



# THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 16

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ASSALAMU ALAIKUM!

Dear Readers,

Well, at long last summer has finally arrived! We hope you are all enjoying the many pleasures of warm weather and kids at home. Picnics, swimming, barbecues, vacations, travel. With this in mind we have brought you topics and articles that travel well! We have packed so much into this special summer edition that it grew from 24 to 32 pages! Lots of new 'goings on' here at The Islamic Bulletin!

In 1991, we began the formidable job of compiling mosque locations for southern and northern California with driving directions. In this issue, we have included the new updated edition for those of you planning to travel. In Sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) we have focused on a Muslim's responsibility to parents and mothers in particular; Qur'an and Science is featuring embryology. Islamic Diet and Manners talks about good Islamic table and eating manners.

Hadith Qudsi presents just a few of the beautiful and very special hadith; Manners of the Prophet (pbuh) covers what the Prophet (pbuh) had to say about a variety of subjects and good general conduct among Muslims. We have formatted it for framing if you like.

A Woman In Islam is a very moving and touching story by a woman who has suffered many trials and tribulations for the sake of Islam ... her story is an inspiration to us all; Hakim ibn Hazm, a close companion of the Prophet (pbuh), who took twenty years to embrace Islam, is our guest in Stories of the Sahaba; and How I Embraced Islam is told by a gentleman gripped by despair, alcohol and demoralization until Islam entered his life.

A prescription for confusion and indecision on page 16 brings relief with Istikhara; an amazing story comes to us from Bosnia about the mercy of Allah for a family driven from their home with It's Their Miracle; in Islamic World News is an article on the changing face of Islam in America; and additionally, we have an interesting note about a six year old boy who is a hafiz that leaves us all saying "Masha Allah"! We have also brought you an excellent article on the realities of Islam for the new or non-Muslim who has been confused by media misconceptions. Read The Real Story on page 22.

Brothers from the San Francisco area tell about their amazing trip to Nicaragua and about the forgotten Muslims who emigrated there.

In the expanded Kid's Corner, we have a challenging game for kids and their parents too. Can you name the 25 Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an? This is a great traveling or car game, plus a real test of your knowledge. Cook's Corner features two wonderful summer recipes sent in by our readers which are excellent 'take along' foods.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge and encourage our fellow Muslims who are incarcerated and the readers who have supported us with their subscriptions. We hope you all enjoy this expanded issue.

- The Editor and Staff of The Islamic Bulletin

### THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



This is probably the strangest letter I have ever written, but here goes... I picked up your May 1998 issue of The Islamic Bulletin at a bus stop bench in Minneapolis while waiting to go home from work one evening. Thinking it was going to be a "hate filled terrorist devil-American" kind of thing, I started to read it just for fun, fully expecting to be horrified by its contents. What a complete shock when I started to see some of the principles Islam stands for. It was nothing like what I had been led to believe by the standard media hype about "Muslim Terrorists, etc.". I saw beauty, grace, and mercy in the words of the Qur'an. Could this be a true representation of this 'crazy Arab' religion? Well, much to my surprise, I found out that not

only is it not an "Arab" religion, but it certainly is not crazy. Nor is it 'hate-filled', but just the opposite! I saw tolerance, justice, guidance, fairness, understanding, and logic! My interest was piqued enough to actually go to the library on the weekend and obtain a copy of the Qur'an plus a few other books about Islam. You people are certainly keeping this wonderful gift a closely guarded secret! I have spent the last month reading everything I could on Islam and I think I am 'hooked'. As a middle-class white American 40-something male, I am stunned that this has happened to me!

With the freedoms and opportunities that America has to offer its people and a belief system such as Islam...it seems to me to be an unbeatable combo! I do not see any conflict between being an American with all of our cultural perspectives and following Islam. As a matter of fact, I believe that Islam can offer Americans what has been missing for many of us from my generation...moral guidance, family values, honesty and integrity in daily life. I also believe that America has a lot to offer Islam if we take advantage of the good things this country has to offer - Freedom of religion, the Bill of Rights, etc. I can only see a benefit for Americans embracing Islam and a benefit to our beautiful country as well. Thanks so much for this 'awakening'. It has changed my life.

Sincerely,

George Herbert

Minneapolis, MN

### Response:

Dear George,

Thank you so much for your touching letter. The staff here at the Bulletin is very appreciative of your response and thank you for your contribution to the Bulletin.

### NEED TO CONTACT US?

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We are receiving many inquiries from Americans like yourself and many new converts to Islam. This is why we have expanded The Islamic Bulletin to address the numerous questions we are getting regarding the basics of Islam. The demographics are definitely changing from what they were ten years ago. May Allah guide you and bless your efforts.

- Editor

Dear Editor,

I am ten years old and I would like you to make the Kid's Corner bigger and more fun. I like it but I think you should do more for us kids to help us learn about Islam. But my mom is sending a check with my letter so you will keep sending it to us. I hope I didn't hurt anyone's feelings by saying this. I got all the answers right in the last quiz but the answers for the blanks were not in order and at first I was confused, but then I figured it out. My little sister likes it too but I have to read it to her because she's small.

Thank you,

Yasmina Howard

Salt Lake City, UT

### Response:

Dear Yasmina,

Thank you for writing to us. We are always happy to hear about what our readers would like in the Bulletin. In this issue we have expanded the Kid's Corner as you asked. We hope you like this month's games. See if Mom or Dad knows all the Prophets! Also, one of the articles in World News is about an amazing 6 year old boy who can recite the whole Qur'an, which you might like reading about. Maybe your mom or dad will have to help. Thank you again for your subscription and your comments.

- Editor

Dear Editor,

I have recently become interested in Islam and took three buses and about 3 hours to go to a mosque in Southern California where I live, with the idea of obtaining a Qur'an and other Islamic literature. When I arrived there, I found that the Mosque was closed but on the front step was a copy of your newsletter. I helped myself to one, thinking that at least it would be interesting reading for the long bus ride home. I was surprised to find that I could not put it down. It explained many things I wanted the answers to...basic questions about Islam. I am enclosing the price of a subscription and will look forward to future issues. Can you tell me where I can obtain a Qur'an and other material?

Tammy Ortiz

Los Angeles, CA

### Response:

Dear Tammy,

We are so happy to hear that you found the Bulletin, enjoyed it, and found it of value. If you have a computer and Internet access there are a few sites for converts to Islam that also may be of help to you. And Insha'Allah (that means God Willing) we will have our site up soon. We are very impressed with your efforts to learn about Islam and the extent to which you went for the sake of knowledge. May Allah make it easy for you.

Best Wishes,

The Editor

## ISLAMIC WORLD NEWS

### THE MUSLIM MAINSTREAM

Islam is growing fast in America, and its members defy stereotypes.



Reprinted in part from U.S. News & World Report

In the polished wooden pews of a white-steepled New England church, the weekend congregation sits with heads reverently bowed. The town of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, is Yankee to the core, and so are most of the inhabitants. Like the sober, straitlaced Pilgrims 300 years before them, the worshipers here shun liquor, dress modestly, and feel uplifted when they call out "God is Great!" Unlike their Puritan predecessors, however, those gathered here address their Maker in Arabic: "Allah-u Akhbar!" They chant, in a call offered five times each day by Muslims from Maine to Alaska.

Five to 6 million strong, Muslims in America already outnumber Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Mormons, and they are more numerous than Quakers, Unitarians, Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Scientists, combined. Many demographers say Islam has overtaken Judaism as the country's second-most commonly practiced religion; others say it is in the passing lane.

Yet while Muslims make up one of the fastest-growing religious groups, largely because of immigration, they are among those least understood by their neighbors. Over half the respondents to a recent Roper poll described Islam as inherently anti-American, anti-Western, or supportive of terrorism--though only 5 percent of those surveyed said they'd had much contact with Muslims personally. And according to a draft report scheduled to be released this week by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, although the incidence of violence and harassment directed at Muslims declined 58 percent last year, discrimination reports increased 60 percent.

In part, such statistics reflect attitudes shaped by Muslims who live across the globe rather than those who live across the street. Militant fundamentalists such as the late Ayatollah

Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran (and a tiny minority of American Muslims) come from an extreme wing, rather than the more moderate center of the world's 1 billion Muslims. But TV cameras and international showdowns raise the militants' public profile. They overshadow the mass of American Muslims, who tend to vote Democratic on issues like immigration and affirmative action, veer Republican on "traditional family values," including such topics as abortion and sex education, and live comfortably within the mainstream of society.

The statistics also suggest that the United States must wrestle with a question that has challenged France, Germany, and other European nations as their Muslim populations have grown: Is America a nation based on Judeo-Christian values or on something more universal? Do we value cultural diversity, or merely tolerate it? As the country begins thinking about how the expanding Muslim population might change the nation's sense of itself, the challenge will be to see Islam as it really is, rather than as people wish or fear.

One of the most widespread misconceptions about Muslims here or abroad is that they are primarily Middle Eastern. Fewer than 1 out of 8 American Muslims (12.4 percent) are of Arab descent; other Middle Eastern groups like Iranians and Turks account for only a few additional percentage points each. On a global basis, there are about 100 million more Muslims on the Indian subcontinent alone than in all Arab countries combined. The two largest Muslim groups in the United States are native-born African-Americans (42 percent) and immigrants from South Asia (24 percent).

America's polyglot neighborhoods are home to Muslims of every conceivable background: Malays from Southeast Asia and Bosnians from southeast Europe, Songhai from the Sahara desert and Uighars from the Taklimakan desert. America is seldom so truly a melting pot as in her mosques. There is even a mosque on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico: Islam has a small but long-standing presence among Native American communities from the Plains to the pueblos.

Islam, which stresses egalitarianism, has a special appeal for the marginalized, but the faith draws many converts from the white middle class: More than 80,000 of America's Muslims are of West European background. When Mariam Agah (nee Mary Froelich) started questioning the faith of her birth, she was not only white and middle class...she was a Roman Catholic nun. At the age of 25, after seven years as Sister Frederick, she gave up her habit: "I was not convinced that Jesus was divine," she says, "and that's when I realized that I needed to leave." That was 28 years ago. Agah got a job at an elementary school, and for a long time she taught and she thought. She read her way through many bookshelves of philosophy, and two works stood out: the Koran and the Autobiography of Malcolm X. "I continued my spiritual journey," she says, "and it led me to Islam."

Jim Bates is another unlikely convert. In 1990, after four terms as a Democratic congressman from San Diego, he lost an election...and also lost his marriage, his home, and his sense of direction. Born and baptized a Catholic, raised Protestant in a series of orphanages and foster homes, then a loose follower of Unitarianism for most of his adult life, at age 50 Bates found himself searching, he says, for a truth that would never slip away. He found it through the faith of Pakistani-American friends he'd made during his tenure in Congress. Now Bates spends much of his time consulting, and the rest farming hay and raising quarter horses on a ranch in Idaho.

The man who attracts the greatest following among American Muslims...black, white, or Asian...is a moderate who has left behind divisive doctrines the Nation of Islam upholds. Warith Deen Mohammed, an imam (leader of prayer) and the son and successor of the black separatist Elijah Muhammad, has up to half a million solid supporters, and perhaps 1.5 million followers more loosely affiliated. He has championed unity among Muslims of different races and made significant headway, though desegregation is still a work in progress. Two decades ago, he led most of his father's radical Black Muslim flock into the mainstream of moderate Islam, and into the mainstream of everyday American life.

"I've become almost a fanatical supporter of the United States government," he told U.S. News. "To me, the vision of the Founding Fathers is the vision that we have in Islam."

Only a few months after the death of his father in 1975, Imam Warith shocked the faithful by renouncing many of the key tenets preached by Elijah Muhammad. Racially exclusionary rhetoric was jettisoned, as was the proposition that whites were "blue-eyed devils" created by an evil scientist named Yacub as a laboratory experiment. Imam Warith tossed out core Nation of Islam doctrines that are viewed as heresy by the rest of the Muslim world: for example, the belief that movement founder Wallace Fard was a manifestation of God and that Elijah Muhammad was his prophet.

"He was like Dr. Frankenstein," Imam Warith (born Wallace) says of his namesake. "He picked up some dead pieces here and some dead pieces there, put them all together, and breathed life into the creature."

In 1985 Imam Warith disbanded the Nation of Islam altogether, urging his supporters to attend any mosque they wished without regard to the race of the other congregants. Several splinter factions had already broken away: One was led by Farrakhan, who reestablished the old Nation and resurrected almost all of Elijah Muhammad's doctrines.

Wali Mutazammil, who had served as the Nation of Islam's minister for public relations in Kansas City, Mo., remembers setting aside his initial reluctance and rejoining American society. A boxer who'd been the Marine Corps champion featherweight of 1970, Mutazammil had been drawn to the old Nation of Islam partly by the example of boxing legend (and Nation spokesman) Muhammad Ali. In 1976 Mutazammil and the rest of his Missouri congregation followed Imam Warith's invitation to enter the mainstream Muslim fold.

Having already studied some of the texts of orthodox Islam, he says, he was glad to be part of a worldwide community. Now Mutazammil runs a management consulting firm with business stretching from East Asia to West Africa. Three-time world heavyweight champ Muhammad Ali also renounced the old Nation theology in the late 1970s.

Westerners tend to regard Muslim attitudes toward women as inherently discriminatory, but reality often differs from the stereotype here as well. "In the name of Islam, cultural habits have developed that suppress women," notes Laila Al-Marayati, "and this needs to be dealt with head-on." Born, raised, and still living in Los Angeles, Al-Marayati is a physician and past president of the Muslim Women's League. Throughout the world, she notes, women are denied equal rights of marriage, divorce, and property.

But such discrimination, she and many other Muslims argue, is a not a reflection of the true spirit of the faith: "The challenge is to let Islam become a tool for elevating women rather than for oppressing them."

Perhaps the most persistent negative stereotype of Islam is that it is a faith of violent extremists, represented by a masked militant rather than the doctor or computer software designer living next door. It is a stereotype that stings: Muslims in America say they are more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrators.

