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Joy and Happiness in Education and Spirituality: Teachings of Imam, Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr

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**JOY AND HAPPINESS IN EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY:
TEACHINGS OF IMAM, SHEIKH ISKENDER ALI MIHR**

A Dissertation Presented

By

IBRAHIM TANER OKATAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT

JOY AND HAPPINESS IN EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY: TEACHINGS OF IMAM, SHEIKH ISKENDER ALI MIHR

SEPTEMBER 2010

IBRAHIM T. OKATAN, B.S., MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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The purpose of this study was to bring more clarification to the concepts of *spirituality* and *happiness*, their meaning, attainability, and position in the field of Multicultural Education. In general, people think they will find joy and happiness if they graduate from a post-secondary educational institution with an undergraduate or graduate degree, find a good work environment, position, salary, living standards, status, etc. Yet, in the real world there may be a different way to find *genuine happiness and joy* which is fair, simple, easy and equal for all human beings even those who cannot afford higher levels of education.

In order to present the data, the study discussed the life, philosophy and teachings of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr, president of Mihr Foundation in Turkey, International Mihr Foundation in the United States and University of Allah in Virginia, and utterly an Ottoman. The review of literature was also included to assist the readers to grasp the different perspectives of the subject matter.

Education should be inclusive and equal for all and so should joy and happiness! In today's world where diversity is the key factor for almost every community, it is

important for educators (teachers/instructors/administrators) to know what shapes students' lives. This study encompassed the idea that only educating our students' minds and bodies is not enough, and without spirituality the education is not complete. As Pamela Leigh (1997) stated, "...acknowledging that people come to work with more than their bodies and minds, they bring individual talents and unique spirits" (p. 26). Students also come with their unique spirits and we should take them as a whole and value them with all the qualities they possess. Nurturing their *spirit* should be part of our school system. No matter if they believe in God or not, educators should be ready to address the aspect of spirituality and religion.

The research was to bring a greater understanding to questions such as how we can better accommodate students' different spiritual beliefs, what the pros and cons are of bringing them together or keeping them separate. In order to answer these questions in a fashionable manner, we need to know "how much the spiritual beliefs of these students shape their cultures and their lives."

In a greater context, the questions like; what we really know about 'true' Islam as one of the fastest growing beliefs in the U.S., is it any different than other beliefs or is it the same, is there a way to eradicate the Islam-phobia that occurred after the 9/11 attack, what was the Ottoman Islamic model, were also answered.

As educators, how do we cope with students who hear voices and start shooting around in a schoolyard, or students who binge drink or get suicidal? Even more importantly, how do we help the remaining population live a healthy and happy life without thinking of ending their own or others' lives, as these examples turn out to be a daily life for us all!

The remainder of this study looked at the “neutrality” of the school systems in the United States. Should educators stay neutral or not will be each individual’s decision to make.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” [Declaration of Independence]

Statement of Problem

We live in a world where there is war at almost every corner. In some countries, people are killing each other and doing this in the name of “God.” In contrast, since the beginning of human kind, we all have tried to find the ways to achieve *happiness and joy*. No doubt being able to live a happy life is indeed the most important part of our lives. But, when you take a look at people today, the majority of them are far from being happy. Everybody is seeking ways to joy and happiness but usually in materialistic things. Yet, finding joy and happiness without a spiritual life is almost next to impossible. What educators (teachers/instructors/administrators) are dealing with in these days are rather different than what they were dealing with 20-30 years ago. In the past we did not have the issues of firearms and knives in schools. The rates of binge drinking (Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt & Lee, 1998), drug use (Johnston, O’Malley, & Bachman, 1993), sexual assaults (Gidycz, Coble, Latham, & Lyman, 1993) and suicides (Jin & Zhang, 1996) were not as high as we have today.

Pretty much the students are seeking all options available to find *happiness and joy*. Therefore, as educators, we need to offer them the means of finding what they are looking for in the safest and easiest way possible, without having them try neither the hard way nor the dangerous way.

Alternatively, according to the *seven stages* of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr: 1) Wishing to redeem the spirit back to the Creator before death, 2) Taking a pledge of allegiance to a Murshid/Spiritual guide, 3) Submitting the spirit back, 4) Submitting physical body, 5) Submitting soul, 6) Embellishing the soul's heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance, 7) Submitting Free will, which Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr presents, *joy and happiness* is possible even at the very first stage for all (Mihr, 1993). Beyond that, finding *joy and happiness* in the interior world, exterior world and in our relations with the Creator are all possible and *promised*. Development within these seven stages grants everyone *joy and happiness* and gets them to the point of being a better person in every aspect.

Even though there are a considerable number of studies on the topic of "happiness" (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978; Easterlin, 1974; Layard, 2005; Lieberman, 1970; Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryff, 1989; Veenhoven, 1991), almost none of their research included the spiritual perspective. Therefore to have a fair understanding of the topic, spiritual aspect should be included. To include a spiritual aspect is especially important in educational settings, because, the complete idea of happiness can and should be taught within our educational institutions.

Purpose of Study

Can the doctrine of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr help people attain 'happiness'? Do all sacred scriptures prescribe human beings' happiness as Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr claims? Why would anyone dedicate a life for others' happiness? Unless we can educate people in regards to respecting different points of views, beliefs, we can never bring peace amongst the people of the world today. For this reason, we

need to prove to all people that in the core, the significance of belief is the same for each and every one of us.

Spirituality and Religion shape the culture of each and every society: we therefore need to carefully look into this notion as Multicultural Educators. Linking the teachings of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr will bring more clarity to the realm of Multicultural Education. This study will also examine the Ottoman Educational System as a Multicultural educational model.

This study was to reaffirm the importance of acknowledging and respecting differences, ideas, cultures, and beliefs as Multicultural Education would stress. After the unfortunate and heinous attacks of 9/11, the importance given to these concepts seem to fade out. In order to reassure the vitality of these concepts, this research study did not discuss their importance, but discussed their attainability by anyone and everyone with a simple “condition” which Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr eloquently explains.

The research was also to empower students, educators and the general public in regards to staying away from harmful ways of living such as binge drinking, drug abuse, sex offense, committing suicide, etc.

Significance of Study

Today’s world is often chaotic and full of hatred; yet, the means of education and knowledge are much better than decades ago. We have better standards of education, more computer use with access to incredible amount of information via the Internet, more experts and professionals in their fields, more doctors and professors and more people pursuing higher education. In spite of all these positive developments, the world is still far away from *peace and happiness* with much bloodshed, terrorism, etc. As a follower,

and an individual who experiences the *joy and happiness* which Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr teaches, this researcher was brought to the point that *everybody should learn this phenomenon and experience such joy and happiness as well.*

The biggest significance of this study was to shed more light on the importance of *unification of all religions for world peace* and the role education could play in making this possible. It is only through education that people can receive proper knowledge and be informed, whether being students or teachers. As, religion and spirituality are very sensitive subjects for many, such topics may appear to be the job for the clergy to some. However, unless we educate our teachers about these facts, we can never save innocent people's lives, as people all over the world die due to faith based disputes and even wars. In my opinion, it is unfortunate that the majority of clergy are too busy teaching their congregations that those outside of their faith are dangerous, enemies and may be even killed in the name of "God." As it was reported by Dana Milbank in the November 30th, 2002 issue of the Washington Post, the president of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) Pat Robertson stated, "Adolf Hitler was bad, but what the Muslims want to do to the Jews is worse." In the same article Milbank also mentioned how Rev. Jerry Falwell, one of the most influential and secular leader in the world, portrayed the Prophet Mohammed, as a 'terrorist' (p. A04). In his report in the Chicago Tribune, Rowley S. H. mentioned how youth were given the 'key to paradise' if they turn into suicide bombers and become martyrs.

Clearly history repeats itself once again. This was the main cause for many people--especially the jobless, thieves, beggars, etc.--to join the Crusades during the 11th

century in the name of Christendom. Unless we prepare our teachers with the factual Spiritual and Religious phenomena, world peace will always remain a dream.

Leaving the ego-centric way of life where we always hear the word *me* behind and getting to human-centric way of life where we hear more *you* and *others*, is more simple and closer than anything else when we start putting others ahead of everything else, and when we come after everybody else. This is the only way to have *joy and happiness* in this world as well as in the hereafter. Moreover, having such *joy and happiness* would not even cost anyone a dime; all it takes is to make a simple *wish*.

If we cannot make this happen, it will be almost impossible to stop drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assaults, violence, high rates of suicides, chaos and all other wicked ways of life. However, almost everyone is seeking the means of finding a better way of attaining *joy and happiness*. All we need to do is present it to them as part of their education to help them in their pursuit of happiness.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms gave direction to this study:

Dhikr: Remembering and repeating the name of God repeatedly.

Happiness/Joy: Having peace and serenity within the inner world (finishing the fight between our Spirit and Soul), exterior world (finishing the fight with other people around us), and relations with the Creator (fulfilling what is commanded and continuously staying away from what is prohibited).

Hereafter: Life after death.

Irshad: Guidance of God, which is same for every individual.

Mahdi Rasul: Messenger that will come right before the end and teach the truth to all mainstream religions that actually there is no other religion but the ‘religion of Abraham.’

Murshid: Religious guide who is appointed by God rather than any individual who claims to be one on his/her own. A true Murshid is the one who initially wished to redeem the spirit to God, took a pledge of allegiance to his Murshid, fulfilled the submission of spirit-physical body-soul to God, had an embellished heart and/or repented before God with unbreakable repentance, and finally submitted the free will to God as well to be ordained by God to guide others.

Rasul: Messenger of God. Since Adam and Eve, the Rasuls come consecutively (one after another) and they will keep passing on the message of God in an undistorted form until the end of the world.

Sheikh: Ordained spiritual leader.

Limitation of Study

This study focused primarily on the concept of *joy and happiness*, why people pursue this concept so hard and still cannot have it. Being a philosophical study, empirical data would not be available. On the other hand, even though there was impressive amount of empirical research on the topic of ‘happiness’ and even a ‘library of happiness’ by Veenhoven, the *spiritual perspective* unfortunately was not included for the benefit of readers. Research related to spirituality however did not include the Islamic nor Ecumenical point of view.

Common notions about getting to the point of real *joy and happiness* in three Holy Scriptures (Torah, Bible, Quran) were presented. The interpretation of these verses

from the Scriptures will still be up to the readers' own understanding. Moreover, the primary source of this study was the Islamic faith's perception without any twist.

The adaptability of this study initially would be primarily limited to certain groups based on their spiritual beliefs, faith and creed.

Even though Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr perfectly explains through revelations that since the existence of humankind there has been only *one spiritual philosophy* in the universe with many different rituals and ceremonies, this still could be considered by some people to be his own way of thinking. It was expected this study would support his point, to get everyone to come to a consensus for peace and happiness in the world.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Multiculturalism

Multicultural education has many different definitions. In his book *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, James A. Banks (1984) described multicultural education as an educational environment that is safe for different cultural groups of people, which enables all groups the very same educational standards. Banks primarily talked about the importance of ethnic studies and its role in multicultural, multiethnic and global education settings. When we look at the educational system in the United States, we see private schools for Catholics, Jews, Muslims, etc. These schools are there not only to offer religious curriculum. Religions also shape the culture of these people who are willing to get educated. The necessity of understanding the religious and spiritual beliefs of today's student population is so obvious. Fortunately we have begun to give some importance to the cultural differences of students within the school system. However, we need to know more about the spiritual beliefs of the student groups that we are working with as part of our multicultural education agenda.

Kiselica (1998) suggested using a “deeply personal style” when it comes to writing about multicultural issues. He recommended bringing personal experiences to public attention and giving opportunity for everyone to share their own experience. Kiselica basically referred to his own racial identity and his personal experiences as an instructor of multicultural psychology. He first suggested instructors to know “how racism affected them” as a person in their field. Rooney, Flores, and Mercier (1998) explained Kiselica's (1998) approach as “the initial defensiveness that culturally

encapsulated Anglo trainees can experience as they begin to understand their own racist attitudes and limited perspectives on the world” (p.22). Rooney, et al. (1998) totally supported Kiselica’s (1998) approach and stated that “the topic of multiculturalism is deeply personal and emotionally charged, instructors can not neglect this important piece in their courses and might consider engaging in this process with their students” (p. 24). Aside from this, Rooney et al. (1998) also recommended “peer support and challenge” to create even a better learning environment. It was again suggested by them that “the developmental needs of minority students” should be considered to provide a supportive environment.

Rooney et al. (1998) brought up the importance of recognizing “developmental differences” among trainees. Since everybody is in a different stage with their multicultural development, their responses or approaches will be totally different from each other. With this important aspect in mind, they also pointed out some of the implications, as the “self-disclosures” will impact readers in a different manner depending on their “developmental” stage. If we do not recognize these differences, first: we would not be “culturally sensitive” individuals. Second: this would lead us “to conceptualize multicultural education in the terms of content acquisition rather than a lifelong pursuit” (p. 28).

In their conclusion, Rooney et al. (1998) suggested to offer many different avenues to our students in multicultural education and to have them see and embrace cultural diversity in every aspect. They also stated “the students should never feel too comfortable in their multicultural development but should remain open and anticipate the experiences that push them just a little bit further” (p. 30).

