

The Ambition.com

The First Journal for Young Muslims in Canada (since 1987)



Jumada II - Rajab 1421
September-October 2000

Greater Toronto's Dependable Source for Islamic News and Views

Vol. 10 No. 5



The Islamic Concept of the Human Psyche

Muslim Traditions in Psychotherapy

by Wahida C. Valiante, MSW

Psychology as a discipline and its practical application (psychotherapy) to heal emotional and psychological problems, have long been a product of cultural, religious, and ethnic norms in society.

Islam as a religion, and subsequently as a culture, developed a concept of the human psyche and produced a body of knowledge to

cure disturbances in the soul (psyche) of human beings.

The term "psychotherapy" first appeared in one form or another well before its modern formulations. From ancient to present times, most methods of psychotherapy, although different in theory and practice, have some common philosophical elements, but at present lack synthesis. This is largely because Western theories of the human psyche have been influenced by Judeo-Christian ideologies.

Although Islam, Christianity, and Judaism have much in common, they differ in their definitions of the human psyche. Similarly, Freud's parallel contributions to Western psychology and psychotherapy were very much influenced by his own Jewish nature and Talmudic training. Freud's Jewish background also had a strong influence on the genesis of his psychoanalytical theory.

Freud viewed religion as a universal obsessional neurosis of humankind, and God as an invention by humanity to find a substitute for a father figure. According to his theory of Oedipal conflict, in which the father figure (or God) presents a threat to the masculinity of the male child, fear of castra-

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Ascension of the Prophet (pbuh) to the Heavens

A unique event that challenged the minds of the Disbelievers and reinforced the mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

by Imam Abdul Hai Patel

The month of Rajab is known for a very miraculous and historical event called *Isra' and Mi'raj*. It was a unique event that challenged the minds of the Disbelievers and reinforced the mission of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

This was an occasion in which, for the first time, ritual *Ibadah* (worship) was introduced. It also educated people about time and space travel. A bridge was established between the finite world of ours and the upper heavens of the infinite universe.

It wasn't until the 20th century that human beings started exploring space, whereas, the story of *Mi'raj*, far from being science-fiction, illustrated a perfect example of space exploration and relativity of time in the universe. It took more than 1,400 years before Einstein came up with the Theory of Relativity. The Prophet's journey into space transcended all human imagination and he had reached a destination that no human being had ever reached; not even the Archangel Gabriel could go there.

The Qur'an describes this event in two different places: Surah Al-Isra' (17) and Surah An-Najm (53). Because of scientific and technological advancements, it is easy for us to accept the *Mi'raj* today, but 1,400 years ago, the world could never come to grips with such an event and for this reason, there was an overwhelming rejection from the masses. Only strong faith in Allah (swt) and the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) propelled them to accept the *Mi'raj* as a Sign from Allah (swt).

Such an account of space travel was bound to create suspicion about Muhammad (pbuh). It was difficult for people to imagine a human being travelling through space in one night without some kind of supernatural power or

magic, or attributing divinity to some degree (as in the case of Jesus (pbuh), whose immaculate birth by the Power of Allah (swt) was instantly rejected, but later transformed into Divinity). Even among other faiths, men of knowledge and piety have been elevated to divine status for their actions that defied human thinking.

For this reason, it seems natural for God to explain this event in such an order with lucid and convincing words that goes as follows: "Exalted is He who took His Servant [i. e., Muhammad] by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose surroundings we have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (Qur'an 17:1).

The Surah begins with glory to Allah (swt), who took His Servant in one night from Masjid Al-Haram to Masjid Al-Aqsa. Here it brings out an important message:

Do not get any idea about Muhammad (pbuh) being a supernatural creation or any other act of magic. Allah (swt) describes him as a servant who had no power of his own to travel such a journey. He took him from one place to another, which also dispels any thoughts of omnipresence of the Prophet (pbuh). He was present in Makkah in Masjid Al-Haram and not present in Jerusalem. Allah (swt) took him there.

Then in Surah An-Najm, Allah (swt) says about Muhammad (pbuh) that "he only speaks what is revealed to him." So do not get any idea of making up stories like fiction thrillers, but what he is going to say about his journey is true and I am confirming it with these additional verses:

"Your Companion [i. e., Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred, nor does he speak of [his own] inclination. It is not

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The Human Face of Tragedy

Why has this man, who once was a newborn with his whole life in front of him, gone so far down into degradation?

by Sister Wilma

He lay there with his skinny legs — encased in black dirt-covered trousers — tucked under his body as if he were a rag doll. His legs and part of his torso covered the hot air vent on this damp and cold day.