In a sense, American Muslims (many of them refugees from the regimes with which they are associated in the public mind) are held hostage to the behavior of Saddam Hussein and Hezbollah: Anti-Muslim violence in the United States rises sharply when tensions peak in the Middle East.

Sgt. George Curtis feels a special pride in having defended the holy sites of Mecca and Medina from the forces of Iraq. He is the commander of an M1A1 Abrams tank at Fort Carson, CO, a veteran of the gulf war, and also one of the 10,000 Muslims serving in the U.S. military. He sees no contradiction in his roles, noting that the Army has provided special "halal" meals for him and has relieved him of daily physical training requirements during the fast of Ramadan. "Whether it's Iraq or anywhere else in the world," he says, "my first duty is to defend my country."

At a mall in Chantilly, Va., last January, all sides of American Islam were on display. It was Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival that ends the fasting month of Ramadan, and the crowd in attendance was as multifaceted as any other mass of 15,000 people one could find. The prayer leader delivered his sermon in English--the only language virtually everyone present could understand. Somali immigrants in white robes and loosely coiled turbans rubbed shoulders with Philadelphia B-boyz in Kangol hats, Lutz jackets, and hip-sagging Tommy Hilfiger jeans.

Veiled mothers bought their kids pink cotton candy and tried not to worry about the competence of the carnies wearily operating the miniature merry-go-round and the ferris wheel. The longest lines were for a gyroscope ride: Teenagers with scraggly beards and decorous skullcaps were strapped in place, and they grinned wildly as their world spun around and around. For these kids and their friends and classmates, it was just another all-American day at the mall.

Islam and America? What would have seemed an impossible concept a decade ago is now becoming a reality. It is possible to live in the 'Western' world and uphold, maintain and promote Islamic living and ideals. It takes conscious and dedicated effort on the part of all American Muslims, but it is happening...right here and right now.

**To Allah belong the East and the West, whithersoever ye turn there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is All-Pervading All-Knowing.**

**(Quran 2:115)**

## ISLAM IN NICARAGUA

### SAN FRANCISCO MUSLIMS VISIT NICARAGUA



Muslim immigration occurred in large numbers in Nicaragua in the late 1800's. The majority of immigrants were originally from Palestine with Nicaragua in Central America the main country of resettlement. This constituted one of the biggest waves of immigration to Central America. It was followed by a second large group of settlers in the 1960's, and again more recently in the 1990's.

The earliest wave of immigrants quickly lost their Islamic roots upon settling in their new country and consequently, one finds many Arabic and Muslim surnames but almost no Islamic traditions or practice. These groups quickly blended into the local population and adopted the local Christian heritage due to intermarrying and pressure of the government.

Many of the family names encountered in Nicaragua are still common in Palestine today. There is almost no knowledge or practice of Islam in these communities... but the shadow of Islam endured.

The second immigration group in the 1960's were better educated, but not any more oriented towards Islam than the first. This group of immigrants was effected by two major events in Nicaragua: a major earthquake in 1972, and the Communist revolution in 1979.

At that time, many of the former Palestinians immigrated to North America or returned to Palestine. Those that stayed suffered greatly and their families were further assimilated into the Christian faith.

The latest and smallest group of émigrés was in the early 1990's. Many of these were immigrants returning to Nicaragua who had since become more aware of their Islamic heritage from exposure in North America or Palestine. These immigrants also possessed a stronger Islamic identity than previous groups, enabling a reawakening of Islam by the community.

To make matters more difficult, the Nicaraguan government bans all missionary groups from Pakistan, India and other Arab or Islamic countries.

After receiving requests for help, a group of brothers from the San Francisco area made travel arrangements to Nicaragua to reintroduce Islam to these forgotten brothers and sisters. As the group contained Spanish speaking brothers with strong commitments to spreading the word of Allah, there was much excitement and anticipation upon setting out.

## THE AMAZING STORY IN CHINANDEGA



While in Managua, the capitol city of Nicaragua, the group was told about a Palestinian elder, named Mukhtar, who had been in a coma for three weeks and near death. Before going into the coma, this man had asked to be among Muslims as he died. He was located in the town of Chinandega, which is approximately 150 Km from Managua. Upon arrival of a brother from the small village, several of the brothers from the group accompanied him to the dying man's home.

As they traveled to the sick and dying man, the local brother explained some background of the family. It seems that the man assimilated into the culture of his chosen country and married a local woman who was very strong in her Catholicism. They had two sons and a daughter who were all raised Catholic and the wife was insisting upon the man's burial as a Christian.

As the brothers arrived in the small city, they were undecided as to whether they should go directly to the home of the elder, or first stop at the house of the driver, have lunch and pray Dhuhur (afternoon prayer) before proceeding to the man's house and giving their full attention to his needs. It was decided to go directly to the stricken man's home before focusing on their own comforts.

Upon entering his home, they were surrounded by a plethora of Christian statues and large crucifixes everywhere. They felt as if they had been transported into a church. Ignoring these, they approached the dying elder brother on whose face could be seen the trauma and torture of his sufferings. With his sons and daughter present they immediately started reciting "Surah Yaseen" and made a collective Dua for the old gentleman.

They could see in the eyes of the sons and daughter the anguish and love for their father. At that moment one is filled with a sense of helplessness.

**"Then why do ye not (intervene when the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat...and ye the while (sit) looking on... But we are nearer to Him than ye, and ye see not." (Qur'an 56:83-85)**

The group comforted these grown children with mention of the greatness of Allah and the principles of Islam, some points about the Prophet Issa (AS), and tried to give them a little of what they had missed of an Islamic upbringing. As they were listening, the oldest brother removed the cross from his neck and at once accepted Islam and said

the Shahada (declaration of faith), followed by his brother, and together they invited their sister to do the same, which she did. The Mother, listening to this conversation, became upset by what was happening and left the house. The brothers from SF then proceeded to their drivers house for a late lunch and Zuhur Salah along with the children of the dying man. It was the first salah for the children and they were instructed to make Dua (supplication to Allah) for their poor dying father who had been in a coma for three weeks.

As the group prayed for the dying man with their hands raised to Allah, the phone rang...the father had passed away...in peaceful repose. How thankful the brothers from San Francisco were that they had delayed Zuhur prayer and lunch for the sake of visiting the man who only had a short time left in this life.

They all then returned to the elders home and started the process of an Islamic burial. The eldest brother, the first of the family to accept Islam, was able to perform a final service for his beloved father by Islamically washing and preparing him for the final internment with the help of the San Francisco brothers.

The wife of the deceased man admitted that when she had left the house earlier, she had gone to her local priest and explained to him about this strange group of men who had arrived from nowhere and converted all her family and was in the process of burying her husband of many years Islamically.

She explained to the priest what the brothers had been saying about Jesus and Islam. This priest agreed with the points the brothers had made and suggested that she submit to her husband's wishes.

During the burial, the son's of Mukhtar were able to place him lovingly into his grave facing the Qiblah (Mecca) with their own hands and thus fulfilled their father's dying wish...to be among Muslims as he died. The greatness of Allah allowed him to be buried as a Muslim, by Muslims, and with those Muslims being his own blood family.

After the burial, the brothers from San Francisco stayed awhile and provided further Islamic information for the family. The family cleared their house of idols and crosses and made their big house into the 'Mosque of Chinandega'. It was then that the mother, who was deeply touched by her husband's funeral also accepted Islam before the brothers departed! There were other miraculous stories that came from the S.F. group visiting Nicaragua.

Many stories such as these came from the San Francisco group to Nicaragua. Within the Islamic community of Managua there had been friction caused by business differences. The masjid was virtually empty during salah times when the group first arrived. Due to their efforts, a renewal of Islamic spirit and brotherhood ensued. The hearts of the Muslims of Managua were again united in brotherhood.

As a result of their visit, many of the Islamic residents of Managua were again attending Fair and Isha prayer in congregation. The San Francisco brothers also provided a yearly prayer schedule which the Managuans hadn't had previously, having to rely on a schedule which the Managuans hadn't had previously, having to rely on a schedule they had received during Ramadan which they had not adjusted for the course of the year.

These descendants of the early immigrants are hungry for information about Islam. Almost 60 people accepted Islam as a consequence of the group from San Francisco. Spanish Qur'ans and literature are continually in demand. It's the responsibility of all of us to remember these Muslims far away. Please help if you can in our efforts to assist with Spanish language literature.

One of the brothers of the San Francisco group visiting Central America was asked by his secretary to deliver some items to her mother, Mrs. Molina, then living in the little town of Granada, close to Managua, while on his dahwa trip.



Granada,  
Nicaragua

It seems that the brother's secretary, a non-Muslim, had been getting some criticism from her mother and other members of her family for her Islamic leanings due to working for our friend. She was not eating pork anymore and she liked to read the Qur'an "because it made her feel good". The mother had been accusing the good brother of 'brainwashing' her daughter.

Well, the brother delivers the parcel to Mrs. Molina as promised and after a little friendly conversation, he realizes it is time for Maghreb prayer.

He asks her permission to pray there, to which she accedes. After praying, our friend starts answering Mrs. Molina's questions about Islam and before he knew it... she asked to become Muslim, made Shahada, and even asked him to speak to her neighbors and friends about Islam! A very enthusiastic convert!

Well, needless to say...the brothers secretary no longer heard about 'brainwashing' from her mother, and was even a little surprised by this turn of events. Not too surprised, knowing this brother who is her boss! The problem though...now her mother is criticizing her again...wanting to know what is taking her daughter and son-in-law so long in accepting Islam too!

There were many moving and some amusing stories of the San Francisco group as they continued on to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala...watch future issues of The Islamic Bulletin for their adventures!

## WOMEN IN ISLAM

### AMIRAH'S STORY



I have been asked many times for the story of how I learned about Islam and came to convert, so with the help of Allah (swt) I will make an attempt to share it.

I was born to American Christian parents in the southern state of Arkansas in the United States and that is where I was raised. I am known as white-American to my Arab friends but Alhamdulillah, Islam knows no color, race, or nationality.

I was raised in the country on a farm. My father worked on our farm and also preached in our local Baptist Church. Baptist is a sect of Christianity such as Catholics, Methodist, etc. They just have different doctrines. But basically they believe in the trinity and that Jesus (pbuh) was God's son. My mother stayed at home as a homemaker. I am an only child.

The town I was raised in was completely white-anglo and all Christian. There were no other religions or races within 200 miles of us for years, so I was never exposed to anything outside of our little town. I had always been taught that we were all created equal in the eyes of God.

Later I found out that this was not really how my parents, family, or friends felt. But as long as these 'other people' didn't bother them, then these were very easy words to speak. This would soon change.

The first time I ever saw a Muslim was when I attended the University of Arkansas. I stared at the strange clothing the Muslim women wore and could not believe that they covered their hair. Being a curious person, I introduced myself to a Muslim girl in one of my classes the first chance I had. It was a meeting that would change the course of my life.

I will never forget her. Her name was Yasmin and she was from Palestine. I would sit for hours and listen to her tell me about her country, culture, family and friends that she loved so much, but even more was the love that she had for her religion, Islam.

Yasmin had an inner peace about her like no one I had ever met. She would tell me stories of the Prophets (pbuh) and about the Oneness of Allah (swt).

This was when I learned that they didn't worship some other 'God', it was just that in Arabic, Allah meant God. Everything she told me made so much sense to me and was so pure. Even though I had never voiced this to any family or friends, I had never believed in the Christian concept of the trinity and why I had to pray to Jesus (pbuh) and not to God directly.

Yasmin convinced me that Islam was the only true religion and also a way of life. The most important thing to her was not this life but the hereafter and that someday she and I would meet again in paradise. When she left to go back to Palestine we knew that we would probably never see each other again here on earth and she cried and begged me to continue to learn about Islam so we could meet again...in Paradise. I can still hear her words in my ears.

Yasmin had called me Amirah the first time we met. Amirah means princess in Arabic. So when I embraced Islam, I chose this as my legal Muslim name in her honor. I am not a real princess, but Islam makes me feel as though I am.

Two weeks after Yasmin returned to her country, she was killed by Israeli soldiers outside of her home. My soul mate was gone and I felt like a part of me had died. With Yasmin I had made friends with Muslims from all over the Middle East and I came to love the sound of Arabic. It was so beautiful, especially when I listened to them read the Holy Qur'an. I still love having someone read the Qur'an to me or listen to Quran tapes. Most of the time I have no idea what is being said, but in some way it still touches my heart and soul. I am learning to read Qur'an and write Arabic, and with time and practice I will, Insha'allah.

After I left college and returned to my little community, I didn't have the honor of being around Muslims any longer. But the thirst for Islam and the Arabic language never left my heart. This upset my family and friends greatly. Years later, Allah (swt) brought someone across my path that was a wonderful example of Islam and once again I began to ask questions and read everything I possibly could about it.

For many months I read and prayed and finally on April 15th, 1996 I embraced Islam. It wasn't one thing in particular that convinced me. It was everything about Islam that did and I will never give my Islam up.

When my family and friends discovered that I was studying about Islam they became enraged and rarely spoke to me. But, when I embraced Islam (converted) they totally disowned me and even tried to have me committed to a mental hospital. They were convinced that I was crazy. They didn't succeed, Alhamdulillah.

All of this was very destroying to me as I loved my family and friends with all my heart, and still do. Occasionally they will call and wish hell on my head...but even these calls have become less frequent. I just thank Allah (swt) that my Iman (faith) was strong.

I spoke to my family two days after the bombing in Saudi Arabia. They called to tell me that my Uncle had been killed and that me and my terrorist friends were responsible, and that his blood was on my hands. I cried for days and days...but again my Iman stood strong and I continued.

I have made repeated attempts to contact my family but still they refuse and have gone so far as to have their phone numbers changed. Some have even put legal restrictions on me so that I can not go near their homes, my mother being one of them. But Insha'allah, I will keep trying to reach them. It has been over 9 months since I have heard from them.

About four days after the bombing, I returned from shopping and found the words "terrorist lover" spray painted down the side of my vehicle.