Teachers' willingness to participate in "social diversity" training is of course related to their attitudes towards diversity. Vogt and McKenna (1998) analyzed teacher tolerance and their attitudes towards diversity. They gathered data in 18 different classes at 4 different colleges and universities. Two hundred and forty five of the subjects were graduate level students pursuing master's degrees and 276 of them were undergraduate students in "teacher education programs." The subjects were given surveys involving General Social Survey (GSS), Phi Delta Kappan (PDK) survey and some other added questions by the authors that were related to education and schooling. Although the researchers integrated these different surveys that had been used for the general public earlier, they identified the limitation of the study as their subject group not being representative of any general population for any "generalizations."

The findings of the study showed that the educators were more outspoken about their "intolerant beliefs and attitudes" than their "tolerant beliefs and attitudes" as was also the case for the general public. The teachers and future teachers differed in their level of tolerance for diversity, again as it was for the general public. Within the sample, there were a few extreme conservatives or libertarians. Vogt and McKenna (1998) concluded, "most educators' attitudes were well-formed and not susceptible to change by comparatively fleeting influences, such as a discussion of issues" (p. 8).

Education and Spirituality

In his study, Robbie J. Steward (1998) looked into the influence of spirituality and academic achievement. Steward (1998) chose African-American urban adolescents as his population, since this group was reportedly to be religious and spiritual.

According to his literature review, much research has been conducted on this subject. However, the subjects were always compared to “Whites”. Steward (1998) asked the following questions to find out if spirituality was a factor in the academic achievement and psychological adjustment of African-American urban adolescents:

- 1) “Do these religious values and practices distinguish among the varying levels of psychological well-being represented among African-American populations who live under circumstances that most in general society would describe as challenging financially, psychologically, and interpersonally?
- 2) Is there a set of unique coping strategies associated with those African-Americans who report a value in spirituality that differentiates them from those who do not?” (p. 4).

Steward (1998) hypothesized that the religious individuals would be the most psychologically adjusted and have a different way to cope with their challenging life circumstances than those who were not religious. To conduct his study, Steward (1998) administered two questionnaires to 121 African-American freshmen in a mid-western urban high school where there was a high risk of poverty, unemployment and crime. Seventy-eight of these individuals were males and 43 of them were females.

Affects Balance Scale (ABS) (Derogatis, 1975) and Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) (Patterson & McCubbin, 1981) were used as the tools of this research. In order to observe the “psychological adjustment influence,” the sub-scale “seeking spiritual support” was used as the dependent variable.

The results of the study clearly stated that “Seeking Spiritual Support Sub-Scale scores were found to be significantly and positively related to psychological adjustment, avoiding problems, demanding activity, diversion, friends, professional support, relaxing, self-reliance, social support and family” (p. 8). Steward (1998) concluded “the practice of religious principals and spirituality appears to be an effective means of coping to maintain psychology well-being used among African-American urban adolescents. The more spiritual were also found to be the most well adjusted, the highest academic performance, and the ones most likely to use family and social support networks as a means of coping. Those who believe and practice such values appear to engage in unique coping behaviors that distinguish them from those who do not” (pgs. 8-9).

Holmes (1993) explained the relationship between spirituality and learning stating, “the linkage between spirituality and learning is a part of the relationship between faith and learning... Faith is not just the content of biblical teaching, but my continued responsiveness to God Himself. So the integration of faith and learning includes integration of spirituality into my work” (p. 4).

From Religion to Spirituality

According to Eugene Taylor, our understanding of religion and spirituality has been changing constantly. In his article in *Psychology Today*, he stated that many people are trying to enhance their spiritual beliefs not only in the churches, synagogues or scriptural texts but also in cancer support groups or Alcoholics Anonymous groups. Taylor (1994) stated “spirituality has moved beyond institutional religion and now flourishes at large in the culture” (p. 57). It is not unusual to see that spiritual and religious beliefs are shaping the cultures of societies. Small communities gather around

their beliefs such as Quakers, Yoga practitioners, and Amish people. They all prefer living together for the same reason.

Taylor (1994) also talked about the relationship between science and religion. How science did not let people talk about their beliefs in generating knowledge and how it made them win different awards when they could integrate two subjects together. He also brought an interesting point to his discussion with the eclecticism of spiritual people. How they could not let themselves be confined with only one belief and they chose their beliefs within their own conditions.

Eclecticism was one of the major points of this study, since it was trying to explain *submission* to the creator (God, Manitu, Allah, Jehovah, Yahweh, etc.). If there is a Creator and we all are created with the Creator's will, then the Creator should know all about us. Since everything is well known to the Creator, then we should be told the way we are supposed to be. When it comes to being eclectic, we come up with our own conditions and these conditions might not necessarily be on the same line as the Creator's. We need to be careful when saying "with my conditions!"

Taylor's article "Desperately Seeking Spirituality," (1994) also talked about the healing power of spiritual beliefs with respect to nature. Nowadays, even medical doctors are accepting the power of prayer for the sick loved ones, or the power of meditation for a faster recovery. Clean foods and environmentally sensitive products are also a part of spiritual living and it opens new doors for the new enterprises.

Taylor also referred to the success of spiritual people such as Mitch Kapor, cofounder of Lotus software or Phil Jackson, Chicago Bulls' former coach, and how other people tend to follow the foot steps of these so called "successful" people. Being

successful does not necessarily mean doing the right thing. Before following the footsteps of these people (especially the spiritual practices), we need to know the realities behind their success and their beliefs. Unfortunately, many people follow them blind, simply because they want to be as successful and rich as they are.

According to Taylor, the migration of spiritual people from east to west and the craving for new information of settlers' children who were born between 1945 and 1955, especially for questions they could not get any answers, initiated the shift from religion to spirituality. Apparently, with more Yoga, Karate, Tai Chi, and Sufi centers, more Americans got familiar with spiritual concepts other than mainstream religious beliefs.

Robert Wuthnow (1995) stated that there really was a core of unifying values in American society and religion was also part of these values. Social responsibility, helping the needy, equal opportunity for all, respect for individuals and human rights were part of these values and it was more evident with those who believe in spirituality or religion. Religion is open to debate about whether it brings people together or divides them. Apparently, the ultimate spiritual belief is supposed to be unifying us all, however, it is common practice that we have very exclusive gatherings at some occasions. Especially when it comes to religious liberals and religious conservatives, it feels like the opposite ends of the magnet. Wuthnow (1995) also talked about how people were shopping for spirituality. With the increasing diversity of spiritual beliefs in America, people have more options to try before they admit any certain belief or they simply choose their own way of meditating.

Some Examples

Joe Wittmer (1995) explained what it meant to be an Amish student in a mainstream school during his childhood. Being Amish he stated was nothing but living for God, away from the rest of the world and technology. He explained the struggle he had during the simple pledge of allegiance to the flag at school, simply because it was against his religious belief. Wittmer (1995) also criticized the way Amish were treated by outsiders for their beliefs, especially during years of war. Fortunately, the Amish have their own educational institutions for their children now. However, isolation of group of people from the mainstream is not a solution to the problem that we are having today in our school systems. In fact, it is more important to be able to offer a system, which is inclusive and unifying for all.

In the book called *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Robert Coles (1990) talked about the different religious beliefs of children and tried to explain this in psychoanalysis. Cole was looking at the faith of these children as an illusion. Throughout his observations, the children challenged him with his understanding of “God” and “Religion.” Many of his patients accused him of being a non-believer and even an atheist. Sometimes his being a counselor and not knowing the patient’s religion was brought up. Sometimes his interest was only in the patients’ problems, which caused even more difficulties. It seemed as if Coles was asking questions about the religion of the child, was not interested in the religious belief of the child, but was only interested in the problems of that person.

On many campuses, we currently have religious advisors as well as mental health counselors. Religious advisors are starting to be more visible these days since the need is there. From Coles' notes, students' need for religious advisors is so apparent.

Coles talked about Freud's perspective of God and followed his footsteps during his life long research of spirituality of children. He talked about Freud's model of God as a father figure and mentioned how people created their own path of spirituality in the world of illusion.

Since the beginning, psychoanalysts have been trying to understand the obsession of people with their beliefs and rituals, and trying to give it a name in psycho-analysis as Erik Erikson and many others did. Ironically, many psychoanalysts agree that even the unbelievers believe in some kind of a supernatural power, but they never call it "God." As one of Coles' patients mentioned, it is so satisfying to have someone watching over you. It does not matter whether it is a supervisor or parents or God. Coles also talked about Ana Maria Rizzuto's analysis of Freud and "God" where reality and illusion were not being contradictory to each other but not being identical either. Within these parameters, psychoanalysts try to find out the meaning of life, and question and challenge the way religion explains it.

In his book, Coles also made a good point that religion has unfortunately been exploited and has caused tyranny in many cases. However, he also brought up the point that it was not only religion that has been abused, but also any systematized set of beliefs. Freudian or Marxist thoughts have been also exploited and taken advantage of by others for their benefit.

One of the narratives of a student greatly exhibits the power of God in coping with racism. During a protest by a group of whites, a young African-American girl was just looking at the sky, smiling. A white lady asked her “Hey Nigger, what you smiling at?” She simply responded “At God” and that was the end of the name calling, at least from that woman (p. 20). This example only proves to us that it is not possible to talk about God and spirituality, and on the other hand hurt people physically or emotionally.

The importance of knowing the religious and spiritual beliefs of different groups was again highlighted in Coles’ work with Hopi tradition and their closeness to nature. How can we explain this psychoanalytically without knowing or acknowledging their respect to nature? Is it fair that a psychoanalyst calls them “not normal” because they explain things through natural circumstances such as the way clouds move, the way the hawk flies, etc?

Since Coles had the opportunity to work with many kids from various religious backgrounds, he had grounds for understanding the face of God. Interestingly, most of the Christian children were eager to draw the picture of God where the other religious groups refused to do that task since they simply believed that God was not like a human being at all. Throughout Christian education at churches, the picture of God is often exhibited all around church construction. Although some of the other groups did have the drawings of the messengers or other chosen people by God, they did not exhibit the figure of God in any manner.

The Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh stated that everyone needs to be in peace in order to reflect peace to the people around them. This is the only way you can help and benefit others. If you cannot be in peace, you cannot reflect it, period. Hanh effectively

pointed out that Buddhism is not worshipping the statue of Buddha, but is the philosophy that Buddha lived with and passed on to his followers.

Hanh said that we all need to try to understand things and give the benefit of the doubt in every occasion. If you think in a positive way, you will come to a better understanding or see where the other person is coming from. Knowing that Buddha means awakened one, Hanh stated “someone who is awake, who knows, who understands, is called a Buddha” (p.15). Buddha is all about loving and caring, according to Thich Nhat Hanh.

Zen master talked about how to sit down and wait patiently until you get enlightened. He also talked about the Buddhist Monks’ ability to increase their body temperature in a cold environment through meditation.

This example reminds me of one of the Sufi orders’ ceremony where they keep repeating the name of God (Allah) and stab big weaving needles to their throats. They do not even bleed when they are doing that. The ceremony is similar to the Sundance of Western Plains Native Americans where they hang themselves from hooks attached to their flesh.

Larry Dossey (1993) was interested in the “power of prayer in getting well.” His interest started with his decision to find out more about if spiritual beliefs enhanced the time of healing for patients. When he started going through his research, he realized that nothing much was written about the subject.

The amount of research in the field of medicine and their findings were enough to impress Dossey. Although he was raised as a Protestant, eventually he turned out to be an agnostic with his life experiences. Becoming a medical doctor and dealing with the

complexities of the human being, caused him to again think about the effect of religion and spirituality in the practice of medicine.

With this study, Dossey (1993) found his religious roots again and became able to make the connection between science and religion/spirituality. Being a doctor during the Vietnam War, especially gave him the opportunity to understand “Eastern spiritual beliefs and rituals.”

Dossey explained that through prayers, we see pain and suffering as part of the real life. The spiritual power helps us to stop complaining about our sufferings and accept them as a God given thing. It also helps us in learning how to cope with pain and sufferings.

In his book called “Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine,” Dossey (1993) also explained the power of mind over our body and how it affects it. Dossey touched base on telepathic and telesomatic events between twins, relatives and extra sensory persons.

One other important subject Dossey brought up in his book was that there is no specific form of prayer or meditation to get help from the Creator. He stated that it can be in any way, any form. He also made it clear that there is no one language that God cannot understand or respond to.

On their research about the long term effects of child abuse in general and the victims’ spiritual behavior, Lawson, Drebing, Berg, Vincelle, and Penk (1998) found out that relatively few studies were conducted on the subject and that the findings were mostly negative when it came to what the victims thought about religion and spirituality. According to the previous data, “child abuse results in alienation from religion and God”

(p. 370). However, Lawson et al. (1998) realized that much of the research was focused primarily on female subjects and was limited to sexual abuse only. The researchers (1998) claimed that taking data only from sexually abused female subjects would not be an accurate way to make conclusions for male victims who could have encountered different ways of abuse (i.e. emotional, sexual, physical or combinations of these).

Thus, Lawson et al. (1998) administered research on 1207 male veterans who were admitted to a substance abuse program and were reportedly abused in different forms during their childhood. Through the “Spiritual Profile Assessment” (McSherry, Tappert, King, Shuster, Anderson, Bard, & Phillips, 1986), the following four techniques were used to gather data. “(1) An adapted questionnaire regarding history and type of child abuse, (2) KASL’s Religiosity Index (Idler, & Kasl, 1992) to measure church attendance, prayer, bible reading, religious TV/Radio program viewing, (3) The Spiritual Injury Scale to measure guilt, anger/resentment, sadness, lack of meaning or purpose in life, despair/hopelessness, feeling that God is unfair, doubts/disbelief in God, and fear of death, and (4) Spirituality/Religion Items from the Westberg Personal Health Inventory (Westberg, N.D.) to measure change in religious belief or practice, change in relationship with God, change in church activity or prayer life, significant spiritual experience, and feeling of spiritual emptiness” (pgs. 371–372).