A wine bottle smashed to pieces, dark green showed vividly against the greyness of the sidewalk and sky. Another wine bottle half empty, a grocery bag half filled, a few clothes spilling out of a tote bag, are all stark reminders of the facts of his exist-

ence.

Car drivers, truckers, and walkers on foot stared at him as they passed him by, some gingerly stepping past his sprawled out form. Mothers with babies in carriages hurried by him. Two young men in natty business suits stopped for a moment to stare, and then walked on, cell phones in hand. A man on his bike peddled by, turned around, and returned to help the woman in Hijab who was trying to see if he was alive.

Help passed by as the lights

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Please treat this Islamic Journal with respect!

Editorial

Reflecting On Back-to-School Time

It's back-to-school time!

Summer is over. And so is the leisure time. Bye-bye sleeping-in. Hello getting-up-early. No more late-night chatting or Internet surfing.

Like you, I had many plans for the holidays. I was going to clean my cabinets, sew a few outfits, read a few books, travel to another city, visit some friends, write some letters, make some phone calls, and so on. But, like most of you, I didn't get around to doing anything. I was too busy doing nothing. I wanted to rewind. And now, suddenly, I realise that the summer is almost over and we are ready to go back to school.

I remember the first day of holidays. I had thought that I have a lot of time to do all that I have planned, so I took it easy. But the days flew by. As a true procrastinator, every day I waited for "tomorrow," but before I grasped it, it slipped away, and now, over a month later, I have a sense of loss, regret, non-achievement, and a sort of anger! It is not fair. The summer was too short.

And so is life.

Time is slipping away from us. Moments are becoming hours, and hours are transforming into days, and months, and years. And one day it will be over, too.

Time is one of the blessings from Allah (swt). The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said, "Respect five things before five things: health before you become sick, youth before you are old, wealth before you become poor, leisure time before you get busy, and life before you die."

It is a fact that we all want to be young, healthy, wealthy, and live a long life, but it is also a fact that these things are only temporal and every story has to come to an end. On the Day of Judgment, we will be questioned about how we spent our life, our money, and our time that God had given us as His Favour to us.

We think and plan about doing something for the sake Allah (swt) but only to find that we are too busy with other things and don't find any TIME for that. Satan, who is always lurking around us, drives us farther away from Allah (swt) and as a result, we become further involved in our daily routine. The cycle goes on.

We make big plans. Plans to get a good education, earn a lot of money, travel the world, buy a big house, and drive a luxury car. Nothing is wrong about it. It is good to be ambitious, as long as the pleasure of the Creator is also on our agenda, and we remember that we acquire or achieve everything with the help of God. It's the indulgence in worldly business, to the extent that we forget our Lord, that creates the problem. And no matter how big or how many plans we make, it's only the action that bears fruit.

In the Qur'an, *Iman* (faith) and action are usually mentioned side by side. They are complementary to each other. One is useless without the other. Action without faith is like a skeleton without flesh and vice versa. We ought to look at ourselves and decide as to where we stand.

Did we start our day with something to gain Allah's pleasure? If yes, let's pray to Him for its acceptance and ask for His help to be able to repeat this act again and again. Did we do something today that may bring Allah's anger upon us? If yes, ask for His forgiveness and His help to be able to NOT to repeat it again. Self-accountability is a very important factor for the growth of personality. We have got to think, and learn, and practise, because practice makes us grow.

Summer will come again, and if you and I are alive with the permission of Allah (swt), we will be able to do what we didn't do this year. But life will not be granted again.

So, what are we waiting for?

Asma Warsi

Our Mail

One more letter regarding Maulid-un-Nabi

I just picked up a copy of *The Ambition* and I must say that I was disappointed, although I have always enjoyed reading it and appreciated the contents. I must have missed the May-June issue with the article on celebrating Maulid-un-Nabi (something that I hold very dear) so I do not know the actual content. However, I read your editors' note to the young person who was explaining that Maulid-un-Nabi is not and should not be done in a casual way. I would like to make a few points regarding this issue.