When the police arrived to make a report I asked them to check for any damages that might have been done that would keep me from driving it to a place of safety...as I no longer felt safe in my home. They refused, stating that I could have had some of my terrorist friends plant a bomb for them somewhere on the vehicle. I could not believe what I was hearing.

But things were only going to get worse. A lot worse. I was beaten and stabbed in a parking lot by a man one night. He was caught and is serving his punishment, doing community service picking up trash in the street, mowing the mayors' yard and running errands. At least this is what I have been told.

So many times I have had people from all over the world ask me where I was from, what nationality I was, etc. and so I said, "Muslim American" which I am. But I recently found some startling information. It seems that I have some bloodline in me that I didn't know about and this is where my search begins: I finally discovered why I faced so many problems with my family on my choice to be Muslim.

My real father is Kuwaiti. My real mother is American. I was adopted at birth by an American couple, the same one's you read about in my conversion story. And although I still consider them my family and love them, I have a REAL biological family somewhere, and Insha'Allah I will find them. Here are the only details that I know...and as scarce as they are...I am bound to find my real father. My birth mother I recently learned died in Oregon in 1986.

My real mother and father were married and living in Anaheim, California which is near Los Angeles. My mother was pregnant with me. During the last few months of my mothers' pregnancy, my father had to return to Ku-

wait, as his mother had passed away. (May Allah bless her soul.)

At some point my mother decided to give me up for adoption. We don't know the circumstances for this decision. She called my father and his family in Kuwait and told them of her decision.

At the time, my mother worked for an American couple who owned a business called "Tibia Ranch", also located in Anaheim. This couple could not have children, and they approached my mother when they found that she was putting the baby up for adoption. She agreed to let them adopt.

A few months later, on September 17th my real mother was admitted into the "Orange County Hospital", in Los Angeles County, California under the woman's name who was adopting me. Although this was very illegal, it was a common practice at that time.

A very short time after my birth, my father returned from Kuwait and started his search for his child and wife. I was told that my mother divorced my father and left the state, never to be heard from again. I have to say that it hurts me deeply that someone could give up a child, knowing that the child was very much wanted by the other parent.

I know my father wanted me because after he returned to the US the first place he went was where my real mother worked to inquire about her and the baby. He was told that they had no knowledge of either.

My father was told this by the very people that had illegally adopted his child. My real father was also an acquaintance of an adoptive Uncle, from whom he also sought information. My Uncle was kinder to my real father than the others, but he did not provide any information either.

My father continued to contact the people that had adopted me, only to be told, repeatedly, that they had NO information for him. At some point he became suspicious when he went to their business and upon seeing me, demanded to know if I was his child! He was told no of course, but my adoptive parents fearing what would be next, sold their business and fled to Arkansas. My real father continued to go to my Uncle pleading with him for any information, but none was given to him.

Still, he continued to search and probe my Uncle, until my Uncles death, in 1995. My father searched for me for many years. I was told that he attended my Uncles funeral, and then went back to Kuwait some days later. The only other thing right now that I know about my real father is his name: KHALED AL-MAZIDI. Insha'Allah, some day we will meet.

Editors Note: If you have any information you would like to share, please contact us at the Islamic Bulletin.

## HOW I EMBRACED ISLAM

In this issue of the Bulletin we would like to introduce you to a gentleman who rose from the depths of despair and darkness into the light of Islam. We hope you will find it as inspiring as we did.



OMAR ABDUL SALAM

February 1992...my wife and I are driving down Highway 80 [Northern California] heading back home to San Francisco after a weekend in Reno [a popular town in Northern Nevada for gambling casinos...little sister to Las Vegas] about a 5 hour drive from the Bay area.

I'm in a severely distressed state of mind as I have lost about \$350 which I cannot afford. More than the fact that I have lost playing poker is an undeniable sense of despair about my life and where my destination seems to be heading.

For the past seven plus years my free time has been occupied by heavy liquor consumption on a daily basis. A situation which obviously needs correcting, but given my theological-philosophical point of view at the time, a day without drinking is not possible for me.

As we near San Francisco a heavy thunder storm begins to pound into us. This is the first time I've seen a full blown storm in the Bay Area replete with numerous lightning strikes which can be seen flashing all around the valleys to the east and the ocean to the west.

As suddenly as the storm hits, I am hit with a lightning bolt of undeniable realization....for me it's over! My nights of drunken bitter meandering about the philosophical virtues of Jean Paul Satre, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky have brought me to a place of dark anguish and existential hopelessness.

This is why I drink, I tell myself. I am convinced that there is no point to birth, life or death beyond this present reality. I cannot see investing a lot of effort in something which is as obviously finite as the human life-span. I can't beat it so I might as well stumble about in a drunken stupor.

So on this night, rolling down the highway amidst the thunder and lightning, I can sense for the first time that God is telling me "Enough is enough". For you, it's over.

The following day at work, I go through the motions as usual, but I know that something is terribly wrong. At my lunch break, I tell the boss that I'm sick and head home. I've got to do something about this alcoholic condition. I read the phone book searching for a way out. I call a place in the Los Angeles area which offers a 30 day in-house treatment program. This sounds plausible to me.

When my wife arrives home, I lay out the whole scenario

to her and in her wise and wonderful way she advises me to see what happens over the next two days. If I drink... go for the treatment. Keep in mind that this is the first night in over seven years that I haven't had any liquor. I'm tense and nervous but agree with my wife's idea.

The next morning I tell my boss the story as my company insurance would have to cover the treatment program. I'm embarrassed, but relieved that I'm doing something about this problem.

When I get home that evening, right on schedule, my sick alcoholic mind tells me, "Just go to the liquor store for a half-pint...you can ease off gradually and this will calm you down." But this time I don't go. As I sit on the sofa, head in my hands, lost in my own internal struggle, it hits me like a "bolt of lightning"! READ THE QUR'AN! As is my usual way, I don't analyze this impulse, I just do it!

As I read Surah Fatihah, tears well up in my eyes and Allah- blesses me with the sweetest of miracles!. I continue to read the sacred script for the next two hours until my wife returns from work. A transformation was taking place inside of me. Coming from me it doesn't sound like much, but I proclaim to her and my work mates that I have become Muslim and have quit drinking.

For the next eight months, I read the Holy Qur'an on a daily basis. I read everything on Islam that I can find. Understand that I had the Holy Qur'an (English translation) at home only because I had every other religious book that I knew of.

I had read bits and pieces of it prior to Allah's blessing me with the revelation, but I had also read the Bible, the Bhagivad Gita, numerous Zen texts, the Kabbalah, as well as all of the major Greek and existential philosophers mentioned previously.

I had a large selection of books promising enlightenment to choose from. It was not mere chance that I picked up the Holy Qur'an that fateful evening.

I had heard of people in life-and-death situations beg God to rescue them and they will follow whatever religion they are brought to. It seems that they invariably convert to Islam. This is the human beings natural religion. As the Holy Qur'an tells us, we are born Muslims...it is the parents that call us Jews, Christians, etc.

For the first eight months I stumbled about praying salat in English, trying to practice my deen as best I could alone. At times I tried to reach out I would look through the yellow pages but the numbers I called [masjids] were either unanswered or I would be immediately invited to the mosque. I was too afraid of looking foolish in front of the "real Muslims" as I couldn't even say "Assalamu Alaikum".

I had first become aware of Islamic conversion in America from reading about jazz musicians that I looked up to such as Yusef Lateef and Ahmad Jamal. I was a big jazz fan and a poor saxophone player myself. I knew of a number of African Americans who converted to Islam, but not many whites like myself. This made me hesitant to approach a masjid. I didn't know what to expect.

Finally after eight months of self-study and research, I called the Islamic Center of San Francisco and spoke to a brother there. He made me feel at ease, he spoke English clearly and he didn't act as though I was another insecure American following a temporary religious whim. He invited me to the Friday night program at the Islamic Center in the area.

This was November 6, 1992. I drove to the mosque following the brothers directions and arrived at 6:00 P.M. even though the 'program' didn't start until 8:00 P.M. I wanted to 'look before I leaped'. I was very nervous, but Alhamdulillah, Allah guided me out of my car and up to the front door. I was greeted by a brother named Muhammad and as I shook his hand,

I felt not only welcome, but that I had 'come home' after 37 years of searching. I was then introduced to another brother who was a most knowledgeable and pious man who patiently instructed me in the requirements of the deen.

He taught me how to make proper wudu (the act of cleaning oneself before prayer or the handling and reading of the Qur'an) and finally, he led me in reciting the Shahada (the Muslim declaration of faith) which was the single most significant moment of my entire life.

May Allah make it easy for all people who seek His guidance to be as blessed as I was with so many understanding brothers and elders as I had, and continue to have the honor of knowing. They have been of immeasurable help in aiding me in the practice of the deen.

Four months after officially taking Shahada, I spent the last ten days of Ramadan in the path of Allah, doing the work of dawah (inviting others to Islam). This gave me a real first-hand look at the beauty of this deen when practiced at what is our current best. As an ummah (brotherhood), I could not believe how I met so many pious brothers who were actually practicing their faith to the best of their abilities.

Over the past 6 years I have had the blessing of being able to spend a week here or there in the path of Allah performing dawah, and I can say without a doubt that it is a sure way to increase ones' iman (faith). All of us in the Ummah of Rasulullah (swm) have a responsibility and a duty to invite others towards the good and forbid the evil. May Allah guide us to a true understanding.

If I may summarize, the deen of Islam (submission to the will of God) is the only religion. It was the religion of the prophet Abraham (swm) when he had the blessings of revelation and destroyed the idols of his father and his fellow tradesmen.

It was the religion of Moses (PBUH) when he received the law of Allah and defeated the army of Pharaoh. It was the religion of Jesus, son of Mary ((PBUH) when he healed the sick and confirmed the law of Moses, and when he foretold the coming of Muhammad (pbuh) and the final revelation until the day of judgement.

Allah has blessed humanity with the miracle of the Holy Qur'an, a book which has remained unchanged since it was revealed to our beloved prophet Muhammad (swm),

and will remain unchanged until Allah judges all that He has created.

We have no excuses. The Holy Qur'an is a document that can lead to eternal paradise, Insha'Allah (If God wills it). It is a miracle which Allah in His mercy has bestowed upon mankind.

We have the Qur'an, a miracle and blessing from Allah. We have the Sunnah (the actions) of the holy and final prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It lights the way to the path which is straight and leads to paradise and brings us closer to the one Creator. No other revelation or book or prophet is going to come to guide us. There is no need for any other instruction. We have it all in the Holy Qur'an.

Where did we come from? Allah, Subhana'Allah (God is Awesome), created us to manifest His glory in this reality. Why are we here? To bring glory to the One true Creator of all things and to enjoin good (the Law of God) and to forbid evil. To fight our own desires and to bring the remembrance of Allah to mind. When tempted by Shatan (the devil) to invite all humanity towards the greatness of Allah.

Where are we headed? To eternal paradise, Insha'Allah. How do we get there? By following the ways of the one who is an example by which to live. Allah in His Mercy and Grace has blessed us with Hadeeth of Rasulullah (swm) so we are able to find the way.

It is often said that Islam is simple and we make it complicated. Let me tell you dear brothers, sisters and elders... Islam says it all! I wandered so long in the darkness of existential dead ends and esoteric thinking and the answer was there all along.

I can't say that my struggle came to an end when I converted to Islam. We all must continually strive to improve our faith and practice and shatain is ever vigilant to our weaknesses. But Allah in His Mercy has given us this light called the Holy Qur'an as a guide, His Beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in which to make it through this brief journey of life.

May Allah increase all of our understanding, raise our Iman and Bless all who seek His guidance with the strength to live our deen to the best of our abilities.

Asalamu Alaikum  
Omar Abdul-Salaam Daly City, CA

**The Prophet (pbuh) when asked "Which deed is most liked by Allah?" replied, "Prayers on time." Then asked, "Which one next?" said, "Goodliness to parents", then asked again, which next, replied, "jihad in the way of Allah".**

## ASK AND HE GIVES

**I asked for Strength.....  
And Allah gave me Difficulties to make me strong.**

**I asked for Wisdom.....  
And Allah gave me Problems to solve.**

**I asked for Prosperity.....  
And Allah gave me Brain and Brawn to work.**

**I asked for Courage.....  
And Allah gave me Danger to overcome.**

**I asked for Love.....  
And Allah gave me Troubled people to help.**

**I asked for Favors.....  
And Allah gave me Opportunities.**

**I received nothing I wanted.....  
I received everything I needed.**

**Allah answers my prayers.**

## SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET (S.A.W.)

### ON PARENTS

In America there are many days set aside to honor and appreciate special people in our lives. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, Grandmother's and Grandfather's Day, etc. We do realize the significance of these occasions and the ideals and philosophies of setting aside certain days to recognize and appreciate these people. As for the appreciation of parents, it should be a daily recognition rather than a special occasion according to the Holy Qur'an and Hadith.



We are taught that a Muslim should respect and appreciate his or her parents every day throughout the year. In the Qur'an, appreciation and treatment of parents is described beautifully in Surah Al-Isra in which Allah (swt) says, "Your Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness lower to them the wing of humility and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'" (Quran 17:23-24)

Recognition and respect of parents is mentioned eleven times in the Qur'an. In every instance, Allah reminds children to appreciate the care and love they received from their parents. In one aspect, Allah demands that children honor their parents by saying, "We have enjoined on man kindness to parents." (Quran 29:8 & 46:15)

This is stated again in Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) with, "And (remember) when We made a covenant with the children of Israel, (saying): worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents..." (Quran 2:83)

...and in Surah Al-Nisaa (the Women), "And serve Allah. Ascribe nothing as partner unto Him. (Show) Kindness unto parents..." (Quran 4:36)

...and in Surah Al An'Am (The Cattle), Allah (swt) reiterates that people should honor and be kind to parents, "Say: Come. I will recite unto you that which your Lord has made a sacred duty for you; that you ascribe nothing as partner unto Him and that you do good to parents..." (Quran 6:151)

It has been related that a person came to the Holy Prophet to take part in the Emigration (Hijrah) against the will of his weeping parents. The Holy Prophet told him to go back to his parents and come back only after pleasing them as he had made them cry. (Abu Dawood)

In fact, Islam teaches us that respect for parents comes immediately after praying to Allah and before Jihad (struggle and striving in the way of Allah) ...this would indeed make it a very powerful and important injunction. This implies that we should take it not only as a worldly affair but as a religious duty also. Almighty Allah and His Holy Prophet have both laid much emphasis on obeying, serving and pleasing our parents.