Lawson et al. (1998) reported that there was “a small but significant increase in the report of spiritual injury as an adult and a lower level of stability in religious belief, practice, and experience” (p. 377). However, the researchers could not find any significant change in the behavior of church attendance, Bible reading or following religious programs on TV/Radio. Higher rates of prayer for abuse victims were reported

than for non-victims. It was suggested that, the “abuse” was a factor in higher rates of prayer for the abuse victims. Lawson et. al. (1998) concluded that “at least adult male victims of abuse are not more alienated from the church and/or religious practice than non-victims” (p. 377).

The researchers found that with more severe forms of abuse, victims have more “spiritual experiences” and more frequent prayers. Lawson et. al. (1998) stated that the impact of abuse during the childhood was more complex than it was hypothesized at the beginning of the study.

The self-report nature of the questionnaire by the subjects was determined to be a validity problem by the researchers. Not having a female comparison group also made this study difficult to correlate gender differences.

The religious questions were also being dealt with in adventure therapy programs. Tom Shackles (1998) explained the necessity of religious education in regards to preparing therapists and institutions to answer questions regarding religion. Apparently, during the adventure therapy session, therapists face many religious questions and they should be prepared to deal with these questions for healthier outcomes.

Shackles (1998) pointed out that the leader of the adventure therapy group could use religious education to connect notions of “preservation of environment” and “care for self.” He stated, “religious education, can provide a range of views of personal value and relationship with the natural world to assist in forming and reforming his own belief system” (p. 219).

Focus-Relationship matrix was the way Shackles (1998) categorized the belief issues and level of relationships. According to this categorization, he divided the level of

relationship into self to self, self to others, and self to world. The belief issues (focus of attention) were also divided into belief clarification, life-world belief systems, and traditional belief systems. Shackles (1998) brought these three aspects of “belief issues” to make it easy for individuals to find their place in the world.

In dealing with religious questions, Shackles (1998) pointed out that in many cases, therapists were uncomfortable because of the vulnerability of their own belief system. Again in most cases, therapists usually made it clear that religious questions were not to be asked during sessions, simply because the session was not dealing with religious issues. Thus, a person who asked a religion related questions could be discouraged from asking these kinds of questions again during the program. Shackles (1998) argued that “the result of such a response to issues raised is that the person’s own agenda for personal development is ignored. This is deleterious to the person’s development and is to be avoided for pragmatic as well as ethical reasons” (p. 223). He claimed that not all of the adventure therapists have sufficient skills to deal with religious questions.

Shackles (1998) concluded that since adventure therapy is a new area, its integration with religious education will even better serve the needs of participants. For the holistic development of individuals, he pointed out the strong conceptual link between adventure therapy and religious education and recommended both to connect for individuals’ sake.

Nwosu (1998) stated in his study about “integration of faith and learning” as follows:

“This study takes a critical look at Jesus’ training methodology, identifying the components used in the training of His disciples, comparing them with current research

on training, and suggesting implications for ‘integrating faith and learning’ training” (p. i).

Becoming “hedonistic and self-centered,” and leaving “God” aside was being talked about by Nwosu (1998). He stated that almost every society was being ruled with the notion of “I can do it myself” and this notion was also reflected in the school systems. Nwosu (1998) was discussing the situation of Christian schools and the risk they were in as well. In explaining these, he used the analogy that Akers (1994) made, “secular salad with religious toppings.” Nwosu (1998) recommended “integration of faith and learning” (IFL) into Christian educational institutions, to have them fulfill their mission and maintain their role as the prophets assigned them in order to keep the faith of their fathers (p. 2). Biblical mandates were exhibited in great detail in this article and the need of “Bible” guiding in our teaching was mentioned.

Nwosu (1998) suggested professional development programs for teachers in Christian schools, to further develop their faith and to have them pass their faith on to their students. He also suggested having “study groups” on Christian school campuses for teachers and administrators “in order to maintain continuity and effectiveness in the implementation of IFL in the classrooms” (pp. 20-21).

Religious Plurality

Due to recent economic instability and the developments of transportation, many people are migrating from one place to another. For example, it is easy now to leave from Spain and be at work the next day in Melbourne. Since people are traveling all over the world and finding jobs in places other than their own countries, they also bring their cultures and religious beliefs with them to these new locations.

Gary Bouma (1995) explained the emergence of religious plurality and their relationships in Australia, and compared that to Canada and New Zealand. According to Bouma (1995), in the 1960s, Australia changed its policy of “white Australia” and many migrants from Middle East and Asia started to be welcomed into the country.

With the arrival of more Europeans, Christianity became more plural (Protestants, Orthodox, Evangelicals, etc.). Through migration, Australia became one of the most religiously plural societies of the world, including Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and non-believers. Bouma (1995) stated that this diversity would be developing more along with the spiritual beliefs of these groups.

In his research, Bouma (1995) stated that “the term ‘multicultural’ applies primarily to societies, not persons. Societies are multicultural and plural, not individuals or local communities” (p. 295). Personally, I do not agree with this statement. In my opinion, multiculturalism starts with the individual. If people are not familiar with the concept of multiculturalism, then society cannot be multicultural. With the help of multicultural education, individuals are becoming aware of related issues and are becoming more sensitive to these issues. I believe that there still may be communities who are not multicultural at all, but some individuals within these communities who are and because of these individuals, the whole community may become familiar with the larger concept one day.

Although Bouma’s 1995 study mentioned almost all of the religions in Australia (Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism), it was ironic that he never mentioned anything about the indigenous religions or spirituality within the country. It

implies there are no indigenous people residing in Australia anymore or perhaps they have all converted to the mainstream religion, which he stated to be Christianity.

On the other hand, another good point made by Bouma (1995) was the fact that pluralistic societies are more open to differences within their communities and do not claim necessarily to be the only correct one. Bouma (1995) also saw the religious way of living as an identity and he claimed that whatever identity you are in, there are always others who identify themselves the same way to support you. Although these groups have their own viewpoints, they do not try to impose their views on others.

In spite of the fact that Australian's tend to value their plural inter-religious society, there are groups of people who do not agree with the construction of more temples or related housing issues. Muslim immigrants claim that the Australian government still has much to learn about their religion (Bouma, 1995). On the other hand, most Australians believe that everyone should be treated the same regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion. Australians are also pretty aware that their nearest neighbors are Muslim countries with whom they have economic and trading bonds. Therefore, it is in their best interest to understand their religious background and culture.

Bouma (1995) indicated that Australia is nominally a Christian country. Its success in not having problems between different religions, even with the domination of two Christian groups, is through support of inter-religious groups with the legislative process, as well as the lack of politicization of religious and ethnic groups.

Multi-Faith Effort in School Systems

According to the Virginia School Board Association (1996), religious holidays are becoming hassles for public schools and December is becoming a dilemma for most

of them. During Christmas or Hanukkah, many people get offended and feel like outsiders. While some teachers try to decorate their classrooms in a more multicultural way, others try to avoid using religious references by using names such as “winter break” instead of “Christmas break.”

On the other hand, with the changes of the seasons, some parents are claiming “God is no longer in the schools.” Some schools have started to decorate Christmas trees with world flags or different ornaments from all over the world instead of getting rid of them. This way they represent the diversity of their school and student body, while trying not to offend anyone.

As a result of all of these discussions and confusion, 17 leading religious and educational organizations gathered together and published ground rules and guidelines for school systems to address people of various faiths, as well as atheists. Some of the ideas were: Schools may provide secular religious instruction only for information not for promotion. Schools should have policies around religious issues and celebrations and should let parents know about these policies. During holidays, schools may display religious symbols only on a temporary basis and these including religious music should not dominate. School officials and teachers should be offered religious workshops to get familiar with the place of religious holidays in the schools and to make it constitutionally permissible and sound for everyone.

The First Amendment and Religion in Public Schools

Quite frankly, Haynes’ (1995) reflection on the meaning of the First Amendment explains it very clearly to all. Haynes stated that “we need to remind ourselves that First Amendment Religious Liberty clauses do not belong only to lawyers and judges; they

belong to all of us. The principles of rights, responsibility, and respect that flow from the First Amendment are obligations of citizenship for every American. When properly understood and applied, these principles allow communities to go beyond conflict and achieve consensus on the role of religion in the public schools” (p. 5).

On May 30th 1998, President Clinton made a similar statement in one of his public addresses regarding education. President Clinton stated that “...Schools do more than train their children’s minds. They also help to nurture their souls by reinforcing the values they learn at home and in their communities. I believe that one of the best ways we can help our schools do this is by supporting students’ rights to voluntarily practice their religious beliefs in schools. For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has protected our religious freedom and allowed many faiths to flourish in our homes, in our work place and in our schools. Clearly understood and sensibly applied, it works.” (From, Richard W. Riley’s – U.S. Secretary of Education – statement regarding “Religious Expression in Public Schools”, p. 1). It has been claimed by many people that the First Amendment actually gives freedom for religious expression by students in today’s public school system, while avoiding any government supported religion (Slowinski, 1997; Riley, 1998).

Riley (1998) also pointed out that schools might not stop students expressing their personal or private religious beliefs. Instead, the school should accommodate the religious activities as much as any other comparable activity. According to this statement, students may practice their faith in a school setting as long as they are free of any school-related business. On the other hand, the schools may not doctrine any specific religion nor may they coerce students to participate in it. Most importantly, teachers and

school administrators may not organize religious activities or ask their students to take part in them within their classrooms. School affiliated personnel are not allowed to be engaged in any religious activity that is taking place in the school nor can they lead them. Riley (1998) also stated that harassment is not tolerated in the public school system either. Student groups are notified that their invitations to participate in a religious activity should not be repetitive or bothersome.

U.S. Secretary of Education Riley (1998) admitted the necessity of teachers' knowledge regarding freedom of religious expression in the classrooms. He invited all teachers to get to know the First Amendment and stated "...I encourage teachers and principals to see the First Amendment as something more than a piece of dry old parchment locked away in the national attic gathering dust. It is a vital living principle, a call to action, and a demand that each generation reaffirm its connection to the basic idea that is America – that we are a free people who protect our freedoms by respecting the freedom of others who differ from us" (p. 5). Riley (1998) concluded "our public schools must treat religion with fairness and respect and vigorously protect religious expression as well as the freedom of conscience of all other students" (p. 6).

The job of superintendents is becoming more complex and challenging with the changing demands of our communities and systems. Thus, they need to develop their related knowledge and skills. Benestante (1998) tried in her study to answer the question "what role must the superintendent play in protecting the religious liberty of students in today's public schools, and is he or she prepared for that role?" (p. 2).

In her brief historical analysis, Benestante (1998) acknowledged that the first settlers of America brought religion with them that together contained both good and bad.

People who were not identified with their faith were not accepted as being part of their group. As a conclusion of the historical aspect, Benestante (1998) mentioned the existence of both “conservative right” and “liberal left” in America today and their attempts to bring their belief systems to the public schools. She recognized that the controversy has become more and more divisive and that the power struggle has also affected superintendents’ decision-making style.

Through a nation-wide qualitative study of six superintendent informants, she tried to find out if superintendents could stay objective when working with a diversity of religious issues, as well as staying productive as a leader, while surviving through the conflict between the two groups. For this study, the informants were chosen through “intensity sampling”. Three of the superintendents represented had a tendency to keep religious liberty in public schools, and were interviewed at the first stage of the study. As the second stage of the study, six superintendents who personally experienced “religion-in-schools” conflict, and either kept their positions or lost their positions or left the position as a result of the conflict were interviewed for a six month period.

Benestante (1998) checked the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the study to prove the trustworthiness of it. She concluded, “the superintendent must first desire to find common ground. Without this desire and commitment to it, nothing else that was determined by the findings can be accomplished” (p. 15). She added that the commitment should be to awareness (i.e. knowing where the conflict is coming from), continuing education (not only university level but also networking with experienced people in the field), knowledge (i.e. First Amendment

Religious Liberty clauses and the current legal interpretations), skills (working effectively in groups, conflict resolution, coalition/consensus building, negotiation).

The researcher also recommended that superintendents should establish a need before looking for a resolution to conflict. Superintendents' openness to dialogue rather than knowing what is good for their school was also an important factor to deal with these kinds of conflicts. It was pointed out that those who thought that power was granted to them, were not as successful as the ones who gained power from their collaboration and helpfulness. Benestante (1998) also mentioned that future superintendents should be educated around these issues at the university level, just to be able to cope with them in a better manner.

Slowinski (1997) pointed out that religion related issues started to be a conflict in public schools during 1990's. As Adler (1996) mentioned in the report for California, while 20% of problems were related to religion and the curriculum, 20% were related to Satanism and Witchcraft. Slowinski (1997) invited school administrators to get familiar with laws associated with education and religion, due to parental attacks on curriculum. He stated that this way, the principals may get a chance to negotiate with parents and provide a learning environment that protects individual expression.

Slowinski (1997) recommended school principles to know the law, appreciate individual perspectives, record all incidents of dispute, determine their insurance policy coverage, not to evade the media, utilize the lawsuit as a learning experience, maintain great concern for their young plaintiffs and although difficult, maintain a neutral standpoint. In order to keep schools secular, Haynes (1991) proposed the following to school principals: Intent should be academic and not devotional; emphasis should be on

awareness and tolerance but not acceptance or conformation of students to any specific religion; study about religion but not the practice of religion; expose students to the diversity of religious beliefs without imposing any or ridiculing any.