In general, the Arabic word "Maulid" means birth, and in this case Maulid-un-Nabi refers to Prophet Muhammad's birthday and more specifically, to the festivities held on this day. Maulid appears however, to more frequently denote poetry or literature written in honour of the Prophet's birth, his life, and his family. In a day and age when birthdays of our children are celebrated alongside birthdays of this country, surely, commemorating the birth of our Prophet (pbuh) should take some precedence in our lives.

The tradition of celebrating the Prophet's birthday on a larger and more festive scale first emerged during the Fatimid era. It was apparently an occasion in which mainly scholars and the religious establishment participated. They listened to sermons after which sweets were distributed and the poor received alms. In Turkey, more festivities and illuminations were added to this solemn and pious occasion. For example, mosques were decorated and homes lit up.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Prophet's birthday was lovingly and enthusiastically celebrated in Makkah and Maulid celebrations became increasingly common in Muslim lands. We must remember that although the celebration of the Prophet's birthday is not an Islamic duty, it is a tradition and custom developed by Muslims out of love and reverence of the Prophet (pbuh) and his family. It helps us understand the role of the Prophet (pbuh) as the Messenger of Allah and helps us look up to, revere, and love those whom he loved and who were close to him.

Maulid traditionally commences with recitation from the Qur'an and comprises of Hamd (poetry in appreciation of Allah),

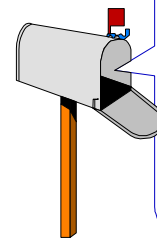
followed by Naat (poetry in praise of the Prophet), and ends with Salam and Du'a. This is interposed with Durood (blessings upon the Prophet).

Poetry, even in pre-Islamic Arabia, has played a very important part in moulding the thinking and attitudes of people. Poetry was a vital means of communication in terms of happiness, grief, war, and peace. At times, non-believing Makkans ridiculed the Prophet (pbuh) in poetry while the Muslims praised him with poems. The first poems in praise were written during the Prophet's lifetime. Hasan ibn Thabit (ra) served him as a poet in Madinah.

In the course of the last century, there emerged a shift in the mystical and mythical orientation of the Maulid celebrations towards a more practical, time-bound emphasis on the Prophet's political and social achievements, his exemplary moral behaviour, and his unmatched way of organising communal life. Yet despite all attempts at modernising, the old tendencies to recite colourful songs about the miracles of Prophet Muhammad's birth remained. Thanks to them, love of the Prophet (pbuh) and his family is implanted in the hearts of children to become an integral part of their religious life.

Naatia poetry inspires our hearts with love for the Prophet (pbuh) because Allah (swt) chose him for us. This in turn motivates us to follow his example and look up to him as the best role model in every aspect of life: "You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct) for anyone" (Qur'an 33:21).

It should be very clear that through the tradition of Maulid, we do not by any means worship the Prophet (pbuh), but revere him as Allah (swt) has asked us to: "Allah and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet: O you that Believe! Send your blessings on him and salute him with all respect" (Qur'an 33:56). We send our Salaams to the Holy Prophet and while standing in the process, we envision ourselves to be present at his grave, praying and hoping for the acceptance of our greetings. We do not believe that the Prophet (pbuh) comes down to our gathering. However, Allah (swt) has informed us that Angels hover over congregations where His Name and the Prophet's name



All letters to the editors are published (space permitting), regardless of the journal's policy. We entertain all letters, except ones with impolite language. Please include your name, address, and telephone number. Only names will be published.

are mentioned with love, respect, and reverence, and they carry our greetings to the Prophet (pbuh). Let us not deprive ourselves of this great blessing and recite the Durood together.

Raheel Raza

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) warned us about following the disbelievers in their rituals and customs. In fact, celebrating birthdays in general was not a practice of the very first Muslims and is an imitation of the disbelievers.

For those who may not know, the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt assumed the Caliphate in 969 CE, over 300 years after the Prophet (pbuh). They embraced doctrines that rejected the legitimacy of the practices of majority of Sahaba and the first three Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman).

However, the point you have raised is historically correct: Maulid emerged after the Prophet's death and has taken on many transformations since then. The original article discusses some of your other points and can be accessed from our website (www.theambition.com). We are closing this discussion with this being the last letter on the subject. Everything good is from Allah (swt) and any errors are our own. — Editors

A letter from Nigeria

I was very grateful, when I saw a copy of your magazine from my friend and I went through it. I will be very happy if you can be sending your magazine to me, either monthly or weekly, because I got some experience from the magazine that I collected from my friend. I will be grateful and it would improve Islam in Nigeria if *The Ambition* is sent to me.