**MOTHERS**

**M**  **M**

**In Islam Every Day is "MOTHERS DAY"**

Although Islam recognizes both parents, mothers are given particular gratitude and respect. This attitude of Islam is better understood if we realize the hardships and suffering that mothers experience in their lives. It was narrated by Abu Hurairah (R) that a man came to the Prophet (pbuh) and asked him, "Who amongst his near one had the greatest right over him?"

The Prophet replied, "Your mother". The man then asked, "Who after that?" to which the Prophet replied again, "Your mother". Asked who is next, the Prophet again replied, "Your mother". When the man asked who after that, the Prophet said, "Your father".

In another narration the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) said, "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers"...emphasizing that each of us should cherish and respect his/her mother and that pleasing them will serve well in the hereafter also.

As a matter of fact, the importance of one's mother is exemplified by the following hadith: Once, when the Holy Prophet was talking to his companions a man came and addressed him, "O Messenger of Allah! A young man is dying. People are asking him to recite Shadada but he is unable to do so."

The Holy Prophet asked, "Did this man offer his prayers," and got the answer in the affirmative. Then he went to the house of the dying man. The Messenger of Allah advised him to offer the kalimah. The man indicated that he was unable to do so as the words could not come out of his mouth.

He then called the mother of the dying man whom he had disobeyed persistently throughout his life. When his aged mother approached the scene, the Holy Prophet asked, "Respected lady, is he your son?" She replied in the affirmative.

He then put to her a question, "O respected lady, if we threaten to throw your son in a raging fire, will you recommend him to be forgiven?" The Lady replied that she would definitely do so at that time. The Holy Prophet then said to her, "If so, declare, making Allah and me your witnesses, that you are now pleased with him!" The old woman readily declared, "O ' Allah, You and your Messenger be my witness that I am pleased with this beloved son of mine."

The Holy Prophet turned to the dying man and asked him to recite, "There is no god but Allah. He is One and has no partners and I witness that Mohammed is His Servant and His Messenger."

By the virtue of the forgiveness of his mother he found the words flowing out of his mouth and he recited the Kalimah. Seeing this, the Holy Prophet praised Almighty

Allah and thanked Him saying, "Thanks to Almighty Allah that He saved this man from the fearful fire of Hell through me." (Tabarani, Ahmad)

A man once came to the Prophet (pbuh) and sought his advice about taking part in the Holy War (Jihad) with him. The Holy Prophet asked him whether his mother was alive? He answered in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet then told him. "Go back home and serve her as if heaven was under her feet." (Ibn-e-Majah, Nasai)

Thus the fact comes to light that a mother deserves service, love, submission, obedience and gratitude from the children more than the father. This is because a mother generally makes more sacrifices and endures greater hardships than a father while bringing up the children. She feeds them and takes care of them by sacrificing her comforts in the day and her sleep in the night without any greed or compulsion but only out of sheer love and affection. This devotion is lifelong.

This is the reason why the Holy Qur'an has given more importance to the mother and stressed upon the children to be more considerate and submissive to her in comparison with the father.

A person came to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) and complained that his mother was ill tempered. The Holy Messenger said, "She was not ill tempered when she kept you in her womb for nine months." The person insisted, "Sir, I am telling you the truth that she is ill-tempered." The Holy Prophet said, "She was not ill-tempered when she used to keep awake the whole night for your sake and feed you." "I have recompensed all these favors of my mother", boasted the complainant.

The Prophet then asked, "How have you recompensed her?" "I have helped her perform hajj by putting her on my shoulders," he replied. The Holy Prophet then stated, "Can you also recompense the painful pangs which your mother bore at the time of your birth?"

The right of the mother to be served and treated nicely is three times greater than that of the father, for she renders three such services to her children which cannot even be imagined by the father. The mother bears the burden of the child during pregnancy, stands the pains of delivery, and then feeds the child from her breasts."

These three important services are also mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. As afterwards both father and mother play equal parts in training and bringing up the children, emphasis has been laid on the fair treatment for both of them by their children.

Of course both the parents play their parts in bringing up the children at the cost of their own comforts and pleasures. The father feels happy to spend his hard earned money upon them while the mother feeds them from her own blood (milk). Thus the children are brought up by the joint toil, love and affection of both their parents.

Consequently the best treatment from the children is stressed in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah for them.

If we go through these verses of the Holy Qur'an the following points will be evident:

(1) Parent's rights are next to those of Almighty Allah in Islam. This is authenticated by the fact that, after the description of the Unity of Almighty Allah, the Holy Quran has repeatedly ordered for the most pleasant and submissive behavior with the parents.

(2) When parents become old their temperament changes. They usually become easily irritable and short tempered due to their age. Their children should take these changes for granted and show considerable patience and magnanimity for their aging parents.

(3) Parents should be respected and revered throughout their lifetimes.

(4) The children should adopt attitudes of humbleness, politeness, and obedience for the parents. They should readily carry out the orders of parents and also feel comforted by doing so. In old age when parents are invalid and naturally depend upon their children, the children should serve them like an obedient servant. While doing so, they should feel exalted and thank Almighty Allah for having the opportunity of serving their parents in their old age.

(5) We should recall those days of infancy when we were totally dependent on our parents. During that period we were weak and in need of help from the parents to survive. In those days our parents nourished us with love and affection bearing all sorts of hardships. They felt happy when we were happy and became restless when we were even slightly disturbed. The children should always have these memories fresh in mind and pray to Almighty Allah to be merciful and kind to their parents in their old age as they had been considerate and kind to them in their hour of need.

Hazrat Abu Osaid narrated that once, while he was sitting with the Holy Prophet, someone asked the Holy Prophet (pbuh) whether there were any steps which he could take to benefit his parents even after their death.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Yes", there are four such things: (1) to pray for their deliverance and forgiveness, (2) to accomplish their promises and carry out the proper wills, (3) to respect and treat their friends well, (4) and to be nice and kind to those who are related to you through your parents." (Al Adab Al-Mufrad)

Apart from service, submission and obedience to the parents, the Holy Qur'an also stresses upon the children not to be miserly towards them; rather they should give first preference to their parents in spending their money. They are even entitled to take money from their own children by compulsion in their parents hour of need. Obedience to the parents includes financial help also.

Once a man complained to the Holy Prophet about his

father who took away his belongings whenever he liked. The Prophet (pbuh) called for the man's father, who was a very old man, and asked him the details of the matter.

He said, "O' Messenger of Allah, there was a time when he (the son) was weak and helpless and barehanded while I had strength and wealth. I never hesitated to give him my belongings whenever he needed them. Today I am weak and barehanded while he is rich and now he keeps his belongings from me." Hearing this, tears came to the eyes of the Prophet, and he said to the son, "You and your belongings belong to your father. You and your belongings belong to your father. There is good news for them who behaved well with their parents. Allah will increase the period of their lives."

Islam has endorsed respect for parents by their children even if the parents are non-Muslims. They are still parents and gave birth to them and cherished them bearing the same pains and hardships which are faced by Muslim parents. Consequently, in spite of the religious differences, it is the duty of Muslim children to serve and treat them with kindness, respect and devotion. All parents should also be helped financially and should not be given a chance to complain in worldly affairs. If non-Muslim parents strive to convert their children to non-Islamic beliefs, the children are not to follow them, but they are still to be good to the parents. In this regard Allah (swt) says in Surah Luqman:

**"And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents...his mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Give thanks unto Me and unto your parents. Unto me is the journeying. But if they strive with you to make you ascribe unto Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not. Consort with them in the world kindly, and follow the part of him who repents unto Me. Then unto Me will you return, and I shall tell you what you used to do."  
(Quran 31:14-15)**

We all hope to show the respect and consideration asked of us by Allah to our parents while they are with us in this life. For those of us that have lost one or both parents there are still actions that can be taken to honor them. Make daily Du'a' for them, give charity on their behalf or in their name, institute a perpetual charity on their behalf such as a Masjid, Islamic Library, Islamic materials for dahwa, read Qur'an on their behalf, distribute Islamic literature in their name.

Let us pray that we will all do our best to respect our parents, honor them, be kind to them, help them, and please them for the love of Allah.

Any amongst you who sees something evil should correct it with his own hands. If he is unable to do so he should correct it with his tongue. If he is unable even to do that, he should at least consider it as bad in his heart. This is the lowest degree of faith.

## COLD SPLIT PEA SOUP WITH MINT AND WITHOUT HAM!

Summertime and picnics are here! Enjoy this great take-along recipe!

After the last issue of the Bulletin which mentioned "Split Pea Soup" commonly made with ham or bacon, one of our kind readers sent us this great recipe for summer soup that is just fantastic and refreshing. Perfect for these hot summer days!



(Serves 6 to 8)

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups dry green split peas
- 2 qts (2 L) chicken or vegetable stock, fresh or canned
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) cumin seed
- Salt and white pepper to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/8 tsp ground cloves
- 1 cup chopped fresh mint
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 bay leaf
- Fresh mint for garnish

### Preparation:

1. Wash and pick over the peas.
2. Bring the stock to a boil in a large heavy saucepan or soup kettle.
3. Add the peas, onion, celery, garlic, cumin seed, cloves, bay leaf, and mint.
4. Reduce the heat and simmer partially covered, stirring occasionally, for 1 to 2 hours, until the peas are soft and easily mashed.
5. Remove the bay leaf.

6. Pass the soup through a fine sieve or food mill, mashing the peas and onion through the strainer and leaving the bulk of the mint and celery behind.

7. Chill the soup in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

8. Add the heavy cream and salt and pepper to taste.

9. Garnish with sprigs of fresh mint.

Note: If you adjusted the seasoning prior to refrigerating the soup, you will probably have to add more salt and pepper after it has chilled.

Halal and delicious!

## EASY BANANA NUT BREAD

### Ingredients:

Mix in a blender

- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 1/8 cup sugar
- Dash of Allspice
- 3 medium bananas, ripened
- 3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon banana extract
- Dash of Cinnamon

Mix in large bowl together

- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup chopped nuts (walnuts)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

### Preparation:

1. Combine banana mixture in bowl with flour mixture and blend well with wooden spoon.
2. Pour into floured bread loaf pan or muffin cups.
3. Bake at 350F for 60 to 70 minutes or until pick comes out clean.

Note: Freezes very well and easy to double recipe.

Makes one 9 x 5 loaf pan and 7 muffins or 1 large and 1 small loaf or 24 muffins.



## MANNERS OF THE PROPHET

Do not delay helping the weak, the destitute, and women, and walk with them without haughtiness nor pride.

Have mercy on people and animals so that Allah will have mercy on you.

Love for people what you love for yourself.

Be neat in your appearance and clothing.

Be courageous and say the truth, even to your detriment.

Be patient when people hurt you and forgive them so that Allah will forgive you.

Leave indecency, which is all that is ugly and evil of word and deed.

Do not speak with arrogance nor dryness, and do not use indecent language even in jest.

Always speak peacefully, and make your speech sweet.

Sleep early and wake up early for worship and diligent work.

Read the Qur'an with measure and understanding, and listen to it if someone else reads it.

Do not be late at the congregational prayer in the mosque.

Modesty is part of faith.

One who tries to help the widow and the poor is like the warrior in the way of Allah.

The seeking of knowledge is a must for every Muslim man and woman.

Give gifts to one another, for gifts take away malice.

Allah is polite and likes politeness.

The young should say 'Salam' to the old, the passerby to the one sitting, and the small group to the large.

No one has ever eaten better food than what he eats from the work done by his own hands.

Beware of envy, for envy devours good deeds like fire devours dry wood.

He who truly believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or keep silent.

When someone has had good done to him and says to the doer 'May Allah reward you', he has done the utmost in praise.

You must speak the truth, for truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to Paradise.

He who does not thank people does not thank Allah.

Removing from the road what causes harm is a charity.

The best amongst you is he who is most kind to his wife.

The deeds most loved by Allah (are those) done regularly, even if they are small.

Allah is pleased with His servant who, when he eats a morsel, praises Him for it, or drinks a sip, praises Him for it.

Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times better than prayer performed alone.

Powerful is not he who knocks the other down. Indeed powerful is he who controls himself in a fit of anger.

The world is a prison for the believer, and a Paradise for the unbeliever.

Charity does not diminish wealth.

## HADITH QUDSI

For a study of Islam, the Qur'an and Hadith are the two primary textual sources. The Qur'an is the paramount source of which every word was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed.

Hadith literally means a narrative and as the second primary source for Islam, it means prophetic narrative. That is, a report of what the Prophet (pbuh) said or did. His sayings and deeds were later narrated by his companions to their disciples and so on until these narratives were assembled and recorded in the second, third, and fourth centuries of Islam by a number of hadith scholars.

Unlike Qur'an, Hadith is not the Word of God. It is nevertheless an expression of Divine revelation, for when Mohammed (pbuh) spoke as the Prophet of God, "he did not speak from his own mind". Hadith Qudsi, however, is a report of what God said, though not necessarily in His Words. The Divine authority in the context of the Hadith Qudsi gives this group of Hadith a special spiritual character and significance to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

For a more in-depth study of Hadith Qudsi, there are a number of volumes available for the serious scholar. We have brought a few of the Hadith Qudsi together here merely for your enjoyment of the beauty of these narratives.

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (ra) the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said: Allah revealed to my dear brother Uzair, "Oh Uzair! If a calamity befalls you, do not complain to my creation (to the people). How much wrong you have done to me and I never complained to my angels (about you). Oh Uzair! Disobey me as much as you can bear my punishment, and ask me your needs according to your good deeds towards me, and never feel secure of my decision (punishment) until you enter my paradise.