In order to show favor on diversity of religious representation, Slowinski (1997) gave the example of the Cherry Hill schools where the teachers were encouraged to use all known religious symbols to represent different holidays on their calendars. As a result of a court decision in Cherry Hill, religious symbols should coexist and represent diversity. According to the same ruling, religious symbols belonging to one specific religious or spiritual belief was not promoting understanding and tolerance and therefore was not allowed.

Slowinski (1997) stated that the Cherry Hill decision and the *Lemon Test*, which was derived by the Supreme Court in 1971 during the case of Lemon versus Kurtzman, should be implemented by every administrator and teacher. Three major points of the Lemon Test as Slowinski pointed out, were “objective must be distinctly and clearly secular, principal effect must be secular, neither promoting or hindering religion, and relationship must separate government and religion” (p. 6).

Spirituality and the Workplace

Apparently spirituality is an important part for some and it does not end with school. People bring their spirituality to where ever they find a job. Spirituality helps us with personal fulfillment at work as well. Some corporations are trying to find the level that will meet the spiritual needs of their employees, their values and provide them with balanced lives.

According to Imel (1998), some of the reasons that spirituality was brought into the workplace were: corporate layoffs and downsizing, the aging of the work force, the decline of traditional support networks and changes in organizational structures. The compatibility of a profit motive for corporations and ways to accommodate the spiritual needs of employees are still ambiguous to many researchers. It is obvious that the former is the most important for corporations.

The relationship between religion and spirituality is the other concern. Most managers are not comfortable with the legal aspects of spirituality, especially those who see it related to organized religion. They simply do not want to get into legal difficulties or complications at all.

On the other hand, as Mirvis (1997) stated, spirituality is there for answers, unlike religion which is there for questions. He argued that spirituality is totally different than religion and that it would be helpful to maintain a different setting for both in the workplace. Imel (1998) recommended career educators and career development specialists prepare students in spirituality and the workplace for after their college years.

About Happiness

In the light of empirical research, a well-known researcher in the field of happiness, Ruut Veenhoven (1997) tried to answer questions such as: “what happiness is precisely; whether happiness can be measured; how happy people actually are; whether people are equally happy or not, and if people appear not be equally happy, then why; whether happiness can be lastingly raised?” Veenhoven defined the concept of happiness as “a state of mind where it is used for evanescent feelings as well as for stable appreciation of life,” and defined happiness itself as “..the degree to which a person

evaluates the overall quality of his present life-as-a-whole positively. In other words, how much the person likes the life he or she leads.” He also used the term *life-satisfaction* as a synonym for happiness.

Veenhoven talked about *Enlightenment Thinking* of the 18th century and how in that perspective, “the purpose of human life was life itself, rather than the service of King or God.” He argued that in the 19th century the Enlightenment Thinking was adopted as an idea of “the greatest happiness for the greatest number,” and how this was carried into the 20th century as well.

It is very clear that Veenhoven was very influenced with 18th century Enlightenment Thinking where the idea of *life itself* became more important than serving the King or God. Yet in order to improve life in a country and to have high welfare, one has to pay high taxes, and in a way serve the government to provide such welfare for citizens. Interestingly enough, the idea of serving government should seem a better way to Veenhoven than serving either the King or God, as with all other scholars who are keen about Enlightenment Thinking philosophy.

In his article, Veenhoven mentioned “how the societies started fighting against ‘ignorance, illness and poverty’ and how they developed statistical measures to see their progress in literacy, control of epidemic disease, elimination of hunger, poverty and social-inequality, and gains in money-income, income-security and income equality.” Veenhoven pointed out how in the 1960’s it became obvious that economic growth was pretty much limited and there had to be more than just material welfare. As a result, post-materialistic values, such as health, were acknowledged.

Veenhoven defined *quality of life* as follows, “the presence of conditions for a good life, which is societal and personal, and the practice of good living, which is personal.” He also stated, “a person can be rich, powerful and popular, but still be troubled and ailing. On the other hand, someone who is poor, powerless and isolated may nevertheless thrive mentally and physically and mentally. I refer to these variants as respectively: presumed quality-of-life and apparent quality-of-life” (p. 2). Veenhoven pointed out that *happiness* is an indicator of apparent quality-of-life along with physical and mental health, and that people still can be happy even though all standards of life are not ideal.

Veenhoven also asserted, “In all modern nations, single persons take less pleasure in life than married persons; divorced and widowed persons are particularly unhappy. This difference in happiness between singles and couples is mostly greater than between rich and poor. Such differences in happiness are typically interpreted as a result of deprivation, singles are seen to fall short of something.” He mentioned that these could be due to negative labeling or loneliness or lack of social support of singles. It is interesting that he never mentioned anything about lack of love, feelings or caring!

Even though Veenhoven strongly advocated for better welfare as, according to him, it brought more happiness, Easterlin (1974), on the other hand, found economic growth in welfare after the war years of the U.S. but no increase in happiness of people. He therefore concluded in his research that “money does not buy happiness.” Again Brickman et al. (1978) asserted that happiness was relative because lottery winners were found to not be any happier than paralyzed accident victims. Happiness seems to be a relative concept to many researchers but not to Veenhoven.

Veenhoven gave a good example to express the challenges of understanding happiness. He indicated, “in the Netherlands, a good education is seen as a pre-requisite for a good life, but the highly educated appear slightly less happy in comparison to their less educated counterparts.” He also considered the egocentric answers to the questionnaire as well stating, “Another objection concerns the presence of systematic bias in responses. It is assumed that questions on happiness are interpreted correctly, but that responses are often false. People who are actually dissatisfied with their life would tend to answer that they are quite happy.” Veenhoven openly mentioned that the level of happiness was based on living conditions, health and level of wealth. On the other hand, those who are *happy* also have complaints and worries at the same time.

Michalos' (1985) Multiple-Discrepancy-Theory showed happiness as the sum of various sub-evaluations. To Michalos, sub-evaluations were assessments of discrepancy between perceptions of how ones life *is* with notions of how it *should be*. The five main comparison standards to him were: what one *wants*, what one *had* earlier in life, what one *expected* to have, what one thinks *other people* have, and what one thinks is *deserved*. Michalos provided ample evidence that small discrepancies were accompanied by high satisfaction with life-as-a-whole. Multiple regression analysis of his research showed that happiness was primarily a function of perceived discrepancy between reality and *wants*.

In his study “Happiness and Public Policy,” Richard Layard (2005) stated that happiness was based on income. He pointed out that a person’s happiness was negatively affected by the incomes of others (a negative externality) where people see what others have and think that they are poor and become unhappy. He indicated that because of this, Sweden banned commercials directed at children; kids ask for what they see on TV and if

the parents cannot afford it, they feel unhappy thinking that they are poor. Layard also talked about how a person's happiness adapts quite rapidly to higher levels of income (a phenomenon of addiction). For instance, when someone starts getting paid for a task she or he is already supposed to be doing, with time that person starts expecting to be paid even more. He also indicated that our tastes are not a given, but that the happiness we get from what we have is largely culturally determined.

To conclude Layard stated, "Thirty years ago population surveys revolutionized labor economics. A similar revolution will soon revolutionize public economics, when psychological data on happiness are at last combined with the insights of revealed preference. This will lead to better theory, and to better policies." We certainly are due for better theory and better policies!

According to Tellegen (1988), some people are born happy and some others are born unhappy based on the neuro-physiological structure of pleasure centers in their brains. Lieberman (1970), on the other hand, stated that some people develop a positive attitude towards life, where others do not within the course of their lives. Costa et al. (1987) also supported Lieberman stating, ".happiness is ultimately also independent of health, youth, power and other life circumstances" (p.305).

Ruut Veenhoven's 1994 research to find out if happiness is a trait or state was an interesting one. Some researchers supported the idea that if the living conditions of people are improved, they will be happier, whereas others stated that happiness is a trait rather than a variable state. In his research Veenhoven talked about *Pollyannaism* as my spiritual leader Dr. Evrenosoglu (Imam, Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr) mentions in his discourses. Veenhoven mentioned that Pollyannaism is correlated to happiness--but not

too strongly-- whereas Dr. Evrenosoglu states Pollyannaism has nothing to do with happiness simply because it is trying to be happy even in the worst case scenarios. Veenhoven concluded that, "Happiness is quite stable on the short term, but not in the long run, neither relatively nor absolutely. Happiness is not insensitive to fortune or adversity. Happiness is not entirely built-in: its genetic basis is at best modest and psychological factors explain only part of its variance." It is finally concluded in his research that happiness is no immutable trait. Therefore Vennhoven indicated that for a greater number of people, there is still benefit in striving for greater happiness.

Veenhoven stated "Personally, we all try to improve our situations in the hope of getting happier. Collectively, we require the state to maximize material comfort, provide legal protection and social security in the belief that such 'social progress' will make life more satisfying." In his article "Is Happiness Relative" he tried to find out what that truly was. For him, happiness is conceived "as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life favorably." Even though Easterlin (1974) interpreted his findings stating that happiness has nothing to do with poverty or wealth, Veenhoven interpreted Easterlin's data otherwise. Veenhoven (1991) indicated "(a) people tend to be unhappy under adverse conditions such as poverty, war and isolation, (b) improvement or deterioration of at least some conditions does affect happiness lastingly, (c) earlier hardship does not favor later happiness, (d) people are typically positive about their life rather than neutral."

Myers and Diener (1995) suggested that "people who enjoy close personal relationships, who become absorbed in their work, and who set themselves achievable goals and move toward them with determination are happier on the whole than people

who do not.” On the other hand, happiness, or subjective well being, was measured on a birth-record-based sample of several thousand middle-aged twins using the Well-Being (WB) scale of the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire of David Lykken and Auke Tellegen (1996). The researchers concluded that, “If the transitory variations of well-being are largely due to fortune’s favors, whereas the midpoint of these variations is determined by the great genetic lottery that occurs at conception, then we are led to conclude that individual differences in human happiness-how one feels at the moment and also how happy one feels on average over time-are primarily a matter of chance” (p. 189).

Components such as *Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, Personal growth*, were defined within the limits of happiness by Carol D. Ryff (1989), whereas Dr. Evrenosoglu puts all these into three categories: happiness in the interior world, happiness in the exterior world, and happiness in relations with the Creator. In her research, three hundred and twenty-one men and women, divided among young, middle-aged, and older adults, rated themselves on the measures Ryff operationalized along with six instruments prominent in earlier studies (i.e., affect balance, life satisfaction, self-esteem, morale, locus of control, depression). Ryff concluded that “positive relations with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth were not strongly tied to prior assessment indexes, thereby supporting the claim that key aspects of positive functioning have not been represented in the empirical arena.” According to her findings, age profiles revealed a more differentiated pattern of well being than is evident in earlier research.

Veenhoven indicated that most people were believed to be basically dissatisfied and that real enjoyment of life was to be projected in past paradise or future utopia and tries to prove otherwise empirically. Yet, Dr. Evrenosoglu substantiates that it is easily possible to have joy and happiness both in this life and in the hereafter. Moreover, after a certain level of meditation, it is incessant.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design And Procedures Of Study

Due to the researcher's empathy with the subject, the life and creed of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr (Dr. Evrenosoglu) was presented in a phenomenological research design, which is qualitative in nature. The intent of a phenomenological method within qualitative research is to portray precisely the lived experiences of people, their own way of discernment and philosophy. Since this study presents the lived experiences of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr, as he directly receives his teachings and philosophy from God, this researcher deemed phenomenological research design to be more appropriate for this study.

Phenomenological research is a form of research design, where many well-known researchers (i.e. Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Eagleton, etc.) presented their works in philosophy as well as religion. The purpose of phenomenology is to return to the concrete, which is initiated by the slogan 'Back to the things themselves!' as some researchers in the field (Eagleton, 1983, p. 56; Kruger, 1988, p. 28; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26) came up with. Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr also makes the point of *getting back to the thing* as he calls all people with sacred scriptures to unite for love, care and world peace.

The researcher posed the following questions and left the answers to the readers' interpretation within the framework of the *explicitation* of this phenomenological design: Can the doctrine of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr help people attain *happiness*? Do all

sacred scriptures prescribe human beings' happiness as Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr claims? Why would anyone dedicate a life for others' happiness?

The researcher used triangulation and repeated observation methods for the trustworthiness and reliability of the research. The triangulation method was utilized as all three holy scriptures as multiple sources of evidence were used as references to confirm the statements of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr (please see appendix C and D.) The triangulation method was used for the future research to be able to collect and analyze the same results and come to the same conclusion. Repeated observations were also used to provide the trustworthiness of the study. The researcher did not only interview Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr but also translated all his speeches from 1996 to present time to cross reference the information that was disseminated by him. All these speeches and their translations into English by the researcher are available on www.mihr.com for further review.

The researcher took a participant observer role as he conducted interviews with Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr and also observed the members of the community, their way of learning and work within the community in a prolonged engagement. The data were collected through interviews and verbal translations of Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr's speeches from Turkish into English. The data analysis is given to the readers in chapter VII as explicitation for the readers to be able to draw their own conclusions.

In contemporary education, if we cannot educate people in regards to respecting different points of views and beliefs and reaffirm the importance of acknowledging and respecting differences, ideas, cultures, and beliefs, then we can never bring peace amongst the people of the world. For this very reason, we need to educate all people that

in the core, the significance of belief is the same for each and every one of us as Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr indicates.