Your brother in Islam,
Mussodiq Balogun

Our paper is published every two months and Insha-Allah, we will send it to you. Jazak-Allah-Khairan for taking the time to write to us. — Editors

Is Hijab mandatory?

I have a question: What is up with Muslim women that don't wear Hijab? I see it so often that I can't help wondering if [they even

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Muslim Role Model

After receiving the surrender of Jerusalem and completing a tour of Syria, 'Umar (ra) was returning to Madinah and led the prayers at Jabiah. On this occasion, he delivered an address that is preserved in history. Most of it is related as follows:

"O people, I counsel you to read the Qur'an. Try to understand it and ponder over it. Imbibe the teachings of the Qur'an. Then practise what the Qur'an teaches. The Qur'an is not theoretical; it is a practical code of life. The Qur'an does not bring you the message of the Hereafter only; it is primarily intended to guide you in this life. Mould your life in accordance with the teachings of Islam for that is the way of your well being. By following any other way, you will be inviting destruction. "Fear Allah (the One True God), and whatever you want, seek it from Him. All men are equal. Do not flatter those in authority. Do not seek favours from others. By such acts, you demean yourself. Moreover, remember that you

Khalifah (The Caliph) 'Umar's Address After Conquering Jerusalem

will get only that which is ordained for you and no one can give you anything against the Will of God. Then why seek things from others over which they have no control? Only supplicate God for He alone is the Sovereign.

"And speak the truth. Do not hesitate to say what you consider the truth. Say what you feel. Let your conscience be your guide. Let your intentions be good, for verily God is aware of your intentions. In your deeds, your intentions count. Fear God, and fear no one else. Why fear others when you know that whatever sustenance ordained for you by God you will get under all circumstances? Again, why fear when you know that God alone ordains death and

it will come only when He wills?

"Allah (swt) has for the time being made me your ruler. However, I am one of you. No special privileges belong to the ruler. I have some responsibilities to discharge, and in this, I seek your co-operation. Government is a sacred trust, and it is my endeavour not to betray that trust in any way. For the fulfilment of the trust, I have to be a watchman. I have to be strict. I have to enforce discipline. I have to run the administration not based on personal idiosyncrasies; I have to run it in public interest and for promoting the public good. For this, we have the Guidance in the Book of God. Whatever orders I issue in the course of day-to-day administration must conform to the Qur'an. God has favoured us with Islam. He sent to us His Messenger (Muhammad). He has chosen us for a mission. Let us fulfil that mission. That mission is the promotion of Islam. In Islam lies our safety; if we err, we are doomed."

Is Hijab mandatory?

Continued from page 2

know] it is really mandatory. Of course I've realised that it is, through reading the Qur'an and Hadith.

The problem is that there are still some that don't think Hijab is mandatory and some of the ones that do, say that they don't have enough courage to wear it.

It was hard at first, getting used to it, when I became a Muslim, but I got used to it and I can't imagine going back to the way I was before. I honestly can't tell if a woman is Muslim or not if she doesn't wear Hijab. Perhaps that's what they are going for, not wearing Hijab so they blend in with the non-Muslims society. It that it? If not, then what is it? I hear some excuses, such as "times have changes," meaning that we've outgrown the old ways, but since when are excuses like that accepted in Islam?

Another thing that bothers me are "successful" Muslims who avoid looking like Muslims, e. g., doctors, entrepreneurs, etc. Does wearing Hijab hurt business?

I have more respect for a person who remains Muslim (inside and out) regardless of society's norm.

Name withheld

From the Qur'an

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart, about all those, [one] will be questioned (on the Day of Judgement). (Qur'an 17:36)

From the Hadith

Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Allah (swt) will give shade to seven on the Day when there will be no shade but His. [These seven persons are] a just ruler, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah (i.e., worships Allah sincerely from childhood), a man whose heart is attached to the mosques (i.e., prays the compulsory prayers in the mosque in congregation), two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake and they meet and part in Allah's cause only, a man who refuses the call of a charming woman of noble birth for illicit intercourse with her, and says: 'I am afraid of Allah,' a man who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given (i.e., nobody knows how much he has given in charity), and a person who remembers Allah (swt) in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears." (Al-Bukhari 1:629)

The Human Psyche in Islam

Continued from page 1

tion shaped the nature of modern clinical psychology and psychotherapy.

