you enjoy it. And also it's something that I'm calling you to, to towards. So I dunno. I just, I found that to be Yes.

Really telling. And it is that, that, that, reality of our existence.

Mira: the last question before I go to my last thing is community is such a huge part of this spiritual practice, and I feel it's foundational. Like we're always in community and we always invite people into our community, maybe speak to the importance of community.

Dawood: Yeah. I think that, for me, I, I just, I really love what, like it talks about. Water. It gives this concept of like water and rocks. So the water will take the form as it flows over rocks and Islam is that way as it comes through culture, it moves through cultures. So I love seeing the practice of Islam through different cultures and then when people can come together to witness that with each other, to understand that with each other.

I had, Ulma?

So an Iraqi man gave me Ulma on Saturday.

When I took the lid off, I'm like, where's the DOMA to make it with cabbage?

Mira: Oh, did I make it

Dawood: with grape leaves? It's

Mira: oo. It's more like min. We have both. We have both.

Dawood: but it was really interesting, my daughter and I, and, I think that they used maybe like a kind of grain pasta inside of it.

Wow. I'm getting into food. Interesting. But anyway, it was just, yeah. My point is that, this idea because everyone, there's, incredible stories. that's the thing that I think about. There's in story stories, there's journeys, there's history. There's all of this richness that comes into your existence and your being.

And so for me, that's why I think that community, that's what community represents the opportunity for that joy to be shared in that way. Again, pleasure. But, I think that, this communal aspect also, there's also a pragmatic. there's a pragmatism to, to that community as well too.

And so now that's one of the wisdoms of the five time daily prayer of being in the mosque of coming and being together. when, if obviously if one can or however, many times, maybe it's evening, it's two right now, you can do it in the, we the morning prayers at 5 45, right now, the evening prays at 10:00 PM Maybe those are the two times at 1:00 PM or just one of them.

But my point is that there's some point in the day that you're connecting with people daily.

Mira: And I

Dawood: think there's something telling about that. because, maybe there's a proximity to people at work, but we don't gather with them or other than work. There's not a thread that brings us together beyond that.

A And I think that, and I think that this kind of does that in a way. And so what's really telling about that as well too is that then that kind of formula, if you will. It's actually global, because if you walk into any mosque and you walk into any congregational prayer, it's the, same thing is going to be required, expected.

And known. and so it builds a community in that way. that is that I think is, quite beautiful.

Mira: Yeah. It really is. prayer. When you, literally pray, you're bowing down. You're surrendering, you're on your knees.

There's something for me that, maybe because I grew up seeing my grandmother pray, but there's something inherently peaceful in that, because when you're on your knees and you're bowed down, you can't harm anyone.

Which I find so powerful. Like you are literally in surrender. Yeah. I would love for you, if there's anything you wanna elaborate on that, the power of that, of saying, I surrender and I bow down and, Yeah. it's interesting because I can't harm you if I'm in that physician.

Yeah. I literally

Dawood: cannot physically harm you. So, I would say two things. One is, let's take it back to even, preparing to pray. And it's natural element, right? So you're using water to wash yourself, to pray. So you're washing your limbs, you wash your face, you wash your hands, you wash your head, you wash your feet, and you're coming in contact with the natural world.

And, actually in a, in society, in a traditional Islamic society, prostration would not be on a synthetic carpet. It would be on some form of a natural

Mira: fabric,

Dawood: right? So you're coming in contact with

Mira: the natural world.

Dawood: this idea of actually, there are three stages, if you will.

There's, the standing stage, which is km. So think about that. Like I'm standing in front of God. Now, if I were going to take. Humility to the next level, then I

actually bow to God. But then the third stage, which is the final aspect of the prayer then is to actually prostrate, like you said, and bring what is the highest, which is the brain.

the head is considered the highest, physically, but also metaphorically of our intellect and our face and these types of things. And actually I take the most sacred part of my being and place it in the lowest place on for the sake of God. And there's a tradition that says that, the servant is most closest to his Lord in the state of prostration.

And again, not gender specific, but the masculine is used. The servant is most closest to their Lord in the state of prostration. And I think that, there were. There was a profound experience. I had one time, it was in New Hampshire, and I prayed outside and I remember my forehead touching the ground and it was really cold.

And I remember just saying to God, bury me in a place where it's warm. I don't want to deal with this.

Mira: That's why you're here.

Dawood: God

Mira: brought me to Texas. Amazing. so when my, my, when my grandmother passed away and we had her funeral, there was all these people that showed up that we couldn't figure out who they were.

Yeah. So many people showed up to pay their condolences and we couldn't figure out, my mom couldn't figure it out. My uncle, my aunts, nobody knew who, these people that were just showing up and showing up and. My grandmother because, she survived the, became a refugee, all that stuff, my, grandfather ended up dying through that whole process.

ended up raising four kids on her own. And when my uncle, who was the eldest got to a certain age, he started supporting his mom. And as he got older, he supported her as much as he could, more and more. And so at some point in her life, she was able to maybe, probably in her fifties, finally be able to do the things that she really like never got to do when she was young, which is like travel or, do all the things that, once we have money we like to do.

And we just thought, she was basically spending this money on her life and living a good life. And when. She passed and all these people started showing

up and we started trying to inquire who are all these people? We found out that all these people that were showing up at her funeral were people who she had put through college and she had put through college with the money that my uncle was giving her to live a good life.