Within the phenomenological design of this research, chapter one is the introduction with the statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, definition of terms and limitations of the study. Chapter two is the relevant review of literature that includes multicultural education, spirituality in education and workplace, and happiness.

Chapter three introduces the summary of the design and the procedures of the study and explains why phenomenological method is the most relevant way for this study itself. Chapter four gives greater detail about Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr, such as his ethnographic background, his work and dedication for happiness of all throughout his life, world peace and his philosophy. In this chapter, his work in the field of nuclear physics is also mentioned to show that he is no ordinary person; since his statements make the perfect sense but are not yet known, even by the scientists, this is clear proof his knowledge must certainly be God given.

Chapter five looks into the notion of happiness and its relationship to the soul and spirit and clarifies the difference between the soul and spirit. These are much mentioned in almost every faith but are not identified properly or accurately. What to do with both and the reasons why we are all given a soul and spirit are explicitly discussed in this chapter with great details. As Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr is an Ottoman himself, he always gives specific examples from the history of the Ottomans. Therefore, chapter six is specifically dedicated to the *Ottoman Educational model* to give readers a little more

historical information about the Ottomans as the rulers of parts of three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa) and their way of education.

Finally within the last chapter, this researcher summarizes the philosophy that Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr unambiguously teaches and talks about the importance of his teachings for the unification of all religions that are in constant conflict.

Recommendations for future research in the field of happiness and joy for contemporary education are made as well.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

Who Is Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr

Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr was born on November 29, 1933 in Iznik, Turkey, with an indication from his eminence Esref Rumi , a well known Spiritualist of his time. Imam Mihr's mother, Refet Hanim had two girls with her previous two pregnancies and she wanted to conceive a boy. She was recommended to go and visit the grave of his eminence Esref Rumi and ask his help. The night of her visit, she saw his eminence Esref Rumi coming to her in a dream. She saw two of her daughters on her two sides and a boy on her chest with a golden figure on top of his head. At the time of the birth, when she encountered a difficulty delivering the baby, she again vision his eminence Esref Rumi telling her to get some water where his grave is and throw it on her. As soon as they brought the water and sprinkled it on her, she easily gave a birth to her only son, Imam Mihr.

Imam Mihr's birth name is Iskender Erol Evrenosoglu, and as the only boy, he is the third and last child to his family. His father was Ali Hamza Efendi and his mother was the daughter of Hacı Hilmi Efendi, Refet Hanim. His lineage goes all the way to Bozoklu Han (an Ottoman ruler who is related to the Prophet Mohammed); therefore he is a Shariff (descendant of Hussein, son of Ali who is a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed.) He is also Syed (descendant of Hassan, other son of Ali who is a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed).

According to Islamic belief, towards the end of the time, there will come an Imam (religious leader), who happens to be *Mahdi Rasul*, to unify all religions and bring peace

and justice to whole world. It is again indicated in this belief that this Imam will be both Shariff and Syed (will be a descendant of both Hassan and Hussein). Yet there is no indication in the sacred book of Muslims regarding this. On the other hand, his eminence Said-i Nursi (Risale-i Nur Kulliyati) talks about Mahdi Rasul in his letters quite often (Kastamonu Lahikasi, Barla Lahikasi, Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybi and Emirdag Lahikasi).

Imam Mihr completed his primary, junior high and high school education in Bursa. As he explains it (Mihr, 2007), during his school years, his generation was taught that God did not exist. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1920, religious teaching and learning was totally banned in the country and the new educational system adopted only the Darwinian theory. It was illegal to study Arabic and or the Quran. During his growing years, Imam Mihr had nothing to do with religion and lived a life that had no place for God.

In 1956, he graduated from Marmara University, which was then the Istanbul School of High Economy and Commerce, with a degree in Banking and Accounting. He received his Master's degree in Economics from the Middle East Technical University. Between 1957 and 1958, he served in the military in Korea. After his military service he served as an inspector, director, and expert at KIT (Civil Financial Association), the Turkish Bank of Vakif and DPT (Planning Organization of the State).

In 1989, he launched the MIHR Foundation in Ankara, Turkey, for the unification of religions and world peace. He had received a revelation from God in which he was told "the word MIHR is an abbreviation of the words **Mahdi-Imam-Halife-Rasul**" (Mihr, 2007); God wanted him to call himself this throughout his life, and thus laid the foundation of his dedication to such a humane ideal. He is the President of the

Foundation and also the editorial writer of the monthly magazine *MIHR*, which has been published since 1992. He is the founder of MIHR TV and MIHR Radio which now broadcast on satellite throughout the world. Imam Mihr completed his doctorate in Religion at Columbia State University in Louisiana in 1997. On April 1, 2000, he founded The University of Allah in Virginia, which is the first, and only such university in the world. He is also the president of this Internet based University.

Imam Mihr has published more than forty books on numerous topics from Macroeconomics to Religion and prepared the commentary of the Noble Quran, which altogether is in nineteen volumes. Each verse of the Noble Quran is rendered word by word in Turkish, and is written in Arabic and Latin alphabets. For complete list of his books please see Appendix B.

For the past thirty years, Imam Mihr has dedicated himself towards the goal of establishing world peace for happiness and joy of all people (Mihr, 2007). His ambition and devotion to this goal can easily be found within the accumulation of recordings and teachings of his, which exceeds six thousand hours. All his teachings and discourses that are summarized in this study are accessible in greater detail at www.mih.com in English, German, French, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Urdu and Turkish. As he explains, human beings are not created for any other reason but to be happy and joyous. Imam Mihr elucidates that happiness and joy starts within, with the start of our relationship with the Creator and it spreads around to others. Those who are miserable can only make others miserable and stressful. If people are happy and joyous, then there is peace. But if people are egocentric and miserable, then there is only chaos (Mihr, 2007).

His Statements in the Field of Nuclear Physics

Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr is definitely not an ordinary person. Not only do his religious teachings present this, but his statements in other fields as well. For instance, his statements in physics, which are discussed below, are still unknown to many physicists and what is not understood by them is already explained by Imam Sheikh Iskender Ali Mihr. However, since he states that God gives this information to him, not many scientists believe or listen to it. During a discussion he had with some scholars in Turkey, Dr. Mihr asked them the meaning of the following statement, which he received as a revelation: “We love you the most, we are the One who loves you the most.” Actually the statement seems to be a repetition at a first glance. Yet, it means two different things. ‘We love you the most’ means that God loves all His creatures, but loves him the most amongst them. ‘We are the One who loves you most’ means, there are many people who love him, but it is God who loves him the most. It is very simple yet very sophisticated and clearly shows its divinity.

Turner and Hazelett (1979) blatantly questioned Einstein’s infamous statement that ‘nothing could exceed the speed of light’ in their commentary “the Einstein myth and the Ives papers: A counter revolution in physics” (p 51). Ironically, Imam Mihr explains that there are three kinds of speed: Speed below the speed of light, speed at speed of light and speed above the speed of light (Mihr, 2004). Furthermore, he explains that the speed below the speed of light (which applies pretty much to everything in this world) makes everything have positive mass (or weight); when we get to the speed of light, the mass has zero weight (Mihr, 2007). All the way to this point, it is very clear for every

physicist, but when it comes to speed above the speed of light, no scientist knows the facts.

Yet, Imam Mihr explains that when we exceed the speed of light, the mass gains negative weight, which makes it possible to exceed the speed of light. Today's science is very clear with the following research: When they collide a proton (where they also know that a proton has zero weight) to a mirror or lead wall, what they observe is one electron bouncing from the lead wall and another electron bouncing in exactly the opposite direction of the wall, which within milliseconds, becomes invisible. This is where the science gets stuck. It is obvious that a proton has no weight (zero mass), yet once it hits the lead wall it breaks into two electrons and they also know that electron has positive weight! However, since the other electron that moves the other way becomes invisible, they are not capable of measuring the weight of that electron.

Approximately fifteen years ago, Imam Mihr explained in his book called *Energy, Matter and Laws of Speed* that the electron that cannot be seen after the proton's hitting the lead wall has 'negative weight' (Mihr, 2007). If you are not a scientist, this will make perfect sense to you because it is common sense. If the proton is weightless, and when you break it into two pieces such as one electron and one anti-electron, the math should give you the conclusion that electron has positive weight and the anti-electron has exact negative weight, hence the proton has zero weight when it is measurable! But if you are a scientist and you hear the concept of 'negative weight' from a man of religion rather than a man of science, you raise a red flag right away.

Moreover, Imam MIHR explains that this is the only way to exceed the speed of light. For instance, in the cases of unidentified flying objects (UFO), people are capable

of seeing the UFO initially but then it disappears, just like the anti-electron disappears during the research in the lab (Mihr, 2007). When Physicists accept the idea of *negative weight* just like we have the negative values in math, then we will be able to get to the speed that is above the speed of light, as Imam Mihr indicates.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

Happiness And Its Relationship To Soul And Spirit

Happiness and joy, according to Imam Mihr is to have peace and serenity *continuously* within three realms; within our inner world (peace within), exterior world (peace with others around us) and relations with the Creator (peace with commands and prohibitions of the Creator). Imam Mihr explains from the Quran that each individual is created with three bodies: physical body (flesh), soul (nafs) and spirit (rouh) where the physical body is an abode for both soul and spirit (Mihr, 2007).

Each of these bodies belongs to a separate world/dimension. The physical body belongs to the *physical world* that we all live in. The soul belongs to *berzah world* (the world where the souls of dead are currently living), and the spirit belongs to *emr world* (the world where the spiritual journey takes place for attaining the Creator) (Mihr, 2007). Imam Mihr explains these bodies stating that the physical body is the body that is created from clay/dust (the creation of Adam), the soul that is designed with 19 groups of vices (see table 1), and the spirit that is blown into human being directly from God, which is full of 19 groups of righteousness (see table 2). As one can tell, soul and spirit are totally opposite to each other at the beginning, which causes all human beings to be unhappy!

In other words, starting from our birth, two enemies are living within our physical body that work as the consultants to our mind (where the decision making process takes place). When a decision needs to be made, both soul and spirit consult the mind to have mind make the decision in their favor. Every mind shapes up within the environment that the individual is raised. If the individual is brought up in a moral environment, the

decisions of the person will most likely to be moral (in favor of spirit). But if the individual is brought up in an environment where lying, cheating, bribing, etc. are the common theme, then the decisions of the person will most likely to be immoral (in favor of soul) (Mihr, 2007).

Yet, as majority of faith-based groups believe, the rules in regards to being moral and immoral have been set forth by the Creator and they are very clear. According to this, those who obey the rules get rewarded and those who violate the rules get punished. Imam Mihr on the other hand elaborates that when the rules are violated, first, the Creator torments the violator; second, the spirit torments the soul; and third, for every negative behavior, there is retaliation from other parties. In other words, *what goes around comes around* (Mihr, 2007). For instance, John steals something from Jane. Aside from suffering of his conscious bothering him so much (due to the torment of Creator and torment of spirit to soul), somebody else will also steal from John one day (not even knowing why she or he steals from John!).

As Imam Mihr explains, God's justice is so perfect, which works right away for all parties. Within the same example of stealing, John loses one figurative point from his cumulative, yet he is happy for what he has done. Jane on the other hand gains that one figurative point that John has lost, but she feels sorry for what she has physically lost (due to not knowing how the justice system of the Creator works in reality) (Mihr, 2007).

Soul and its Vices

The soul is designed with nineteen groups of vices, which are totally open to all kinds of temptations. Since it is designed only with vices, it is always prone to be controlled by the *enemy*! The enemy influences each and every vice of our soul and

makes us do wrong and commit sins (in many cases, even without our will!) The following list indicates the nineteen groups of vices of our soul: (Mihir, 2007).

1. Grudges/Hatred
2. Unbelief
3. Lying/Denial
4. Wrongdoing (Injustice, Oppression)
5. Envy/Enmity
6. Ignorance
7. Stinginess (Parsimony)
8. Anger/Rage
9. Rebellion
10. Impatience
11. Conceit/Arrogance
12. Greed/Lust
13. Ingratitude (Ungratefulness)
14. Gossip/Backbiting
15. Conjecture
16. Addictions
17. Unfaithfulness (Disloyalty)
18. Hypocrisy
19. Mischief-making

Table 1. Nineteen groups of vices of the soul

The Spirit and its righteousness

The spirit, which we usually call our own, actually belongs to the Creator. Hence, it is perfect from the beginning to the end. It has nineteen groups of righteousness within itself and always guides us to do the right thing (the reason why it is given to each individual). In other words, it asks us to do what the Creator commands us to do, and asks us not to do what the Creator prohibits. Since it belongs to the Creator, it has the ability to punish our soul when the soul makes us to do something against the will of God. The following list indicates the nineteen groups of righteousness of the spirit: (Mihir, 2007).

1. Love
2. Faith (Belief)
3. Truthfulness
4. Justice
5. Good Manners (Etiquette)
6. Perfections (Maturity)
7. Generosity
8. Quietness (Tranquility)
9. Obedience
10. Patience
11. Humility (Modesty)
12. Contentment
13. Gratitude (Thankfulness)
14. Reticence (Discretion)
15. Truth (Verity)
16. Merits (Virtues)
17. Loyalty (Faithfulness)
18. Sincerity
19. Unification (Monotheism)

Table 2. Nineteen groups of righteousness of the spirit

In the teachings of Imam Mihr, the most important concept for every human being is to work on his or her soul, and within two processes first to cleanse and then to purify it (Mihr, 2007). Imam Mihr does not only recommend a happier and more joyous life, but also gives the prescription for attaining such a life. He indicates that salvation for anyone is possible only if they *wish to reach God* before death! As one will understand right away, according to Imam Mihr, one does not need to claim to be a Jew, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or anything to have salvation and therefore be entitled to joy and happiness. Just believing in the Oneness of the Creator, and willing to reach the Creator before death is enough as Imam Mihr orates (Mihr, 2007).