Muslim traditions in psychotherapy evolved from the Qur'anic concept of the human psyche. The Qur'an states that human beings (human psyche) are created to be different within the universal scheme: "And when your Lord said to the Angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the Earth a successive authority'" (2:30.)

"And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration" (15:29.)

Thus, God created a being, which alone among His creations possessed a spirit (Ruh) and God-consciousness. In addition to the spiritual aspect, this unique creation was given the rational dimension of personality (the ability to create knowledge): "And He taught Adam the names, all of them" (2:31).

Finally, the Qur'an says: "We have certainly created man in the best of stature" (95:4).

According to the Qur'an, it is the divine element in the human psyche that places human beings in the position of being God's vicegerents on Earth. This Islamic definition of the human psyche is the basis upon which Muslim traditions in psychotherapy evolved during the Islamic civilisation.

Sr. Wahida Valiante is Vice-President of the Canadian Islamic Congress. The above abstract (posted on CIC's Bulletin) was for a paper she first presented in 1997 at the 74th Annual Conference of the American Orthopsychiatric Association in Toronto, and which was updated for the Islamic Social Services Association.

The Ambition is published bi-monthly, with a circulation of five thousand copies. It is a free, non-profit publication and does not have the financial support of any group or organisation, foreign or domestic. It is mainly supported by Muslim businesses and individuals.

All submissions are subject to editing for the purpose of clarity or space.

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The Ambition

7224 Harwick Drive
Mississauga, ON L4T 3A4
Tel & Fax: (905) 673-2181
editors@theambition.com

Visit us on the Web at
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Publisher
Asma Warsi

Editors
Asma Warsi
Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Department Editors
Aneesa Lakhi
Ayub A. Hamid
Farheen Zehra

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Personal Reflections

by Sr. Nosheen Ahmed Mian,
1st year, University of Toronto

Going from oppression to liberation was the goal of this century's many feminist movements. Yet a closer look at what these women have supposedly achieved in their quest for equality brings about the realisation that in reality, they seem to have taken themselves in the opposite direction: from liberation to oppression.

The Western World has an obvious fascination with external physical beauty. So much so that little girls are brought up aspiring to and wanting to be like supermodels as opposed to humanitarians. They are always taught that their worth is proportional to their beauty and attractiveness. Thus, in their never-ending quest to reach such a state they miss out on the time when they really should have been developing their character and inner self. The creation of morals and principles that would last a lifetime are sacrificed for beauty that can fade in a second.

Yet, the exact same people have such a superficial view of equality that they label Islam as a religion that oppresses women! In reality, Islam does quite the contrary: It liberates women as it has done since its very beginning in the annals of history. Before Islam, women had virtually no rights, it was only with the emergence of Islam that women were given rights to inheritance and property and allowed to conduct business. Before Islam, it was also common practice in Arabia to kill baby girls soon after birth, because they could not be heirs to their family's wealth.

A woman wearing Hijab has become the Western symbol of oppressed women world-wide; it has come to represent forced silence, hardcore fundamentalism, and terrorism. All stereotypes that are both false and hurtful.

The Hijab gives women freedom and security, amongst other things, and these are the reasons that young Muslim women everywhere have reclaimed the Hijab to give back to them the ultimate control of their own bodies.

Women will not achieve equality through the rights to bare their bodies in public, as many people would like you to believe. True equality will only be achieved when women will be judged by the content of their character, not their level of attraction, and when they will not have to defend their decision to keep their bodies to themselves. Islam teaches us that men and women are created equal and should not be judged on the basis of their gender, beauty, or wealth, for the only thing that makes one person better than another person is their character and Taqwa (level of faith). By wearing Hijab and dressing in adherence to the Islamic dress code, we are no longer subjected to public scrutiny: One's level of beauty is removed

from that which can legitimately discussed and so they can grow up and go through things in privacy.

Now one may ask, what exactly is the Islamic dress code for women? Although many scholars have minor differences as to the number of *Fard* (obligatory) requirements for women's dress, the following are agreed upon by an overwhelming majority of scholars. (Due to the limited space, I will not include proofs, except where proof is from the Qur'an as opposed to Sunnah. Detailed proofs can be found at <http://www.islaam.com/sunnah/dress.htm>)

The **first** requirement is that the dress worn by a woman in public must cover the entire body, except that which has been specifically excluded (face and hands). Allah (swt) has told us this in the Qur'an (24:31).