Then Uzair started shaking and crying. So Allah revealed to him "if you disobey me out of ignorance, I forgive you out of my mercy, because I am generous and don't wish to punish my creation, as I am the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assemble better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.

Allah has written down the good deeds and the bad ones. Then He explained it [by saying that] he who has intended a good deed and has not done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a full good deed, but if he has intended it and has done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as from ten good deeds to seven hundred times, or many times over.

But if he has intended a bad deed and has not done it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a full good deed, but if he has intended it and has done it, Allah writes it down as one bad deed.

**I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it occurred to human heart. Thus recite if you wish: "And no soul knows what joy for them (the inhabitants of Paradise) has been kept hidden."**

(Quran 32:17)

Our Lord (glorified and exalted be He) descends each night to the earth's sky when there remains the final third of the night, and He says: Who is saying a prayer to Me that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me that I may give it him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me that I may forgive him? And thus He continues till [the light of] dawn shines.

Your Lord delights at a shepherd who, on the peak of a mountain crag, gives the call to prayer and prays. Then Allah (glorified and exalted be He) say: Look at this servant of Mine, he gives the call to prayer and performs the prayers; he is in awe of Me. I have forgiven My servant [his sins] and have admitted him to Paradise.

The first of his actions for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded: and if they are wanting, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, the Lord (glorified and exalted be He) will say: See if My servant has any supererogatory prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in like fashion.

O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that (the reward for doing so) with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you gave Me not to drink. He will say: O Lord, how should I give You to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: My servant So-and-so asked you to give him to drink and you gave him not to drink. Had you given him to drink you would have surely found that with Me.

Faith is that you believe in Allah (Tawhid) and His angels and His messengers (Rislah) and in the life after death (Akhirah). Islam is that you worship Allah and not associate anyone with Him, keep up Salah (prayer), pay Zakah, and observe Sawm (fasting) in Ramadan. Ihsan is that you worship Allah as if you see Him and if you do not see Him, surely He sees you.

## ISTIKHARA

(SUPPLICATION FOR SEEKING GUIDANCE)



Feeling  
Confused? ...  
Undecided? Follow  
this proven recipe  
for success... it  
works every time!

It is natural that in our day-to-day affairs Muslims are confronted with important issues requiring decision making. This is sometimes accompanied by much thinking, anxiety and worry before one is able to decide one way or another, if at all! It is in regard to these types of situations that the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) recommended a voluntary prayer for a person to employ which will enable them to seek from Allah (SWT) (the best decider) guidance in reaching the proper decision over a particular matter.

This is a prayer known in Arabic as Salatul-Istikhara and its importance is such that Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) used to teach his companions about it the same way he used to teach them the verses of the Holy Qur'an. The companion Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet (pbuh) used to strongly encourage us to practice Istikhara for all our affairs.

The manner of performing this prayer is that the person comes up with a voluntary prayer of two rakaats (units) at anytime during the day or night. Upon completing this the person then recites a private supplication in which he/she seeks the guidance of Allah (swt). This goes as follows:

**"ALLAHUMMA INNI ASTAKHYIRUKA BI'ILMIKA WA ASTAQDIRUKA BI QUDRATIKA WA AS-ALUKA MIN FADHLKA-AL-AZIM, FA INNAKA TAQDIRU WALAA AQDIRU WATA'LAMU WALAA A'LAMU, WA ANTA 'ALLAMUL-QUYYUB. ALLAHUUMA IN KUNTA TA'LAMU ANNA HADHAL-AMRA...**

(Here the person makes mention of the matter for which guidance is sought, i.e., "should I move, take that job, marry her, etc.")

**...KHEIRUN LEE FII DINII WAMA'AASHII WA'AAQIBATA AMRII FAQDURHU LII, WA YASSIR-HU LII THUMMA BAARIK LII FIIHI, WAIN KUNTA TA'LAMU ANNA HADHAL-AMRA...**

(also at this point the person makes mention of the matter for which guidance is sought)

**...SHARRUN LEE FII DINII WA MA'AASHII WA'AAQIBATA AMRII, FASRIFHU 'ANNII WASRIFNII 'ANHU WAQDUR LEE AL-KEYRA HEYTHU KANA THUMMA ARDHINI BIHII."**

Which means:

"O Lord, I seek your guidance, through Your knowledge and power; and I ask You of Your great bounties; for You decree and I do not decree; and You know and I know not; You are the Knower of invisible things. O Lord, if You know that this matter (here the person makes mention of the matter for which guidance is sought, i.e., "should I move, take that job, marry her, etc."), is of benefit to me in my religion, in my livelihood and in its outcome, decide it for me and make it easy for me and then bless it for me. And if You know that this matter (here again the person makes mention of the matter for which guidance is sought) is bad for me in my religion, in my livelihood, and in its outcome, turn it from me and divert me from it and decree good for me wherever it may be and make me pleased with it."

Having sought Allah's guidance as above, the person then resumes his/her routine affairs and waits for the due response from Allah. This can appear to the person by way of the feeling you have in your heart about the matter of either confidence or further indecision. Thus, when you feel in your heart a sense of vigor, optimism or confidence about the intended undertaking, you may construe this as a positive response from Allah (swt) and may accordingly proceed forward with the intended undertaking.

If, on the other hand, the opposite is true and your sense of doubt or worries have not cleared, then you may want to avoid the proposed undertaking as it could mean a bad outcome.

Allah (swt) says: **"...It is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye may love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth and ye know not."** (Qur'an 2:216)

Indeed the essence of this prayer is to test someone's trust in Allah, hence, the need to abide by the guidance of Allah whether it means pursuing or abandoning the intended undertaking. Allah also says:

**"...and if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him. For verily Allah surely accomplishes His purpose: Verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion."** (Qur'an 65:3)

**The Qur'an refers to several types of human creation including the creation of the first human called Adam, from clay; the virgin birth of Jesus, through the intermediary of a woman without sexual joining with a man; the normal sexual reproduction that has resulted in humanity; and the resurrected creation of the human after physical death.**

**Many religious and nonreligious people may wonder about the meaning of the categories of creation other than sexual reproduction which is directly observable in nature.**

**How accurate are the accounts of other types of creation in terms of what we know through modern science? Should they be looked at allegorically with spiritual significance only or could they be literally true? Furthermore, the Qur'an provides a remarkably detailed account of conception and the growth of the human embryo. Given that embryology was not correctly understood until the nineteenth century, could the details mentioned in the Qur'an possibly be accurate?**

**The following sections provide some information from the Qur'an and the writings of modern scientists which may help the individual explore these issues.**

## HUMAN SEXUAL REPRODUCTION



The Qur'an gives a surprisingly detailed account of the creation and development of the human embryo, which appears to be consistent with modern scientific findings.

In the book, *Human Development as Revealed in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith*, Dr. Mohammed Ali Albar discusses how verses in the Qur'an and Hadith revealed in the seventh century AD, contain descriptions of embryological development that were only discovered more than 1000 years later.

As a framework for the discussion, Dr. Albar gives a brief history of embryology. He begins with the writings of

Aristotle in fourth century B.C., which basically stated that embryos containing miniature human beings were imbedded in menstrual blood of the female and the sperm from the male served only as a catalyst to the growth and development of the embryo. Surprisingly in the West, this view dominated medical thought until the middle of the eighteenth century when it was found that the egg from which the embryo developed was built up gradually. And it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the fertilization of an egg by sperm was first described and it was proven that male and female cells contributed the same number of chromosomes to the embryo. Finally the development of the human embryo in stages was not widely recognized until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Dr. Albar shows how the main modern findings of embryological development are found in the Qur'an. In summary these findings are: the contribution of male and female cells to the formation of the embryo; the determination of the sex of the newborn by the sperm cell; and the development of the embryo in progressive stages.

First, concerning the formation of the embryo, Sura 76:2 states that "Verily, We have created man from a drop of mingled fluids." These fluids are called "Nutfah" in Arabic.

That the mingled fluids come from both the male and female partner is further clarified in the Hadith in which Ahmed Ibn Hanbal narrates that a Jew asked the Prophet Mohammed the following question, "O Mohammed. Tell me from what thing man is created." According to the Hadith the Prophet answered, "From both male Nutfah and female Nutfah man is created."

Second, modern science has shown that the male sperm determine the sex of the embryo. Sperm cells contain either X or Y chromosomes. The ovum always contains an X chromosome. If the sperm that fertilizes the egg contains an X chromosome the embryo becomes female but if the sperm contains a Y chromosome the embryo becomes male. The emphasis on the sperm as the determinant of the sex of the child is reflected in at least two chapters of the Qur'an.

Sura 53:45-46 states that, **"God fashioned both male and female from a drop of fluid that has been ejaculated."**

In addition, Sura 80:18-19 states, **"Does man ever consider out of what substance God created him. Out of a drop of fluid (Nutfah) He created him, in which He determined his nature."**

Third, in describing the further development of the embryo, the Qur'an states in Sura 23:13-14 that: **"... We placed him as a drop of liquid (sperm) in a firm lodging (the womb). Then we fashioned the sperm (Nutfah) into something that clings (Alakah) which we fashioned into a chewed like lump (Modgha). The chewed like lump is fashioned into bones which are then covered with flesh...Then we developed it into another act of Creation. Blessed is God, the best to create."**

The term "Alakah" in Arabic literally means something that clings or attaches to something else. This term refers to the blastula or ball-like structure of cells that forms about six days after fertilization and becomes implanted in the uterine wall.

After the fourth week, the embryo actually looks like what in Arabic is termed "Modgha", a lump or flesh on which indentations that look like teeth marks are apparent, containing the basis for the development of the muscular and skeletal system.

The Qur'an also correctly points out the sequence of the development stages: the developments of the bones first, followed by the soft tissues, muscles, and skin.

The gradual, progressive nature of the process is further reflected in Sura 39:6, which describes the process as follows: **"...He creates you in your mother's wombs, one act of creation after another in three veils of darkness."**

In order to understand this verse and the different "dark zones" it refers to, Dr. NurBaki in his book on science and the Qur'an suggests that you take the point of view of the ovum and then the embryo, imagining what its changing surroundings would look like during the various stages of development.

The first dark zone seems to refer to the Fallopian tube where the ovum is fertilized. From the ovum's perspective it would appear as a large dark tunnel.

The second dark zone appears to be the implantation of the fertilized ovum on the uterine wall, where its surroundings can be compared to a secluded spot in a dark forest, with the hair-like protrusions on the lining of the uterus resembling trees.

The third dark zone could be the enclosure of the embryo in the amniotic sac, which is similar to floating at the bottom of a dark sea where the organs and physiological systems develop.

Therefore, the "triple darkness" would mean the three stages mentioned above. The Hadith has described the processes in detail.

It is recorded that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, **"Verily the creation of every one of you is brought together in the mother's womb as a drop of semen for forty days, then it becomes a clot for the same period, then it becomes a blob of flesh for the same period. Then the angel will be sent unto it to blow into it a spirit, and the angel is ordered (to carry out) with four instructions, to write down its livelihood, the span of life, its deeds, and whether it is wretched or fortunate."**

The period of forty days from semen to clot, and of clot (or embryo) for the same period, approximate with scientific research. The human embryo develops in six weeks or 42 day after fertilization.

But then it must be remembered that there is a range of development of embryo from 40 to 42 days depending on the nature and circumstances, and the body temperature of the woman who has conceived.

The development of the fetus takes almost the same period, and it is after about 3 months that it takes a recognizable human form. The movement of the baby in the mother's womb starts after this period. It may be noted, however, that the modern scientific information about the stages in the growth of a human baby from conception to delivery, is the product of highly advanced techniques in the study of human biology.

Surgical operations, drugs, and X-rays have made some of this knowledge possible, but 1400 years ago, none could dream of such an analytical and specific description of the phases of human growth from conception to birth; much less from the unlettered Prophet of the Desert.

This is yet another proof that his knowledge which is now corroborated by modern scientific research was divinely inspired.



## HAKIM IBN HAZM

History has recorded that he is the only person who was born inside the Kabah itself. Together with a group of friends, his mother had gone inside this ancient House of God to inspect it. On that particular day it was open because of a festive occasion. She was pregnant and labor pains suddenly gripped her. She was unable to leave the Kabah. A leather mat was brought to her and she gave birth on it. The child was named Hakim. His father was Hazm who was the son of Khuwaylid. Hakim was therefore the nephew of the Lady Khadijah.

Hakim grew up in a wealthy and noble family which enjoyed a high status in Makkan society. He was also an intelligent and well-mannered person who was well respected by his people. He was held in such esteem that he was given the responsibility of the rifadah which involved giving assistance to the needy and those who had lost their property during the season of pilgrimage. He took this responsibility seriously and would even help needy pilgrims from his own resources.

Hakim was a very close friend of the Prophet (pbuh), before his call to Prophethood. He was five years older than the Prophet, and they used spend much time talking together enjoying hours of pleasant companionship. Mohammed (pbuh) in his turn felt great affection for Hakim. They became even closer when the Prophet married Hakim's aunt, Khadijah.

What is truly amazing is that in spite of the close friendship between Hakim and the Prophet, Hakim did not become a Muslim until the conquest of Makkah, more than twenty years after the start of the Prophets mission! One would have thought that someone like Hakim whom God had blessed with a sound intellect and who was so well-disposed to the Prophet, would have been among the first to believe in him and follow his guidance. But that was not to be. As soon as he finally accepted Islam and tasted the sweetness of iman (faith), he felt deep regret for every moment of his life as a denier of God's religion and of His Prophet.

Hakim's son once saw him weeping and asked: "Why are you weeping, my father?"

"Many things cause me to weep, my dear son. The most grievous is the length of time it took for me to become a Muslim. Acceptance of Islam would have given me so many opportunities to do good which I missed even if I were to have spent the earth in gold. My life was spared at the battle of Badr and Uhud. After Uhud, I said to myself, I would not help any Quraysh against Mohammed (pbuh), and I would not leave Makkah. Then, when I wanted to accept Islam I would look at others among the Quraysh. Men of power and maturity who were attached to the ideas and practices of old,

and I would fall in line with them... How I wish I had not done so. Nothing has destroyed us except the blind following of our forefathers and elders. Why should I not weep, my son?"