When Imam Mihr talks about *reaching the Creator before death*, he actually talks about redeeming God's spirit, which is given to us as a trust (for a short term) back to its

owner before death. But again, the key is that one does not have to fulfill anything! Once the individual is willing to do that from his or her heart, it is God who makes it happen (Mihr, 2007). In a way, it is just like having the desire to learn how to fly. Once you have the will and you go to flight school with determination, they will teach you how to fly! Yet, the Creator's guarantee cannot be topped! People usually think that having salvation is the hardest thing. On the contrary, it is actually the easiest thing that one can imagine as Imam Mihr elucidates. He states, "God promises in the Quran that whoever turns to Him, it is Him to deliver them to Himself."

Yet, such salvation, (in other words, being saved of punishment) would only give temporary joy and happiness to the individual simply because of being under the protection of the Creator, until the spirit reaches where it belongs. In order to have happiness and joy throughout our life, we have to manage purifying our soul (Mihr, 2007).

Cleansing of Soul

As indicated earlier, in the beginning the soul is one hundred percent full of vices. Decreasing the vices to forty nine percent is considered the cleansing of the soul and this process is a guarantee of God. The individual, who believes in God, and who wishes to redeem the spirit back to God before death, takes a pledge of allegiance to the *Murshid* (Religious Guide) that God assigns specifically, and starts doing *Dhikr* (remembrance of God by His name). It is the *Dhikr* that brings the glories (light of God) from the presence of God and makes them get into the soul's heart to start the process of cleansing. The glories accumulate within the heart in seven percent increments and within seven stages forty nine percent of virtues accumulate in the heart. At the very beginning when one

wishes to reach God, two percent mercy gets into his or her heart as the significance and sign of God's manifestation upon such an individual. Hence the accumulation of Mercy and Virtues altogether totals to fifty one percent (Mihr, 2007).

This is exactly the point where the soul of the person is cleansed. Up until this point, the individual is within direct protection of God and therefore she or he feels the abundance of happiness and joy during this time. This joy and happiness gets to such a point that the person feels like *screaming* that she or he is *happy*. Only such feeling is a clear and enough sign of God's presence, His total control and His generosity (Mihr, 2007).

Yet, this is only half way through the *ultimate goal* indicates Imam Mihr. With fifty one percent glory accumulation, the spirit reaches God and disappears in God. The person at this point has the guarantee of third Heaven, and the half of the world happiness and joy. However, if the person continues the path and increases the percentage of his or her Dhikr, she or he will certainly complete the purification of the soul as well (Mihr, 2007).

Purification of Soul

Filling the soul's heart with hundred percent glories of God is the point of purification (Mihr, 2007). Virtues start replacing vices, and with ninety eight percent virtue and two percent mercy accumulation, there remain no more vices in the soul's heart. And since the glories keep coming into the heart continuously within the 'continuous Dhikr' phase, the darkness and vices can no longer get into such a heart, teaches Imam Mihr. Yet, it is the purification of the Soul that is considered to be the

steep hill. After the spirit returns back to God, God's protective shield is lifted off, and the individual starts encountering the serious attacks of the enemy (Mihir, 2007).

As indicated in all three scriptures, there is only one thing the enemy wants, and that is to get everyone to Hell with him in the hereafter to be punished eternally (Mihir, 2007). Therefore he will try any trick to deceive people and get them away from the divine truth. The only way to be protected from his attacks is to stick with Dhikr and to have full trust in God as we wish to reach God before death according to Imam Mihir's teachings.

If the individual can manage increasing the level of Dhikr and with the help of the Creator carry the Dhikr more than half of everyday, then the individual is ready to submit the physical body to God as well. That clearly does not mean that the physical body also reaches God physically like the Spirit does, but it is for the physical body to start fulfilling every command of God and staying away from every prohibition of His (Mihir, 2007).

Once the physical body is submitted, the individual is very close to *continuous Dhikr*. Again with the help of the Creator, the individual will get to the continuous Dhikr and through that will submit the Soul to God as well (and will become Ulul Elbab). After the submission of Soul, it is only a matter of time for the submission of Free Will to God (Mihir, 2007).

It is *absolute* joy and happiness that the individual attains at the point of submission of free will. Aside from elimination of all vices, the individual's heart is embellished nineteen total times; at this point of time and she or he is even granted to

solve the very last puzzle, which is *seeing God* (Mihir, 2007). These are the people who are assigned to deliver others to the path of God--by God--indicates Imam Mihr.

According to Imam Iskender Ali MIHR, living without knowing what the Creator wants from us (which is our happiness and joy only and nothing else) is living a vain life. In his own words, “living a life in vegetable state.” Either we will “wish to deliver our Spirit to God” and start living a life that is happy and joyous, or we will not and we will live the life of this world in agony and unhappiness until we die. Yet, the truth will be even harsher in the hereafter. On the other hand, Imam MIHR explicitly states that “those who try what God prescribes, they certainly, but certainly succeed.”

Imam Mihr also teaches about the two sets of angels that record our daily life in a three dimensional film format. The first set records our actions and the other set records our thoughts. He explains that on the Day of Judgment, everything we had done will be shown to us with our actions, and their level of intendancy will again be proven to us with the records of our thoughts. Considering how in today’s technology we spend thousands of dollars for security surveillance, we are given that for free starting from our birth. Knowing that we have our very own police within us, we need to be more careful about doing the right thing at all times.

On the other hand, if we cannot teach this concept in our schools, we cannot stop crime, rape, drug use, alcohol consumption, binge drinking, gang problems, sexual abuse, suicides or any other negative consequences that take place within our society. If we can teach our kids this information, then aside from elimination of all these negative concepts, we also teach them how to feel and experience *joy and happiness*, and if they are willing also prepare them for the hereafter. The peace that starts within spreads to

each and everyone else around us as well. Those who are not happy and who are in misery can only make others unhappy and miserable. More importantly, this is the only way to stop the bloodshed all over the world where people are literally killing each other in the name of God, thinking that others' beliefs are different than their own.

It is also obvious that not everyone will be interested in *such knowledge* that is presented here. Even though we teach math and science to all students, not every one of them is becoming a mathematician or a scientist. But at least, making it available gives them the option to get familiar with that information.

In any educational system, it is the responsibility of teachers to prepare kids in the best way for the future. Educating our kids' minds, bodies and spirits is very important, just like the YMCA model where the body-mind-spirit triangle refers to a completely healthy human being. Not only the body, not only the mind, not only the spirit either. The education of all three at once will bring forward the totally healthy individual. But, first we need to know the difference between the soul and spirit, before we can teach them to the future generations.

Spirit and Soul In Cultural Stories

Even if it is not called the soul and the spirit, they are mentioned pretty much in each culture in different ways. For example, the Cherokee nation has the following story:

A Grandfather from the Cherokee Nation was talking with his grandson. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf is evil and ugly: He is anger, envy, war, greed, self-pity, sorrow, regret, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, selfishness and arrogance. The other wolf is beautiful and good: He is friendly,

joyful, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, justice, fairness, empathy, generosity, true, compassion, gratitude, and deep vision. This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other human as well."

The grandson paused in deep reflection because of what his grandfather had just said. Then he finally cried out; "Oyee! Grandfather, which wolf will win?" The elder Cherokee replied, "The wolf that you feed." (Native Wisdom)

The American version of the story, on the other hand, was very well portrayed in Spiderman III where Peter Parker was trying to resist the temptation of a black spider dress that made him greedy, selfish and superior. On the contrary, his regular spider dress made him very humble, generous and giving.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

An Ottoman Imam Mihr And The Ottoman Empire

Imam Iskender Ali MIHR explicitly states that “he is honored to be an Ottoman and he admires the Ottomans.” In every occasion, he indicates why the Ottomans were mentioned to be the *Lords of the Horizons* by western historians (Goodwin Jason, 1999) and how they were the provider of ‘justice’ to the world during their time.

The story of the Ottomans starts with Ertugrul’s son Osman Gazi in 1299. After the founder of the dynasty Osman Gazi took over the leadership of his tribe had a dream. His dream is being transcribed as follows;

When he was resting at Edebali’s house (for the shelter of hospitality could never be denied even to the suitor whose addresses were rejected), the young prince, after long and melancholy musing on her (Edebali’s daughter) whom he loved, composed his soul in that patient resignation to sorrow, which, according to the Arabs is the key to all happiness. In this mood he fell asleep, and he dreamed a dream.

Osman saw himself and his host reposing near each other. From the bosom of Edebali rose the full moon (emblem of Mal Hatoon), and inclining towards the bosom of Osman it sank upon it, and was lost to sight. After that a goodly tree sprang forth, which grew in beauty and in strength, ever greater and greater. Still did the embracing verdure of its boughs and branches cast an ampler and an ampler shade, until they canopied the extreme horizon of the three parts of the world. Under the tree stood four mountains, which he knew to be Caucasus, Atlas,

Taurus, and Haemus. These mountains were the four columns that seemed to support the dome of the foliage of the sacred tree with which the earth was now centered. From the roots of the tree gushed forth four rivers, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Danube, and the Nile. Tall ships and barks innumerable were on the waters. The fields were heavy with harvest. The mountain sides were clothed with forests. Thence in exulting and fertilizing abundance sprang fountains and rivulets that gurgled through thickets of the cypress and the rose. In the valleys glittered stately cities, with domes and cupolas, with pyramids and obelisks, with minarets and towers. The Crescent shone on their summits: from their galleries sounded the Muezzin's call to prayer. That sound was mingled with the sweet voices of a thousand nightingales, and with the prattling of countless parrots of every hue. Every kind of singing bird was there. The winged multitude warbled and flitted around beneath the fresh living roof of the interlacing branches of the all-overarching tree; and every leaf of that tree was in shape like unto a scimitar. Suddenly there arose a mighty wind, and turned the points of the sword-leaves towards the various cities of the world, but especially towards Constantinople. That city, placed at the junction of two seas and two continents, seemed like a diamond set between two sapphires and two emeralds, to form the most precious stone in a ring of universal empire. Osman thought that he was in the act of placing that visional ring on his finger, when he awoke.

Osman told this dream to his host; the vision seemed to Edeballi so clearly to indicate honor, power, and glory to the posterity of Osman and Mal Hatun, that the old Sheik no longer opposed their union. They were married by the saintly

Dervish Touroud, a disciple of Edebali. (encyclopedia of wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire).

The Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) started with the Oghuz settlers who came from Central Asia during the Seljuks time (1098-1308). When the Seljuks' reign ended, the Oghuz took control of the Western part of Turkey (Hines, R. 1999). From the beginning, the Ottomans always fought against injustices and unfairness. During the thirteenth century, Anatolia was a chaotic place where there was no security (Hines, R. 1999). Richard Hines also stated, "the Ottomans are one of the greatest and most powerful civilizations of the modern period. Their moment of glory in the sixteenth century represents one of the heights of human creativity, optimism, and artistry. The empire they built was the largest and most influential of the Muslim empires of the modern period, and their culture and military expansion crossed over into Europe. Not since the expansion of Islam into Spain in the eighth century had Islam seemed poised to establish a European presence as it did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like that earlier expansion, the Ottomans established an empire over European territory and established Islamic traditions and culture that last to the current day."

More than six hundred years of reign! During the rise of the Empire (1299-1683), it extended over three continents (Eastern Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa) and was the country to turn to for help. It did not matter to Ottomans how far the country was, how small or large the country was, what the religion of that country was, or what natural resources that country had for Ottomans to help. They literally existed for the joy and happiness of all mankind. They left their cultural, traditional, religious, artistic and historic traces everywhere they went.

During the growth of the Empire, almost all of the Ottoman Sultans had a religious guide (*Murshid*) that they followed. It was actually the education and commands of these religious guides who could get the orders directly from God, and who brought the Empire to the highest status through the Sultans who lead the country. Sultans would rule with justice due to their fear of the Creator. Most of the Ottoman conquests were to serve justice to the places they went. People of any religion, faith or belief were always supported and encouraged. Their religious buildings (let it be a synagogue, church, shrine, mosque, etc.) and other needs were maintained, sponsored and paid by the government.

For instance, Mehmet II (Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the conqueror of Constantinople) was appointed to the throne at a very early age by his father; this was due to his father's religious guide's sign of Mehmet's conquest of Constantinople. One day, Mehmet's father Murat II asked his Murshid Haci Bayram Veli if it would be granted to him to conquer Constantinople (today's Istanbul). Haci Bayram Veli pointed to Murat II's son in his crib and his young follower Ak Shemseddin next to the crib and said "it will not be granted to us, but it will be to this young student of mine and to your newborn son." Since Murat II had total trust in the statement of his Murshid, and was eager to see his son's conquest, he left the throne to him when he was a teenager.

When Mehmet II laid siege to the city, it still seemed very difficult to succeed. Right before the day of conquest, Mehmet II attempted to enter the tent of his Murshid Ak Shemseddin, the guards did not allow him inside even though he was the Sultan. Mehmet II sneaked to the back of the tent and ripped open the tent of his Murshid with his dagger and saw him on his prayer mat which was all wet and muddy due to his tears.