And she never told anybody.

Dawood: Yeah. Amazing.

Mira: And that for me, like represents the beauty of. Being a person on, the spiritual practice. Yeah. to not only be generous and not only to give, and she was literally putting PEs in your refugees through, college, Yeah. And it's like not only to be giving, but also to not feel like you even have to tell anybody about your giving.

And the power of that.

Dawood: That's, the ethics again, when you said there's an, from our tradition that the, right hand gives such that the left hand doesn't know meaning, it's like it's in such secrecy. Yeah. Which is, counterintuitive to now having a building named after.

That's not from our tradition. It's not from our tradition. Our tradition is one of a loss of sincerity, and that sincerity is between you and God. If other people find out, then that's fine, but. But to hear that God bless her. it, these are the examples, right?

And, to be able to witness that and to see that in the human spirit, that, to give, even though the Quran talks about that, I'm not saying that this is the case, but it's just that those will give even the poverty be their lot, and to, that's what I was talking about. So again, it's hard for me to articulate, but being called the best version of myself, That those are the, doors that I get to open and say, okay, what's, this one look like now? And, go spend some time in there. This idea of people showing up and paying their respects to that is again, what's also, I think is just foundational to, to expressing gratitude to someone that, you know, that, that lived, this tradition, right?

I think it's very different of what are you gonna, what are you gonna do?

And so I ask my students that a lot. what are you, gonna do?

Mira: Who are you

Dawood: gonna be and what are you going to do?

And that's, this kind of, again, where I talked about this kind of alchemical process, We're trying to get to that state of gold.

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: and these, this is a part of the elixir that helps us

Mira: Yeah.

Dawood: To, to, that. and, that, that's also something I feel is incredibly beautiful about just funerals

Mira: In our

Dawood: tradition Is I don't have to know You and, and, people would just show up.

Because, one of God's creation is returning back Home.

Mira: Yeah. And how we have it over three days Yeah. And the community comes together. And even how we have the 40th day and, the community comes back together.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. There's such power to that.

Dawood: Yeah. And it's really interesting because, that, calling, remember I say when a child is born, the call to prayer in the ear of a child is because there is no call to prayer in a funeral prayer.

So it's a representation of, it's, it is the, sendoff, if you will, delayed

for that time.

Mira: It's interesting that you say there's no prayer. 'cause I've always heard prayers at the

Dawood: a call to prayer. Oh, call to prayer. So the avan, so I'm talking about the avan. Okay. Okay. Yeah. So the prayer itself, absolutely. Yeah. But there's not a, there's not a call to prayer. The The, yeah. At a za.

Yeah. Beautiful. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. No, thank you.

Mira: Thank you. That was so beautiful.

Dawood: Yeah.

Mira: Yeah. I don't know if there's anything that you feel left, if there's anything left unsaid or if there's anything that you feel called to share that maybe we didn't cover.

Dawood: I don't know. I think about what guidance I didn't even know I needed.

And I think that's what I was hopeful for. And that's what I've found in this, way of life. Of

how to, speak to my wife, how not to speak to my wife.

How to spend my money, how not to spend my money.

how to use my time, how not to use my time, how much to eat, how, why not eat. I think this is, something that, again, is just mind boggling to hear that this, Muslims don't share our same Judeo-Christian values or whatever one wants to say out of. That's why I think ignorance is very, tough, which is really interesting. I'll just share this. Yeah. 'cause the madrea That became a big buzzword around Obama attending a madrasa in, in, in, Indonesia, which is just Mada translation

Mira: as a school.

Dawood: But it's actually interesting because in Arabic osa, so to learn right, to learn, and then you have here, which is madrasa, the place where you learn Literally is translated as the place where ignorance is efface. Because, and Arab bar means who to efface ignorance.

Mira: So

Dawood: that's what we're after.

And then to be a Paul.

Mira: Yeah. A student to be a seeker. A seeker,

Dawood: A secret Muslim. Like the, linguistic.

yeah.

So you, yeah. So you have the, just the etymological, like pure root, if you will. Literal translation. Toler sharing to seek something. So what are we seeking?

We're seeking understanding, so a face ignorance and seek understanding.

Mira: I love thinking about it that way, like that it's a spiritual practice to seek understanding what a powerful thing. Yeah. Yeah. So what do you say to your wife? Or not say to your wife?

Dawood: Yeah. No, I think it's, I think it's more so in terms of one of our teachers one time was talking about like in an in if, one is arguing that this kind of one upmanship

because he said at that time the devil is there with a stick of honey and it tastes, it's, sweet, on the tongue. Okay. So the not saying is. It's better for me not to, respond now because it's ego. It's not gonna bring us to reconciliation. It's not gonna bring us to the place that we want to go or need to be, so to speak.

I'm just gonna continue responding to you with ego and this whole idea of that we're seeking as well too. And that is, is to right, be the one who fears the station of his Lord and prevents himself from his desires, from his ego, from his lower self. Genital then, paradise is the, ability for such a person.

So keeping those principles there and, not being able to, hold oneself back and every cell is firing to go get your, go, get your revenge or get your, go get your, whatever that is. So that's, the, just where the standard is on that.

Mira: Thank. Thank

Dawood: you are you're very welcome.

Mira: We could talk to you for hours. If you enjoyed this conversation, please subscribe, and share with a friend. You can connect with into healing on TikTok and Instagram for more inspirational and behind the scenes content, and visit

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