The Prophet himself was puzzled. A man of sagacity and understanding like Hakim ibn Hazm, how could Islam remain hidden from him? For a long time, the Prophet had dearly hoped that he and others like him would become Muslims. On the night before the liberation of Makkah, he (pbuh), said to his companions: "There are four persons in Makkah whom I consider to be above having any dealing with shirk and I would dearly like them to accept Islam." "Who are they?" asked the companions. "Attab ibn Usayd, Jubayr ibn Mutim, Hakim ibn Hazm and Suhayl ibn Amr," said the Prophet. By the grace of God, they all became Muslims.

When the prophet (pbuh) entered Mecca, he ordered his herald to proclaim: "Whoever declares that there is no god but Allah alone, that He has no partner and that Mohammed is His servant and His messenger, he is safe ... whoever sits at the Kaba and lays down his weapons, he is safe. Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan or Hakim ibn Hazm is safe. By proclaiming these houses as places of sanctuary the prophet wisely accorded recognition to both Abu Sufyan and Hakim, weakening any thought they might have of resisting and making it easier for them to be more favorably disposed to him and his mission.

Hakim embraced Islam wholeheartedly. He vowed to himself that he would atone and that whatever he had spent in opposing the Prophet, he would spend the same amounts in the cause of Islam.

He owned an important and historic building in Makkah, where the Quraysh held their conferences during the days of Jahiliyyah. Here the Quraysh leaders would gather to plot against the Prophet.

Hakim decided to get rid of it and cut himself off from its past associations. He sold the building for one hundred thousand dirhams. A Quraysh youth said to him: "You have sold something of great historical value and pride to the Quraysh, uncle."

"Come now, my son," replied Hakim. "All vain pride and glory has now gone and all that remains of value is taqwa - consciousness of God. I have only sold the building in order to acquire a house in Paradise. I swear to you that I have given the proceeds from it to be spent in the path of God Almighty."

When Hakim performed Hajj he took with him one hundred fine camels and sacrificed them all in order to achieve nearness to God. In the following Hajj, he stood on Arafat. With him were one hundred slaves. To each he gave a pendant of silver on which was engraved: "Free for the sake of God Almighty from Hakim ibn Hazm." On a third Hajj, he took with him a thousand sheep and sacrificed them all to feed the poor.

Hakim was generous in his spending for the sake of God, but he still liked to have much. After the battle of Hunayn, he asked the Prophet for some of the booty. He then asked for more and the Prophet gave him more. Hakim ended up with a large share of the booty. But the Prophet (pbuh) told him: "O Hakim! This wealth is indeed sweet and attractive. Whoever takes it and is satisfied will be blessed by it and whoever takes out of greed will not be blessed. He would be like someone who eats and is not satisfied. The upper hand is better than the lower hand (it is better to give than to receive)."

## ISLAMIC DIET & MANNERS

Muslims are a part of so many cultures and have contributed much to the nutritional practices of the world. However, the Islamic nutritional practices (including every other action) are expected to be predominantly determined by the injunctions and regulations of Islam as outlined by the Holy Qur'an and explained by Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). More than 900 million Muslims of different nationalities, societies, and geographical backgrounds of this world make this nutritional practice unique.

### CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

Cleanliness and hygiene in Islam are emphasized to the extent Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported by Ibn Hayyan to have said: "Cleanse yourself, for Islam is cleanliness."

In another Hadith the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said, "Cleanliness invites towards faith, and faith leads its possessor to the Garden."

Cleanliness in food handling, cooking, preserving, processing, etc. is highly recommended and emphasized besides an overall cleanliness of body, clothing, home, and surroundings.

### MISWAK

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) laid special emphasis on cleaning the teeth, hands, and hair. He (PBUH) was particularly careful in the observance of Miswak (brushing teeth).

Miswak is an Arabic word meaning tooth cleaner. It is made of wood and the Prophet (PBUH) recommended its use with every ablution (washing for prayer) five times a day and before and after every meal. How our modern day dentists would applaud that advanced view.

### EATING HABITS



Eating like all other acts of a Muslim is a matter of worship and begins in the name of Allah. Bismillah. Islam reminds Muslims that food and drink are the provision of Allah for survival and for maintaining good health.

The following seven habits were recommended by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and are practiced by Muslims all over the world:

1) Du'a' (Supplication) before each meal:

"Bismillah wa ala barkatillah."

"In the name of Allah and with the blessings of Allah."

2) Du'a' (Supplication) after each meal:

"Al hamdu lil lazi at ta mana wa saqana waja-alana minal muslemeen."

"Praise be to Allah the One Who gave us the food and the drinks. Praise be to Him Who made us Muslim."

3) Eating less:

Overeating is discouraged and wasting of food is condemned.

**"O children of Adam! Look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not prodigals. Lo! He loveth not the prodigals." (Quran 7:31)**

(Editors note: Prodigal means wasteful or unnecessarily extravagant.)

4) Dieting:

One of the main principals of good health is a balanced diet. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) emphasized the behavior of eating less as a method of preventing sickness and diseases. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is reported to have said:

"Eat less you will be healthier." (Hadith)

"Nothing is worse than a person who fills his stomach. It should be enough for the son of Adam to have a few bites to satisfy his hunger. If he wishes more, it should be: one-third for his food, one-third for his liquids, and one-third for his breath." (Tarmazi, ibn Majah and Hakim)

5) Eating slowly:

Eating slowly is recommended for good health as it facilitates the food being thoroughly chewed and hence easier to digest.

6) Moderation and sharing:

Fourteen centuries ago, Islam laid down the basis of dietary regulations as well as the limits within which man can satisfy his physical needs and desires without endangering his life and mental health. Islam motivated people to seek the good of the Hereafter as well as of this world in a balanced way. It taught us to enjoy the pleasures of life, including food, in a moderate way, not becoming a slave to his desires or losing sight of the ultimate spiritual goal. Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) did not permit Muslims to undertake fast which might be harmful and lead to weakness or illness, even though fasting

is considered and act of worship.

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As told of God's messenger, "Have you not been informed, 'Abdullah, that you fast during the day and get up at night for prayer?" When he replied that this was so, he said to him, "Do not do it. Fast and break your fast, get up for prayer and sleep, for you have a duty to your body, your eye, your wife, and your visitors. May he who observes a perpetual fast never fast! Fasting three days a month is equivalent to a perpetual fast. Fast three days every month and recite Qur'an every month."

A Muslim is advised to avoid extremes and to choose a moderate course in all his affairs, including his eating habits. **"Eat of the good things we have provided for your sustenance, but commit not excess therein." (Qur'an 20:81)**

We are also encouraged to enjoy life within certain limits which are drawn from the Shari'ah which was built on the Islamic 'Golden Rule', "Do not harm or be a cause of harm", whether for oneself or others. We are cautioned to avoid greed and to enjoy the pleasures of sharing, especially in regard to eating.

7) Eating together:

The benefits of enjoying meals together applies whether it's a family sitting down together, a husband and wife dining out, or a young couple getting to know one another. The Prophet (pbuh) emphasized the importance of this when he said, "Eat together and not separately, for the blessing is associated with the company." (Ibn Majah)

## DRINKING HABITS



It is recommended not to drain a glass of liquid in one continuous draught. The pharynx serves as a common passageway for both food and air, and the pathways for these cross. Intervals while drinking are also recommended to avoid choking. Sitting down while drinking is also recommended.

The Holy Prophet said, "Do not drink water in one gulp (or one breath) like a camel, but take it in two or three installments (with breaks for breath). Take the name of Allah (recite "Bismillah") when you start drinking and praise Him (say "Alhamdulillah") when you finish. (Tirmizi)

## TABLE MANNERS

As Muslims we are required to show compassion, grace, gentleness, and consideration for others. This also extends to the table and how we conduct ourselves with others:

- 1) Sitting down while eating.
- 2) Eating together and sharing of food.
- 3) Serving others first, especially guests.

4) Host is the first to start eating and the last to finish. (This is the opposite of Western table manners.)

5) Taking food in smaller portions than needed.

6) Finishing (cleaning) the plate without leftovers (this too is different from Western tradition where we are taught to always leave a small bit on the plate.)

7) Eating with the right hand.

8) Waiting for everyone to finish before finally leaving the table or floor cloth.

9) Washing hands and mouth before and after eating.

10) Brushing teeth before and after eating (Miswak).

11) Sharing food with relatives, friends, neighbors, the needy and destitute.

12) Eat from the corner of the plate from your side (for one dish communal eating), don't eat from the middle or the other side of the dish.

13) As an invited guest it is permissible to ask your host for water or salt. Accept what is offered and don't request additional items your host may not have available.

14) When eating in a group, if quantities are limited, share from your plate with the others.

The Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) is reported to have said, "A plate for one is enough for two, and a plate for two is enough for four.

It is reported that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) has said that one who serves drinks should himself be the last person to drink. (Tirmizi) It is also said that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) never found fault with any food; if he had the inclination, he would eat it, and if he disliked it, he would leave it.

**"If a person takes the name of Allah (i.e., recites Bismillah or Assalamu Alaikum) when he enters his home and when he eats, Satan tells his companions, "Let us go. There is no room for you to pass the night in this house nor food." If he enters his house without calling to Allah, Satan says to his companions: "You have at least secured lodging." Then if he does not remember Allah at the time of eating also, Satan says, "You have secured both lodging and food." (Muslim)**

Editors Note: Recently scientists in France discovered that eating with ones hands is beneficial as certain enzymes present on our fingertips act as an aid in digestion. Those elements are not present when using cutlery which is why it's called "finger lickin good"!

## IT'S THEIR MIRACLE!

Every Bosnian child knows the story of a poor woman who caught a golden fish, released it and in return gained wealth and happiness. Its a Balkan fairy tale, but it turned into reality for one poor family.

"What happened here is beyond good luck, it really is a fable," said Admir Malkoc, reflecting on how his fleeing relatives freed two goldfish and were repaid hundredfold. The 150 Muslim families in Jezero, a northwestern village surrounding a lake, lived a quiet life before the Bosnian war, except for holidays, when the men returned from jobs in western Europe loaded with presents. In 1990, Smajo Malkoc came back from Austria with a gift for his teenage sons, an aquarium with two goldfish.

Two years passed, and war arrived. As Serb forces advanced on Jezero, women and children fled while the men resisted. Malkoc was killed. When his wife, Fehima, sneaked back to the village to bury her husband and take their remaining belongings, she saw the fish in the aquarium. She let them out into the lake.

"This way they might be more fortunate than us" she thought. Fast forward to 1995. Mrs. Malkoc returned to Jezero to find ruins, nothing left except memories. Sadly, she turned toward the lake and glimpsed something strange.

"The whole lake was shining from the myriad golden fish in it," she said. "I thought of my husband, he left me something that I never hoped for."

During the years of war around the lake, life underwater had flourished. Soon Mrs. Malkoc and her sons started feeding and selling the fish.

Now, homes and coffee shops in the region are filled with aquariums containing fish from Jezero. The two boys are grown and Mrs. Malkoc is a proud grandmother. The Malkoc house, rebuilt from the ruins, is one of the biggest in the village. Two new cars are parked in front, and the family has enough money not to worry about the future. "It was a special gift from our father."

In winter, when the ice is thick enough to skate on the lake, the fish survive, although "before it was impossible to keep them even in a home aquarium without a heater", Malkoc said.

Some are as big as 4.5 pounds, some have two tails, which the villagers say is something magical. Others are welcome to catch and sell the fish. But most defer to the Malkocs.

"They threw the fish into the lake," said a villager, "It's their miracle."

## ISLAM 101

With the incredible growth of Islam in America we are being asked more and more often for clarification as to what Islam stands for. Many are becoming confused with their previous misconceptions of Islam as viewed through the eyes of an antagonistic press and the reality of a growing number of 'mainstream' Americans embracing it. We shall endeavor through this column to bring a clearer understanding of basic Islamic principles and practices. - Editor

In a world swayed by misunderstanding of cultural differences, Islam and its adherents often are stereotyped and caricatured, branded with a violent or sexist image. In reality, Islam is no better characterized by acts of Middle Eastern terrorists, for example, than is Christianity by acts of Northern Ireland's terrorists or in America as typified by Klu Klux Klan activities with their burning crosses.

Islam is an ancient religion with profound historical and theological ties to Judaism and Christianity. All three religions worship the same God, acknowledge large parts of the same Bible and revere Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses to name a few of the Prophets. Muslims regard Jesus as one of the greatest prophets.

In fact, Islam teaches that it represents the modern mainstream of a primordial, monotheistic religion that began with the earliest humans. Over millennia, the religion took form with the early Jewish prophets, was modified significantly by Jesus and finally shaped by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the final prophet, who died in 632.

Among Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) most important acts was rejection of the old Jewish concept of a "chosen people." Instead, he taught that all people are born Muslim (subject to 'submission to God') and that anyone regardless of color, nationality or social standing can join the Muslim community simply by submitting to God and reciting the words known as the Shahada: "There is no deity but Allah (God), and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger."

Because of its powerful, cross-cultural appeal, Islam has won the hearts and minds of an estimated 1.2 billion people around the world, making it the second largest religion. Christianity has about 2 billion adherents, and Hinduism is third largest with about 800 million.

Despite its association in the Western mind with things Arabic, about 85 percent of Islam's faithful are not Arabs. South Asia has the largest Muslim population, with 275 million believers. Africa is second largest, with 200 million. And, according to the American Muslim Council, China has about as many Muslims as better-known Islamic strongholds such as Iran, Egypt, or Turkey. According to The Muslim Almanac, an estimated 2 percent of Americans, or about 5 million people, are Muslim.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Muslims anywhere because they do not belong to congregations and because mosques are open to all and do not maintain membership rolls.