Ak Shemseddin praised the Lord and told Mehmet II which fortresses to be bombed for the conquest.

In 1517, Yavuz Sultan Selim conquered Egypt and took over the title of Caliph and its emblems, the sword and the mantle of the Prophet Mohammed (may peace be upon him) with a direct command from a vision of the Prophet Mohammed (may peace be upon him) himself. Yavuz Sultan Selim passed the Sinai Desert with his army in 13 days, which no other commanders would even think of. In the middle of the desert, Selim dismounted his horse and started walking. His grand viziers approached him requesting him to mount back on his horse since the army was also off of their horses due to their respect to the Sultan. Selim turned around and said “How could I ride my horse when our Prophet (may peace be upon him) is walking in front of us and showing us the way!”

Yavuz Sultan Selim was extremely pious as a true believer in God. Once he was in Egypt, the earrings on certain males caught his attention. He got intrigued and asked why they were wearing earrings. His viziers found out that those males who were wearing the earrings were the slaves. Then Selim ordered his own ears to be pierced and ringed as well indicating that “All should know that I am a slave to God!” He was also a follower of Ibn-i Arabi who was slain in Damascus (1240) as a blasphemer for his famous “What you worship is right under my feet” statement. After conquering Damascus, Selim asked where the Ibn-i Arabi incident actually took place. Once he was shown the actual place, he ordered that place to be dug. As the place was excavated, the workers found a pot of gold and brought it to Yavuz Sultan Selim. It was then the Sultan

revealed the truth about the statement of Ibn-i Arabi, “He was giving the message that the people were worshipping money rather than God!”

Religion and education went hand in hand for the Ottomans from their beginning to their end. Therefore science and religion helped each other tremendously rather than competing against each other and the innovations contributed to the joy and happiness of all. When we take a look at the early times of Islam and rise of the Ottoman Empire, we always see Islamic East to lead the way in math, physics, chemistry, aviation, medicine, dental hygiene, education, etc. until the decline of the Empire. For instance, it was the Islamic invasion of Spain that brought an organized library system and electricity to Spain and other parts of Europe. What we call Algebra is the method Islamic scholar Al-Jabir added to mathematics. An Islamic dentist developed the first dental hygienic process in history.

When we take a look at the U.S. governmental system today, we still see the influence of Ottomans and their governmental genius. Ottomans ruled three continents with the help of state and federal government system. States had their own rules and regulations but they were reporting and paying taxes to the Ottoman government.

As multicultural educators, we have so much to learn from the educational system the Ottomans had. Higher education was incorporated within their religious institutions and they were not only teaching religion in those institutions but also every domain of science to promote inventions and discoveries in the light of the Holy Scripture. Therefore the joy and happiness they promoted and taught was not only spiritual but also scientific.

CHAPTER 7

EXPLICITATION

There are many philosophies, political and social beliefs around the world such as socialism, communism, multiculturalism, etc. that were believed in and followed by greater masses in the past than in the present. Nonetheless, today many people follow some sort of religion and or spiritual belief. Those who are against organized religion are more spiritual and those who are more devoted in their practice are considered more religious, although there is still a debate in regards to accuracy of these qualifications.

Education plays an ultimate role in every aspect of human belief. Science, politics, philosophy, arts, or religion are always acquired through the means of education. When it comes to educating minds, we teach both the good and bad at the same time. Some are more interested in learning how to become rich, how to get ahead of others, how to exploit more, etc. Yet, some are more interested in learning how to live modestly, how to put others before themselves, and how to serve others. Nevertheless, it is obvious that it is time to focus on teaching more *peace and love* to reduce the bloodshed, violence and economic struggle throughout the world.

Imam Iskender Ali Mihr's essential teaching is only about *love*. He states "To be loved by others, you have to love them first. It would be a great mistake to expect the people to love you first. When you manage loving even those who consider you as an enemy, then you live in true joy and happiness" (Mihr, 2007). Imam Iskender Ali Mihr explains the way to achieve this as well. Today there are people who promote peace and happiness all over the world such as the Dalai Lama, as well as Gandhi and Mother Theresa did in the past, but none of these leaders promoted the principal of attaining joy

and happiness with proof from all three sacred scriptures: the old testament, the new testament and the last testament) (see Appendix C).

Imam Iskender Ali Mihr teaches 7 stages of our closeness to the Creator and our four submissions:

1. Wishing to reach God before death (willing to deliver the spirit back).
2. Taking a pledge of allegiance to the Murshid/Religious Guide.
3. Delivering and submitting the spirit to God (First Submission).
4. Surrendering the physical body to God (Second Submission).
5. Surrendering the soul to God (Third Submission).
6. Having an embellished heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance.
7. Submitting the free will to God (Fourth and Last Submission). (Mihr, 2007)

Imam Mihr uses the Quran to prove all these stages to show that they are all obligations. He also uses the Quran to prove that all Sahabe/Companions of Mohammed (may peace be upon him) fulfilled all of these seven stages. He also proves with Quran that Moses (may peace be upon him) and his followers, and Jesus (may peace be upon him) and his followers fulfilled all these seven stages as well. Imam Mihr also corroborates these obligations in both the Old and New Testament, which Moses and Jesus fulfilled respectively with their followers.

There are so many clear indications in the Quran that towards the end of time (Appendix A), a messenger will come to unite all the world's religions proving that all religions are the same as Abraham's (may peace be upon him) original religion which is called 'Hanif' and is based on *submission*. This will take place right before the return of Jesus (may peace be upon him), which is clearly mentioned in the Quran.

Right before the birth of Jesus (may peace be upon him), the Jews were expecting a savior. Yet they did not believe Jesus was this person. Both Christians and Muslims are waiting for the second coming of Jesus (may peace be upon him), and we do not know how many will seriously believe once he comes back. Yet, according to Islamic belief, right before the second coming of Jesus (may peace be upon him), Mahdi Rasul will come to teach the truth and correct what is being changed even in Islam. His duty will be to promote *peace and serenity* for all humanity and to establish it with the help of the Creator. Thus far, many people have claimed to be Mahdi Rasul. Yet, none of them could prove that they were the genuine one. The true Mahdi Rasul will be able to establish peace and serenity all over the world; there will be abundance all over the world, (which no one has yet achieved), and he will be joined by Jesus (may peace be upon him).

This seems like *mission impossible!* Nevertheless, no one can possibly stand against the will of the Creator. If peace, happiness and joy are the only things that God wants for us, then God will certainly provide it. The main factor for this is time and it is up to us to make it happen even faster by believing in it and putting our trust in the hands of God. The sooner we turn to God and His only religion (submitting to the will of God) less bloodshed and more peace around the world will be achieved faster.

Do all people need to become Muslims for that purpose? Not at all! Imam Mihr states, “All will keep their rituals and traditional ways, they will only trust in God delivering their spirits back to Him!” (Mihr, 2007). If they are willing to get closer to God, they will improve themselves with the seven stages and from the first stage to the seventh, they will move upward Heaven to Heaven until they reach the seventh Heaven.

Happiness and joy should be continuous both in this world and in the hereafter. Being happy in this world is only possible if we can put our ego aside, put others before us, and always be considerate of others. Otherwise, we will always live in a *me always* state of mind, let our temptations rule us and live in that miserable state until the end of our life. The hereafter however is the place where all the math will be done and all will be judged accordingly. If you believe and are ready, there is nothing to be afraid of. But if you do not believe, and this happens to be the case in the hereafter, then you will be *ruined*.

Spirituality and multicultural education cannot be separated simply because as every individual has his or her own culture, every individual also has his or her own spirituality. Within President Obama's administration, our country appears to be more culturally conscious and broader multicultural education will provide diversity in spirituality. Cultural diversity in the U.S. has been attacked particularly within the universities and colleges as multicultural education courses get eliminated as soon as budget cuts are eminent. Merging of different departments into one eliminates cultural uniqueness and is racially and culturally insensitive. Not valuing multicultural programs is a clear sign of how the mainstream population feels threatened about different cultures. Spirituality and multicultural education is greatly needed to support the cultural diversity of the educational arena.

As educators, the only responsibility that we have is to present this information to our students. Just like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (may peace be upon them) called their people to the path of God. That was all they could do, just call them to the path of God and give them the good news. As teachers, first, we need to

know what happiness and joy is, and then we need to illustrate and teach it to those who are willing to learn! It will then be up to them to decide what to do with it.

The study of happiness and joy in multicultural education is imperative for all teachers to get themselves familiar with *why the majority of the people are unhappy, possibly including themselves!* Students can only learn through the knowledge teachers impart. Aside from teaching, teachers would also benefit from knowing the key to happiness and joy. Being students at one point themselves, we all know that we all prefer a teacher or professor who is fair, down to earth, friendly, understanding and helpful rather than arrogant, selfish, insecure, intolerant, and insensitive. The study of happiness and joy in multicultural education clearly teaches how to become an example of an individual who is experiencing happiness and joy and is ready to pass it on to his or her students, colleagues, families, etc.

In the light of the importance of teaching happiness and joy in multicultural education, this research proves that education should not only be limited to science, liberal arts and other domains, but should also incorporate the *spiritual* realm to prepare a generation that knows how to attain happiness and joy in a world where economy is in crisis. This way education will be complete in all its domains.

As far as the continued research on this matter is concerned, there will be more open doors into the study of *happiness and joy* in education and researchers will be urged to conduct more studies about the issue. More importantly, the new research will help believers to unite for world peace as one body and bring a brighter future to our upcoming generations. Psychological and social aspects of faith should also be looked into with future research.

In a world where money is proven not to be the source of happiness and joy, we need to study the true foundation of it in education and teach it properly to all.

APPENDIX A

INDICATIONS FOR THE END OF TIME

- * When untrustworthy people will be regarded as trustworthy and the trustworthy will be regarded as untrustworthy.
- * When it will be hot in winter (and vice versa).
- * When the length of days is stretched, i.e. a journey of a few days is covered in a matter of hours.
- * When orators and lecturers lie openly.
- * When people dispute over petty issues.
- * When women with children come displeased on account of them bearing offspring, and barren women remain happy on account of having no responsibility of offspring.
- * When oppression, jealousy, and greed become the order of the day.
- * When people blatantly follow their passions and whims.
- * When lies prevail over the truth.
- * When violence, bloodshed and anarchy become common.
- * When immorality overtakes shamelessness and is perpetrated publicly.
- * When the offspring become a cause of grief and anger (for their parents).
- * There will be an abundance of illegitimate children.
- * There will be an abundance of critics, tale-carriers, backbiters and taunters in society.
- * People will establish ties with strangers and sever relations with their near and dear ones.
- * Hypocrites will be in control of the affairs of the community and evil, immoral people will be at the helm of business establishments.

* The Shrines will be decorated, but the hearts of the people will be devoid of guidance.

* Gangsters and evil people will prevail.

(Ali, M. & Ali, I. Z.)

APPENDIX B

IMAM MIHR'S PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

His books published in the area of Macro Economics:

1. The Liquid Mechanism
2. How Can Turkey Be Delivered From the Bottleneck?
3. The Solution to the Problem of Inflation and the Development in Turkey
4. Medium Term Credits in Turkey, 1973
5. Financial Problems in Turkish Industry, 1974
6. The Waste of Resources in the System of Turkish Banks, 1984
7. The Manpower Relationship Between Turkey and Germany, 1973

Some of his research to be found in the Library of the State Planning Organization:

1. The place of the contribution of savings in the development of Turkey
2. The relationship between money supply and price
3. Money multiplier factor and the financial system
4. The relationship among money in circulation, the turnover rate of money and the rate of inflation
5. Diagnosis and treatment of inflation in Turkey
6. Analysis of 10 banks in Turkey
7. Report about savings bonds and banking for development
8. Trade credits and investment credits
9. The liquid mechanism in the system of Turkish banking in 1982 and the waste of resources

10. Credits in the system of Turkish banking and shareholders
11. Cost of savings in the banks and rentability
12. Calculation of the incomes of credit and the cost of savings interest

His Articles in the Area of Religion:

1. 13 articles in the magazine "Sebil"
2. 17 articles in "Millî Gazete" (National Newspaper)

His Articles in the Area of Macro Economics:

1. 33 articles in the Turkish Newspaper of Economy
2. 8 articles in the Magazine of Economy.

His Conferences:

Imam Iskender Ali MIHR had conferences almost in every city in Turkey. Currently he offers Videoconferences all over the world every weekend through satellite, which are available via Internet connection as well.

His Books in the Area of Religion:

1. Happiness, Sufism, Islam
2. Discourse
3. Islam in the Qur'ân (in English)
4. Islam in the Qur'ân (in Turkish)
5. The Lights of Message

6. Repentance
7. The Oaths
8. Reaching Allâh
9. Conveyance of the Message
10. Divine Destiny (Kader) - The Chosen Act (Kaza)
11. Ve'l 'Asr Sura (The Time) - 1
12. Ve'l 'Asr Sura (The Time) - 2
13. Ve'l 'Asr Sura (The Time) - 3
14. Ve'l 'Asr Sura (The Time) - 4
15. To Be a Believer
16. Unification
17. Denial
18. Explanation
19. The Warner
20. Poems
21. The Deviated and Hidden Verses of the Glorious Qur'ân Preventing (Mankind) From Entering Paradise Through Concealing and Distorting Its True Meanings
22. Conversation on the Night of Power
23. What's Islam?
24. Tasavvuf: Der Islam im Kur'ân (in German)
25. Islam - Happiness - Sufism
26. Islam and Sufism, Volumes 1 and 2
27. The Commentary of the Noble Qur'ân (Volumes 1-19)

APPENDIX C

7 STAGES IN QURAN (LAST TESTAMENT)

1st Stage: Wishing To Reach God

30/Ar Rum 31: Turn back to Him (Allah), and have TAQWA (piety) for Him, and perform regular prayers, and do not be among those who are MUSHRIK (those who attribute a partner to Allah).