The **second** requirement is thickness: The garment must be thick and opaque so that neither skin colour nor form of the body beneath it is revealed. Al-Qurtubi reports a narration from 'Aisha (ra) that some women from Banu Tamim who had come to see her were wearing transparent clothing. 'Aisha (ra) said to them: "If you are of believing women, these are not the clothes of believing women." In another case he reports that a bride came to see her wearing a sheer, transparent Khimar, whereupon 'Aisha (ra) said to her: "A woman who wears such clothing does not believe in Surah An-Nur."

The **third** requirement is that the clothing must hang loosely enough that shape and size of the woman's body are not revealed, for the function of the clothing is to eliminate the lure and beauty of her body from the eye of the beholder.

The **fourth** requirement is in regards to colour, appearance, and demeanour, for clothing intended to conceal a woman and her beauty should not contain bright colours, bold designs, or shiny and reflective material that draws attention (Qur'an 33:33).

The **fifth** requirement is that the clothing be different from that of men. Abu Huraira (ra) said: "Allah's Messenger (pbuh) cursed the man who wears women's clothes, and the woman who wears men's clothes (Saheeh from Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah).

The **sixth** requirement is that there be a difference from the clothing of non-believers, which is derived from a general rule of the Shari'ah that encompasses manners, customs, religious practices, and festivities.

The **seventh** requirement is that there be no vain or ostentatious dressing so as to excessively show high status, nor so

Oppression, Liberation, Islam, and the Hijab

is in dispute amongst scholars, it is agreed that this was a practice of the Sahabiyat, and thus is encouraged by all, though some believe it to be Fard, not Sunnah.

Furthermore, if the concept of sin in Islam is understood, then it is realised that by being ordered in the Qur'an to wear Hijab, women are truly blessed. We escape a multitude of sins that can otherwise be almost inescapable. It must be understood that human beings sin to many degrees in their attraction to the opposite sex. One does not necessarily have to engage in sinful acts in order to sin, for that is a decision one actively makes, but there are also times where one can sin and not necessarily realise it. For instance, Looking at opposite sex with lustful thoughts is the adultery of eyes

and wearing modest dress saves us and others from committing this sin.

Having stated the many reasons for and benefits of wearing Hijab, I must say to parents, and especially my Brothers in Islam, that the Hijab is a thing of beauty, a gift, but one whose benefits can only be reaped if one wears it from the heart. It is not something that should be forced, as it is the philosophy of modesty behind the Hijab that must be understood and applied.

I have seen, as I am sure many of you have also, numerous Sisters that are forced to wear Hijab and thus they do so pointlessly. Throughout my high school career, I saw Sisters who would go through great lengths to get around wearing Hijab and adher-

ing to the Islamic dress code. I'm talking about a total change of outfit: clothes going from baggy to skin tight, Hijab going from covering the neck to being tied back into a big knot, as soon as they were out of parental sight. Oh, and of course, once that final bell rang at the end of the day, a total reversal of outfit took place again in order to go home. I've seen other Sisters in buses and public place wearing the Hijab properly, but with short sleeved, deep-necked shirts, and tight pants. In all honesty, I must say that this serves no purpose but to humiliate the beautiful religion of Islam, and these Sisters come off as truly confused individuals.

Time must be spent with children so that Islamic morals and principles are not forced, but rather embedded within their character from early childhood. For if your children grow up with Islam as a part of being, that is all they need.

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First Muslim Judge Joins Maryland District Court

(Washington, DC, 2000/7/31)
In what may be a first for Maryland's Islamic community, a Muslim has been sworn in as a judge of the District Court in that state. (There are only a handful of Muslim judges nationwide.)

"God is merciful, and I pledge to show mercy from the bench -- both for the accused and for those who have been wronged," said Judge Hassan Ali El-Amin.

Imam Yusuf Saleem of Masjid Muhammad in Washington, DC, gave the invocation at the swearing-in ceremony. A number of judges and court officials at the event praised El-Amin for his integrity and work ethic. Imam W. Deen Muhammed also attended the event.