Quite apart from its importance to believers, Islam has performed services for which all of humanity is in its debt. When Christian Europe sank into the so-called Dark Ages for about 600 years starting in the late 5th century, Islamic scholars elsewhere maintained high standards of academic study, mathematics, and scientific research.

Islamic libraries in Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus preserved the writings of ancient Greek, Roman and Indian scholars even as Europe's leaders rejected them.

While Europe languished, Islamic mariners, mathematicians, scientists, physicians and engineers made major advances in many fields. Our words algebra and algorithm, for example, were derived from Arabic. When the best European libraries consisted of a few dozen books, Islamic collections held tens of thousands.

When the Renaissance blossomed in Western Europe in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, it found a trove of ancient knowledge and new discoveries in translations from the Arabic and from Islamic libraries.

## PEACE AND SUBMISSION

Islam is an Arabic word derived from the Semitic three-letter root -s-l-m - as the Hebrew word for peace, shalom, often used as a greeting. The meaning of "Islam" encompasses the concepts of peace, greeting, and submission. Thus, a Muslim - the word is derived from the same root - is one who submits to God, a stance enunciated in the traditional profession of faith: "There is no deity but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger."

"Allah" is simply Arabic for "God," the same supreme, supernatural figure worshipped by Christians and Jews. Unlike most other religions, however, Islam has no baptism or other initiation ceremony.

"Membership in the community of Muslims is not conferred by man," Thomas W. Lippman writes in *Understanding Islam*. "It is acquired by a conscious act of will, the act of submission, summarized in the profession of faith." Also, "to become a Muslim, it is sufficient to make that profession sincerely in the presence of other believers, who will witness it. But to become a Muslim is also to accept a complex interlocking body of beliefs, practices and other ethical standards."

Although Islam has taken root in diverse cultures such as those of Egypt, China, and the United States, with some cultural aspects being integrated in each region, Islamic scholars say Muslims everywhere share a core of basic principles, the "five pillars" of the faith.

The first pillar is the profession of faith or, in Arabic, the Shahada which is "There is no deity but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger." This is called by many as the central theme of Islam because many Muslims repeat it, in Arabic, several times a day to remind themselves of God's central position in their lives.

The second pillar is ritual worship, or salah (prayer). Mus-

lims are required to pray formally five times a day - at dawn, midday, afternoon, evening and night. In Islamic countries, a man summons believers to prayer by calling from atop the mosque's tower, or minaret, or by using loudspeakers. Or as is becoming common in the western world...a computer program or an Islamic watch calls out the 'adhan' (call to prayer) at the proper time.

Muslims may pray alone or in a group as long as they face the Saudi Arabian city of Mecca, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s birthplace and the holiest city of Islam. It is common in many predominantly Islamic countries to see Muslims performing the salah wherever they happen to be at the appropriate time.

Unlike most Christian or Jewish prayers, the salah requires more than words. The whole body performs the ritual. It begins as worshipers raise their hands and say "Allahu Akbar," which translates as "God is the greatest." Worshipers then bend with hands on knees, kneel with hands on thighs, and finally bow their heads to touch the floor. Each motion is accompanied by verses from the Qur'an. A person, sometimes called an imam, may lead the service.

The third pillar is fasting, or sawm, during the month of Ramadan. Because Islam uses a lunar calendar, its year is 11 days shorter than that of the solar calendar governing most worldly affairs. As a result, Ramadan comes 11 days earlier each year. The month is sacred because, as Muslims believe, God first revealed verses of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during Ramadan.

During Ramadan, Muslims are to refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sex from dawn to sunset. Typically during Ramadan, Muslims have breakfast before dawn and do not eat again until after sunset. This is a special time of happiness for Muslims and gatherings at the Mosques for communal fast breaking and special prayers make it particularly festive and joyful.

The fourth pillar is almsgiving, called zakah (charity) in Arabic. Muslims pay a specified amount of money, typically 2.5 percent of one's accumulated wealth each year, to assist the poor and sick. The money is not to support the mosque or Islamic leaders. The Qur'an does not say how much should be given. In some Muslim countries, it is voluntary, while in others, the government enforces it.

The fifth pillar is the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. Islam requires every believer make at least one visit to Mecca in a lifetime if physically and financially able to do so. The spectacular hajj now brings together more than two million Muslims in a religious gathering that has continued without interruption for about 1,400 years. The hajj commemorates the sacrifices, faith, and obedience of Abraham; his second wife, Hagar; and their son, Ishmael, at Mecca. It is the largest, regularly scheduled international gathering on Earth.

When the pilgrims arrive, they don special clothing. Men wear two seamless white sheets, and women usually wear a modest white dress. In this uniform attire, the pilgrims feel that they are equal before the eyes of God and that only virtue and devotion will set one apart from others. The demanding rites and prayers last for days. According to Islamic scholars, the pilgrims hope that God will accept their effort, after which they can commence life afresh with a slate wiped clean of sins.

The focus of worship in Mecca is the Ka'ba, an empty, cubical stone structure covered by an embroidered black cloth in the courtyard of the Great Mosque. Ka'ba is the source of the word "cube." The Ka'ba is believed to have been built on the site of an original structure made by Abraham more than 4,000 years ago, and Muslims consider it the original house of God on Earth. This is what the pilgrims are circling during the Hajj pilgrimage one sees in news photos.

## NO DEITY BUT ALLAH

Perhaps Islam's most distinctive attribute is a belief descended from that of the ancient Jews and akin to that of early Unitarians in a single deity, whether the name be Jehovah, Allah or God. At many times throughout history, this has been a radical claim because most other religions believe in many Gods, a position called polytheism. Islamic monotheism goes even further than its Christian counterpart by rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that Jesus also is a deity, along with a third entity called the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit.

The Qur'an is the dominant scripture. It is considered the literal word of God, dictated by the Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) over the course of 23 years. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was illiterate, but his followers memorized the revelations and scribes set them down in writing. The Qur'an is viewed as the authoritative guide to proper living, along with the Hadeeth, which is based on the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and Sunnah which is based on the actions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Muslims view life as a test. It is a person's responsibility to live as closely as possible by the words of God in preparation for a "Day of Judgment" much like the one in which Christians believe. Muslims say the world someday will be destroyed and the dead resurrected, judged and sent to heaven or to hell.

However, sinners may take heart because, according to the Islamic council's handbook, "the infinite mercy of God is demonstrated in the Qur'anic statement that those who have even a mustard seed's weight of belief in God will eventually be admitted into Heaven."

Islam also teaches that each person has a direct relationship with God and that no intermediary is needed. As a result, Islam has no priests or other clergy. Some people, however, are considered experts on the Qur'an and serve as leaders of the community. Some, for example, are trained to judge how the Qur'an applies to social and personal issues. Another leader, called an imam, leads daily prayer, gives sermons, officiates at marriages, and performs other clerical duties.

Muslims believe that God has sent many messengers to all people in all times for the purpose of guiding them to the right path of God. Among these many messengers were Adam, Abraham, Noah, Lut, Jacob, Issac, Ishmail, Joseph, David, Solomon, Elisha, Jonah, Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus, with the final prophet being Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Like some Christians, many Muslims believe that human history began with Adam and Eve, but they do not believe in "original sin," the Christian doctrine that all human beings inherit a state of sin from that first couple's disobedience of the command not to eat the forbidden fruit.

Because Islam does not accept the concept of original sin, humanity did not need a savior whose death wiped away this sin. Jesus was not crucified, the religion teaches. Being sinless, he did not need to die and was taken bodily to heaven, as Catholics believe his mother Mary was.

Incidentally, the Qur'an teaches that God made Adam and Eve simultaneously by splitting one human soul, not by making the woman from a part of the man, as the Jewish and Christian traditions hold. The Qur'an also teaches that the serpent in the Garden of Eden seduced both Adam and Eve and that both were equally guilty. Muslims often cite this teaching in defense against assertions that Islam is inherently sexist.

## LIFE OF THE PROPHET

[www.islamicbulletin.org/sira/sira.swf](http://www.islamicbulletin.org/sira/sira.swf)

No understanding of Islam is complete without knowledge of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who was not the founder of Islam. Rather, they hold, he was guided by God to help humanity return to the original, true religion. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born about 570 in Mecca in what now is Saudi Arabia. Europe was entering the Dark Ages. Throughout the world, empires were collapsing, new societies emerging, and religions spreading. The region's dominant religions were polytheistic, worshipping many deities and idols.

Orphaned by age 6, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was raised by his grandfather and by his uncle after his grandfather died. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) grew up to be a thoughtful, well respected, and honest businessman. He married and became the father of six children, two of whom died young. At the age of 40, he retreated to a cave outside Mecca to meditate. It was there, Islam teaches, that the angel Gabriel visited him and communicated the first of God's words to him. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) continued to receive these revelations from God for the remaining 23 years of his life.

God instructed Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to convey the message of Islam to the people of his region. This was not easily done. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) asked the people to abandon their many idols and recognize Allah as the one God. He was met with reactions ranging from amusement to anger. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also taught two revolutionary principles - that Islam was the source not just of spiritual authority but also political authority and that the bond uniting people should not be tribal but shared religion.

Dissenters taunted Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with demands that he work miracles to demonstrate authenticity. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) claimed that only Allah could perform miracles. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) insisted that every aspect of nature was an example of God's power. This did little to win converts. After 11 years of mounting hostility towards him, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his small band of followers emigrated to the city of Yathrib, about 200 miles away. There the people embraced his teachings. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) established himself as the city's political leader and promulgated Islamic teachings. The city was renamed Medina, meaning "city of the prophet." After several years, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers returned to Mecca, conquered it and established Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as both religious and political leader of his people. By the time he died at age 63, Islam was established throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

Within a century of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s death, Islam had spread west to Spain and Portugal and northeast to Central Asia, establishing Islam as a formidable world empire. Islamic rule also pushed into northern Africa and other parts of the Mediterranean basin within the first 20 years of its establishment. With every advance, Islam adopted and adapted features of many other cultures. By the Middle Ages, Islam was established in parts of Europe, for example, Spain in the west and the former Yugoslavia in the east.

In the 1500s, Hispano-Arab Muslim explorers arrived in America from Spain. In the early 1700s, the slave trade brought the first Muslims, captured African slaves, to this part of the world. By the end of the 19th century, free Muslim immigrants were reaching North America from the Middle East and other Muslim lands. Today, more than 1,300 years after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Islam continues to thrive, a growing, global religion with a powerful ideology that now binds one-fifth of the human race in a common system of beliefs.

### MOTHER OF THE RENAISSANCE

Muslims were the inheritors and guardians of the body of knowledge that created modern society and are credited with having kept scholarship alive through the Dark Ages. After the decline of Roman government and civic order in the 5th century, Europe turned from the wisdom of the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Indians. Elsewhere, however, Islam's large universities continued to advance these intellectual interests. Although the Renaissance, which occurred between the 14th and 16th centuries, is considered the period of revival of art, science, and literature, historians say its roots can be found in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Then, medieval scholars began to question traditional ways of viewing knowledge and regained access to important classical and Islamic texts.

European scholars came to Muslim cities to use the vast libraries. They translated Arabic works into Latin and, often inadvertently, soaked up Muslim culture. This was a pivotal time as the legacies of several cultures began to mingle, most notably, Greek, Persian, Indian, European, and Islamic. During this epoch when intellectual curiosity was at a peak, education was introduced to those outside the Catholic Church hierarchy, creating a professional class of intellectuals. Visiting European scholars returned home and helped to establish universities based on what they had translated from Islamic texts and what they had experienced from their immersion in Muslim culture. As a result, large bodies of Islamic knowledge subsequently were transferred to the rest of the European world.

### WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND ISLAM

Traveling through the Islamic world, visitors notice that the status of women changes drastically from country to country. Westerners question why Muslim women cover their heads and most of their bodies. They question the nature of freedom

where women have very little political power or social clout. In many cases, the differences are based on local customs and culture only. Wearing veils over the face for example, is not required by the Qur'an but in some places is local custom. Islam requires that women dress and behave modestly. Historians note that, before the rise of Islamic culture in the 7th century, women in much of the world had few rights and were considered little more than chattel. Against that background, the Qur'an and Islamic tradition were positively revolutionary in teaching that men and women are spiritually equal and that women have the right to own and inherit property, seek divorce, gain an education, retain one's family name after marriage and the right to vote.

Muslims such as Rkia Cornell, who teaches Asian and African languages and literature at Duke University, argue that "every culture is inherently sexist to some degree." Cornell insists that, as a Muslim woman, she still has the freedom to control her own life. "Muslim women historically have had a strong role in Islamic society." What some see as oppressive, Muslims view as protective. While Americans may regard a Muslim woman's attire as stifling, Muslims may view the way American women generally dress as sexist and compromising, devaluing the woman to a sex object.

The Prophet (SAW) said to make use of these five things before you are overpowered by the other five:

#### LIFE

before you are overcome by **DEATH**

#### HEALTH

before you are overcome by **SICKNESS**

#### YOUTH

before you are overcome by **OLD AGE**

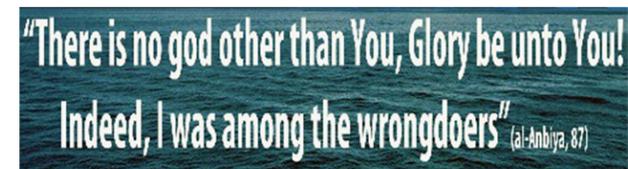
#### TIME

before you are overcome by **OCCUPATION**

#### WEALTH

before you are overcome by **POVERTY**

## PROPHET YUNUS (AS)



Prophet Yunus (Jonah) was sent by Allah to a big town where many people had forgotten Allah's orders and did many things which Allah had forbidden. You should believe only in Allah and obey only Him, Yunus told them. You should worship Him alone and do good, otherwise a severe punishment will come upon you!

But Yunus soon discovered that the people did not want to listen to him. He lost patience with them and left the town in anger. Afterwards, Yunus decided to go across the sea, and boarded a ship for the voyage. But when the ship was in the middle of the ocean, Yunus suffered a great misfortune. He was thrown overboard and swallowed up by an enormous fish! Fortunately though, the fish had swallowed Yunus in one big gulp, so he landed in its stomach unhurt.