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

4/An-Nisa 64: We send messengers to be obeyed by the permission of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to their souls (ego), come to you and asked for Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked for forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning (to both sides), Most Merciful.

5/Al-Maidah 35: O you who are AMENU (those who wish to reach Allah in this life before they die)! Have TAQWA (piety) for Allah and seek the means of approach unto Him. And strive hard in His cause so that you may prosper (get happiness).

25/Al-Furqan 70: Except those who repent (before a Murshid, the religious Guide), and become MUMIN (those among the believers of Allah who wish to reach Him) (since he has repented before a Murshid and faith has been written in his heart), and do improving righteous deeds (with the same reasons), for those Allah will change their sins into merits. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

40/Mumin 7: The angels who uphold the Throne (of Allah) and the one (the spirit of the Imam of the Age) there glorify and praise their Lord (by dhikr; by remembering and repeating the name of Allah) and have faith in Him; and ask for Forgiveness (the transfer of sins into merits) for those who are AMENU (who wish to reach Allah in this life): "Our Lord! Your Reach is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge. Forgive (transfer their sins into merits) those who turn in Repentance (before a Murshid [religious guide]), and depend on (follow) Your Path (the Path leading straight to Allah); and preserve them from the torture of the Blazing Fire!

40/Mumin 15: Allah Who raises the ranks (degrees) and Who is the owner of the Throne sends a spirit (that will convey the command of Allah) by His Command onto any of His servants (the heads of His servants) He pleases (since he wishes to reach Allah, Allah also wishes to make him reach Himself) in order to warn (the spirit of that servant) of the Day to reach Allah.

3rd Stage: Submitting the Spirit to God

4/An-Nisa 58: Allah commands you to render back the Trusts (spirit, physical body, soul, and free will) to their owner (who is Allah). And He commands you to judge with

justice when you judge between men. Verily how excellent is the teaching He gives you by this! And Allah is the All-Hearer and the All-Seer.

13/Ar-Rad 21: And they submit to Allah the thing (their spirits), which Allah has commanded to be submitted (before death, and they feel HUSHU (reverence) for their Lord and fear the terrible reckoning (to enter Hell).

73/Al-Muzzammil 8: Do dhikr (remember and repeat the name of Allah) with the name of your Lord and turn to Him with complete devotion.

89/Al-Fajr 28: "(O spirit!) Be well pleased with Allah, and seek His pleasure as well! Come back to Allah (your Lord) and reach Him."

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

36/Yasin 60, 61: "O you Children of Adam! Did I not enjoin on you that you should not worship Satan? Verily, Satan is an apparent enemy to you. "And (did I not enjoin on you) that you should worship Me? And this is SIRAT-I MUSTAKIM (the path leading straight to Allah).

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

4/An-Nisa 103: So when you have finished the prayer, remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining. But when you are secure (from danger) keep up (regular) prayer. Prayer indeed has been enjoined on the believers at fixed times.

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

2/Baqara 186: When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them). I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me. Let them also, with a will, listen to My call (invitation), and have faith in Me, so that they may walk in IRSHAD (Guidance [to Allah]).

98/Al-Baiyinah 5: And they have been commanded for nothing but to worship Allah as HANIF, being righteous (with a purified soul [ego]) and to perform regular prayer and to give alms. And that is the Religion which is QAYYUM (True and Acceptable).

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

3/Al-Imran 102: O you who are amenu (who wish to reach Allah before death and to surrender to Him). Be the Possessors of Taqva with the most care which is due to Him and do not die unless you are Muslims (those who have surrendered their spirits, physical bodies, souls and free wills [faculties of choice] to Allah).

2/Baqara 132: And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob: "Oh my sons! Allah had chosen Faith for you; then you do not die except in submission to Allah."

12/Yusuf 108: Say: "This is the Way I and those who have depended on (followed) me invite unto Allah on seeing Him (with heart-eyes). I exclude Allah from all things. And I am not one of those who are MUSHRIK (who attribute partners to Allah)."

APPENDIX D

PROOF OF FULFILLMENT OF 7 STAGES IN QURAN (LAST TESTAMENT)

1st Sage: Wishing To Reach God

39/Az-Zumer 17: For those who avoid being servants to the way of Satan and who turn to Allah (made their spirits reach Allah before death), there is Good News. So announce the Good News to My Servants.

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

4/An-Nisa 64: We send messengers to be obeyed by the permission of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to their souls (ego), come to you and asked for Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked for forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning (to both sides), Most Merciful.

48/Al-Fath 10: Verily those who give pledge to you are also giving pledge to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands (since Allah manifests all over your body, He manifests also on your hands). Whosoever takes it (his degree) down does so only because of his own soul (ego) (as he did not keep the oaths and promises he has taken). And whosoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah (his Oath, Promise and Covenant), Allah will soon grant him a great Reward (the happiness of Heaven and of this world).

60/Al-Mumtahinnah 12: O Prophet! When MUMIN women (those among the believers of Allah who wish to reach Him) come to you and give you a promise that they will not attribute a partner with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery, that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey you in any just matter that I commanded them, you accept their pledge. And you pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins) (the transfer of their sins into merits). Allah is indeed Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful.

3rd Stage: Submitting the Spirit to God

39/Az-Zumer 18: They (SAHABA: disciples of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)) listen to the Word, and depend on (follow) the best of them (the Word said by our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)), they are those who have attained HIDAYET (The True Guidance Leading To Allah) (those who have made their spirits reach Allah in this life before they die). And they are ULUL ELBAB (to whom the secrets of Allah are revealed) (they are of CONTINUOUS DHIKR (constantly remembering and repeating the name of Allah)).

3/Al-Imran 20: So if they dispute with you, then say: "I and those who depended on me have submitted our physical bodies (Wajh) to Allah." And say to the People of the Book and to those who are illiterate: "Have you also submitted (your physical bodies)?" If they

have, truly they are in HIDAYET (The True Guidance Leading To Allah). If they turn away, your duty is to convey the Message. Allah sees His servants.

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

3/Al-Imran 20: So if they dispute with you, then say: "I and those who depended on me have submitted our physical bodies (Wajh) to Allah." And say to the People of the Book and to those who are illiterate: "Have you also submitted (your physical bodies)?" If they have, truly they are in HIDAYET (The True Guidance Leading To Allah). If they turn away, your duty is to convey the Message. Allah sees His servants.

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

3/Al-Imran 190, 191: Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for people of understanding (to whom the secrets of Allah are revealed, the owners of continuous dhikr, ULUL ELBAB). Those are ULUL ELBAB (to whom the secrets of Allah are revealed) who remember and repeat the name of Allah all the time, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides. They contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): "Our Lord! You have not created (all) this in vain! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire.

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

2/Baqara 139: Say: "Do you dispute (argue) with us about Allah? And He is our Lord and your Lord, and our deeds belong to us (we are to be rewarded for our deeds), and your deeds belong to you (and you for your deeds). And we are sincere (utterly pure servants) to Him.

49/Al-Hujurat 7: And know that among you is Allah's Messenger. If he followed your way in most of the orders, you would certainly be cursed. But Allah has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful (with Faith) in your hearts (by gathering FAZLs (virtues) around the word Faith and filling the heart with light). And He has made Blasphemy, Rebellion and Disobedience hateful to you. They are those who have attained IRSHAD (the True Guidance to Allah).

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

3/Al-Imran 104: Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong (helping people get rid of the vices in the hearts of their souls (ego). They are the ones who attain salvation.

3/Al-Imran 110: You are the best nation that ever existed among humanity. You command people to good and prohibit them from evil (you help them get rid of the vices in their souls (ego)), and you have Faith in Allah. Had the People of the Book had faith, it

would certainly have been better for them. Some of them are MUMIN, but most of them are FASIQ (in blasphemy).

9/At-Taubah 100: It was the vanguard of Islam, SABIQUN-AL AWWALEEN (the ones in the first three ranks of those who were always ready to give and help for the cause of good deeds: ULUL ELBAB [to whom the secrets of Allah were revealed], IKHLAS [who have also submitted their souls (ego) to Allah], SALAH [who have attained the very last stage through their submissions]) some of whom were MUHAJIRs (who migrated from Mecca to Medina), some of whom were ANSARs (the helpers in Medina), and some of whom were those who depended on (followed) them (MUHAJIRs and ANSARs) (since SAHABA (disciples of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]) were of the IRSHAD POST (True Guidance, they were depended on [followed]). Allah is well pleased with them, as they are with Him. Allah has prepared for them the Gardens under which rivers flow, and they will dwell therein forever. That is the greatest reward.

12/Yusuf 108: Say: "This is the Way I and those who have depended on (followed) me invite unto Allah on seeing Him (with heart-eyes). I exclude Allah from all things. And I am not one of those who are MUSHRIK (who attribute partners to Allah)."

APPENDIX E

7 STAGES IN NEW TESTAMENT

1st Stage: Wishing To Reach God

Matthew 7:7, 8 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 13:15, 16 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

Job 22:27 You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows.

Job 22:30 He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

Matthew 3:1-3: In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"

Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Matthew 3:13-16 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have been all made to drink of one Spirit.

Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

3rd Stage: Submitting the Spirit to God

Acts 3:19, 20 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.

Luke 1:15, 16 For he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

John 3:4, 5 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

Matthew 6:24, 25 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Luke 12:23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

Galatians 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Romans 6:18 and, having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness.

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Mark 12:29-33 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Luke 6:27-29 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.

Matthew 22:39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

APPENDIX F

PROOF OF FULFILLMENT OF 7 STAGES IN NEW TESTAMENT

1st Stage: Wishing To Reach God

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

John 3:21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

2 Thessalonians 2:14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience.

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

Philippians 1:19 for I know that through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3rd Stage: Submitting the Spirit to God

Romans 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hebrews 4:6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience.

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

1 Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

1 Corinthians 4:12 And we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

Acts 24:18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But only some Jews from Asia...

John 3:26, 27 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness--look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

John 3:34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

John 8:28 So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

John 5:30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Acts 14:15 "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

Acts 26:20 I declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

Romans 1:15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Romans 11:5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

APPENDIX G

7 STAGES IN OLD TESTAMENT

1st Stage: Wishing To Reach God

1 Samuel 7:3,4 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ash'taroth from among you, and direct your heart to the LORD, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." So Israel put away the Ba'als and the Ash'taroth, and they served the LORD only.

2 Kings 23:25 Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

Numbers 11:17, 29 And I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

Deuteronomy 30:16 If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it.

Psalms 5:11 But let all who take refuge in thee rejoice, let them ever sing for joy; and do thou defend them, that those who love thy name may exult in thee.

3rd Stage: Submission Submitting the Spirit to God

Psalms 2:12 Kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Psalms 18:30 This God--his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

Deuteronomy 5:20, 21 'Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor. Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.'

Deuteronomy 6:5 and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Jeremiah 4:14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

Jeremiah 32:38-40 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Jeremiah 33:6-9 Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them; they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren--him you shall heed. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Daniel 12:3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Samuel 9:9, 18, 19 (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate, and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?" Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer; go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind.

APPENDIX H

PROOF OF FULFILLMENT OF 7 STAGES IN OLD TESTAMENT

1st Stage: Wishing To Reach God

2 Chronicles 19:3 Nevertheless some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Ashe'rahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."

2 Chronicles 19:4 Jehosh'aphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people, from Beer-sheba to the hill country of E'phraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

2 Chronicles 20:4 And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

2 Chronicles 22:9 He searched for Ahazi'ah, and he was captured while hiding in Sama'ria, and he was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehosh'aphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart." And the house of Ahazi'ah had no one able to rule the kingdom.

2 Chronicles 26:5 He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechari'ah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.

2nd Stage: Taking a pledge of allegiance to the religious guide

2 Chronicles 15:14, 15 They took oath to the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns. 15 And all Judah rejoiced over the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest round about.

2 Chronicles 30:12 The hand of God was also upon Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD.

3rd Stage: Submitting the Spirit to God

1 Kings 15:14 But the high places were not taken away. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly true to the LORD all his days.

2 Kings 20:5 "Turn back, and say to Hezeki'ah the prince of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD.

2 Kings 23:25 Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

4th Stage: Surrendering the Physical Body to God

Joshua 24:24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

1 Kings 19:10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

5th Stage: Surrendering the Soul to God

1 Kings 3:6 And Solomon said, "Thou hast shown great and steadfast love to thy servant David my father, because he walked before thee in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward thee; and thou hast kept for him this great and steadfast love, and hast given him a son to sit on his throne this day.

1 Kings 5:4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune.

6th Stage: Embellishing of the heart and repenting with unbreakable repentance

2 Chronicles 31:21 And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

Ezekiel 1:3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chalde'ans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

7th Stage: Submitting the Free Will to God

Micah 3:8 But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

Micah 4:5 For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

Nahum 1:15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah, fulfill your vows, for never again shall the wicked come against you, he is utterly cut off.

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