It was very dark inside the fish's stomach and Yunus grew very fearful. In his loneliness, he started to think over what had happened in the town and came to realize that he should not have acted so hastily and in such a quick-tempered manner. Instead, he should have stayed and kept on speaking to the people and ask them to return to Allah.

In his despair, Yunus started to pray with all his heart to Allah. He said, "Oh Allah, there is no God apart from You. You alone do I praise and honor. I have done wrong. If you do not help me, I shall be lost forever."

Allah hears the prayers of those who pray to Him and those who believe in Him. Allah heard Yunus's prayers and He caused Yunus to come out of the fish's stomach, and to be swept by the waves of the ocean all the way to the shore.

Poor Yunus was in a terrible state after all that and just lay on the beach weak, ill and helpless. He felt dreadfully miserable, but Allah caused a tree to grow and this tree provided Yunus with shade and good fruits. Before long, Yunus had recovered his health and strength.

When he was better, Allah sent Yunus back to the town. This time, though, the people there listened to Yunus when he told them it was better for them if they believed in Allah and worshiped Him alone and that they must do good. Everyone was much happier after that.



### THE PROPHETS QUIZ

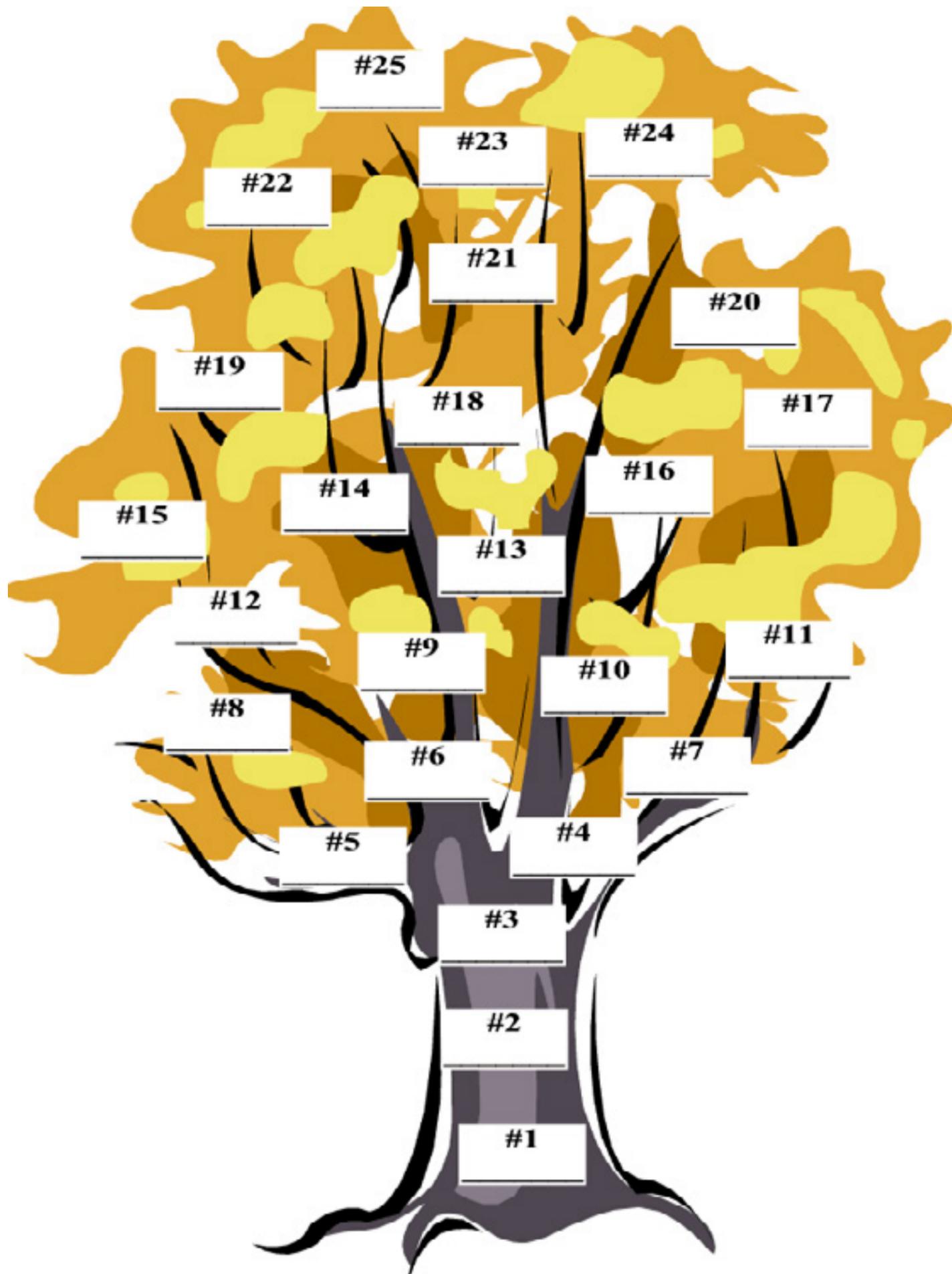
As Muslims, we must believe in all the prophets and messengers of Allah. Allah's guidance to mankind began with Adam (pbuh) and was completed with Muhammad (pbuh).

Hud	Mohammed
Idris (Enoch)	Harun (Aaron)
Ismail	Musa (Moses)
Adam	Ayyub (Job)
Isa (Jesus)	Al-Yasaa (Elijah)
Nuh (Noah)	Zul-Kifl(Ezekiel)
Ibrahim (Abraham)	Sulaiman (Solomon)
Ilyas (Elias)	Z a k a r i y a
Ishaq (Issac)	L u t ( L o t )
Ya'qub (Jacob)	Salih
Yusuf (Joseph)	Yahya (John)
Shu'aib	Yunus (Jonah)
Dawud	(David)

Below are the 25 Holy Prophets (peace be upon them) mentioned in the Holy Qur'an...can you match the names with the clues? Put them on the tree on the next page in the order in which they came to mankind.

How many of the Prophets can you name without looking?

Play this with Mom or Dad to see how many they can name!



**TIDBITS FROM OUR READERS**



**I WONDER**

If Prophet Mohammad visited you just for a day or two,  
 If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.  
 Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored guest,  
 And all the food you'd serve him would be the very best,  
 And you would keep assuring him that you're glad to have him there,  
 That serving him in your home is joy beyond compare.  
 But when you saw him coming, would you meet him at the door,  
 With arms outstretched in welcome for your visitor?  
 Or would you have to change your clothes before you let him in?  
 Or hide some magazines and put the Qur'an where it had been?  
 Would you still watch the same movies on your TV set?  
 Or would you switch it off before he gets upset?  
 Would you turn off the radio and hope he hadn't heard?  
 And wish you hadn't uttered the last loud hasty word?

Would you hide your music and instead take Hadith books out?  
 Could you let him walk right in, or would you rush about?  
 And, I wonder... if the Prophet spent a day or two with you,  
 Would you go right on doing the things you always do?  
 Would you go right on saying the things you always say?  
 Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?  
 Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace,  
 And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?  
 Would you keep up every prayer without putting on a frown?  
 And would you always jump up early, for prayer at dawn?  
 Would you sing the songs you sing, and read the books you read?  
 And let him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?  
 Would you take the Prophet with you everywhere you go?  
 Or would you maybe change your plans just for a day or so?  
 Would you be glad to have him meet your very closest friends?  
 Or, would you hope they stay away until his visit ends?  
 Would you be glad to have him stay forever on and on?  
 Or would you sigh with great relief when he at last was gone?  
 It might be interesting to know the things that you would do.  
 If Prophet Mohammad, in person, came to spend time with you.

## A SAD PASSING

*Author of The Miracles of the Qur'an Dies at 87.*

One of the best known and respected personalities of the Muslim world, Sheikh Mohammed Mutwali Sharawi, died recently. He was well known for his Friday televised lectures on Islamic teachings which were widely watched because of the simple way in which he conveyed Islamic principles. His colloquial manner of speaking presented the deepest meanings of the Qur'an to the 'common man'.

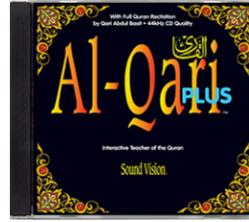
His depth of knowledge was exhibited in a six-volume cassette series which explained every nuance of the Fatiha. The majority of his works were in his native Arabic, but his erudite Miracles of the Qur'an and Good and Evil were produced in English.

Sheikh Mohammed was born in 1911 in the village of Daqadus, Egypt and studied traditional Islamic sciences at the University of al-Azhar, Cairo, graduating in 1941.

During his long career, he held numerous important positions, including those of President of al-Azhar, head of Graduate Studies at King Abd al-Aziz University, Jeddah, Minister of Awqaf of Egypt, and member of the Islamic Research Academy of al-Azhar.

His contribution to Islam will live on for many generations to come. Sheikh al-Sharawi will be deeply missed.

## TECHNOLOGY REVIEW



*Al-Qari CD  
from  
Soundvision*

The reasonably priced Al-Qari CD from Soundvision (\$49) enables learning and reciting of the Arabic alphabet and the Qur'an with your computer.

It's alphabet features include: Arabic letters with sounds in all shapes and forms; learning vowels in all positions; three different exercises for each letter; silent letters, recognizing letters in their different positions (shapes) in a word; substituting letters; combining sounds, letters and connecting words; comparing similar sounding letters with graphics, sounds and animation; multiple levels of learning from beginning to advanced; lots of exercises at every level of learning.

It's Qur'anic features include: Short surahs (the last 10) broken down in letters, words, and verses for easy understanding and memorization; Maddah in its different forms and lengths; pauses /stops while reading Qur'an; all about Nunnation, Sukun and Shaddah; and the basics of Tajweed (the art of Qur'anic recitation).

It's recording by Sheik Jamal Said, graduate of Madinah University, is clear and easy to follow. The use of multimedia is certainly easier than either books or tapes alone.

With the ability to record your own voice for comparison and more than the last 10 surahs, it would certainly get a 5 Star rating.

## THE 6 YEAR OLD HAFIZ

Reprinted from The Muslim News by Ahmed Versi

### WONDER BOY IN UK

This month saw the visit to the UK of a six-year-old boy who is not only a hafiz of Qur'an but also has a unique command over the meaning of the ayah (verses). Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, whose mother tongue is Persian, is also fluent in the Arabic language and is a master of the Arabic grammar.

In his travels to Saudi Arabia during Hajj, Bosnia and now Great Britain, the scholars of Qur'an have been amazed by his deep knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an. Shaykh Abdul Rahman of Saudi Arabia is claimed to have said: "Sayyid Muhammad Husayn is a great miracle of the Qur'anic knowledge and the history of Islam and no one has ever witnessed such a prodigy." Amongst his many achievements he has also memorized 800 ahadith (sayings of the Prophet (pbuh)) and the poetry of Sa'di and Mohtasham Kashani.

The burning question that I had been waiting to ask was how he was able, at such a tender age, to not only memorize the entire Qur'an by heart, but also able to understand, analyze and interpret the ayahs. "He was just two years old, when I first realized his talent, says his father, Muhammad Mahdi. Muhammad Husayn learned by listening to his mother, Aminah, who is also a hafizah. Muhammad Husayn had already at that age memorized, on his own, the thirtieth portion of the Qur'an. He memorized the verses by listening once or twice. However, he would, and still does, read the Qur'an daily in order to help him retain what he memorizes.

Muhammad Husayn replied to me by quoting from the Qur'an:

**"We will make you recite so you shall not forget."  
(Qur'an A'la:6)**

He has photographic memory but he also has the ability to understand and convey the meanings of the Qur'an. One of the unique characteristic of Muhammad Husayn is that when he answers any question, he always answers quoting from the Qur'an. He does so even with his family and friends (he can communicate like any other child but uses the Qur'an whenever he can). "When he is in a meeting, speaking with scholars and ulama, he

uses the Qur'anic language, when he is with his family and friends, he also uses the Qur'anic language, but with the latter not always", explains his father.

His father used sign language to explain to him the meaning of the ayahs. He would read one verse, then use a sign language or a combination of signs for complicated words. After many hours of training, Muhammad Husayn would, at the tender age of two and half years, be able to recite to his father the relevant verse when Muhammad Mahdi made the appropriate signs. Muhammad Husayn has learned about 800 signs.

During the interview, Muhammad Mahdi asked me to pick any ayah and he used sign language. Muhammad Husayn then recited the verse just by watching the signs. So why isn't he like other hafiz in that he wants, at such a young age, to understand the verses? Muhammad Husayn once again quotes from the Qur'an after a lot of thought: **"That is better for you and purer."** (Mujadilah:12) He only quotes what is relevant to the answer. So in this case he quoted a phrase from ayah 12.

However, then the father intervenes and explains what his son means. "When one speaks through the language of the Qur'an and understands it, one therefore speaks in a pure and more proper way. And those who speak from the Qur'an speak less but their meaning is more complete."

So does he just learn the religious sciences, or does he also study other subjects? Muhammad Mahdi replies: "He studies the Qur'an, ahadith and Arabic. I teach him Qur'an and tafsir (interpretation), and he has two professors who teach him Arabic literature and Arabic grammar and another two teachers who teach him other nonreligious sciences."

Which was his favorite part of the Qur'an? He liked stories of Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) and Ya'qub (pbuh), quoting from the Qur'an: **"We narrate you the best of narratives."** (Yusuf:3) The Qur'an says it is the best of the stories, added his father. Muhammad Husayn then added: **"Most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect."** (Ra'd:3) His father explained that the Qur'an encourages us to reflect on events mentioned in the Book.

Most of us do not even know what career to follow even after GCSE's. But I thought I would ask anyway. "What would you like to do when you grow up?" Muhammad Husayn answered: **"On you is only to deliver (the Message)."** (Shura:48) His father elaborated: "He wants to do what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had done, that is to give the message of Islam to the people."