El-Amin was appointed by Maryland Governor Parris N. Glendening. Prior to his appointment, El-Amin worked as a defense attorney in Prince George's County, Maryland and in the District of Columbia. He completed his undergraduate studies at Yale University and received a law degree from the University of Maryland.

"Judge El-Amin's appointment shows that Muslims are entering and having a positive impact on every level of American society," said Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group.

A CAIR representative also attended the swearing-in ceremony.

There are an estimated six million Muslims in America and 1.2 billion worldwide. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in North America.

The Hijab

Continued from page 4

It is understood that parents can never always be with their children, no matter how much they want or try to. However, Allah (swt) is everywhere. So fear of Him and not of parents is what is needed.

The wearing of Hijab is something that must be taken with the utmost seriousness, for once it is worn, the Sister wearing it becomes a clear and obvious ambassador of Islam. I admit that wearing Hijab is not always the easiest thing to do. For years, I thought about covering my head, yet I let the Shaitan put little senseless doubts in my mind, things like, "I will be so hot in the summer."

Al-Hamdulillah, through acquiring knowledge and discussing the issue with many Sisters and Brothers as well, I have realised its purpose and benefits, as well as the fact that I now know that those doubts that Shaitan once filled my head with were so ignorant. Indeed, if I could think of such issues as being hot, Allah (swt) surely did when He ordained the Hijab as being obligatory upon women, especially since the first Muslims were from Arabia, one of the warmest places on Earth! How could I assign to Allah (swt) something lesser than myself?

So as I complete my journey to Hijab at the age of eighteen, many people wonder why I would do this to myself, having had all the advantages of being born and raised in North America. They think that perhaps I have been forced into this, and for all I care, they can continue to deceive themselves by thinking such things. In



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reality, I would like to thank my parents and brother for never forcing me to cover my head, but instead giving me knowledge and love of the beautiful religion of Islam. That is all I needed to come to this decision of wearing Hijab wholeheartedly and on my own, determined to wear this to the day that I meet my Creator once again.

Insha-Allah, I make Du'a that Allah (swt) will forgive us for our sins and guide us all to the Right Path, the path of those whom He has favoured and away from the path of those who have earned His Wrath, so that on the Day of Judgement He may open the doors of Jannah (Paradise) for us and close the doors of Jahannam (Hell). Ameen.

Dr. Sheema Khan appointed to CAIR's National Board of Directors

(OTTAWA, 2000/7/8)—Dr. Sheema Khan has been appointed to the national board of directors for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic Advocacy group. Khan is head of CAIR-CAN, the council's new Canadian office in Ottawa, Ontario.

Khan has been active with CAIR in Canada for the past four years, first with CAIR-Montreal and then as director of CAIR-Ottawa. She has a master's degree in physics and a Ph.D. in chemical physics, both

from Harvard University. Khan currently works as a senior research scientist with a pharmaceutical firm in Montreal. On September 16, CAIR-CAN will sponsor a seminar entitled "Know Your Rights." Speakers from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Quebec Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association will address issues related to employment, education and access to services. Contact: Sheema Khan, CAIR-CAN, ottawa@cair-net.org

Pen is Mightier than Sword.
So why not write?

We invite writers, interviewers, community news reporters, children's story writers, etc., to send us their contributions.

Send your articles by Sept. 30th, 2000 to be included in Nov. 2000 issue.

Articles should not be more than 1500 words.

Include your full name, address, and phone number. You can send your picture and an introduction about yourself if you wish.

What is Islam?

by Osman Bakhach

What is Islam? Is it a religion in the Western sense or a way of life? Well, it depends on who answers the question.

If it is the latter, is it just one way of life among many others or is it a peculiar, unique way of life, superior to all others and therefore, should be the only way of life for mankind to adopt and follow?

In the Western sense, a religion is strictly a matter of personal "faith." Since faith cannot be proven, it has to rely on an individual act of faith. Faith is to be distinguished from knowledge. One cannot have knowledge and faith at the same time in relation to the same proposition. Faith can only arise in the absence of knowledge. Since religious truth is incapable of objective proof, it takes a leap of faith to bridge the gulf between man and God.

The French philosopher Pascal assumed that divine existence can neither be proved or disproved. He reasoned that if one decides to believe in God and to act on this basis, one gains eternal life if right but loses little if wrong, whereas if one decides not to believe, one gains little if right but may lose eternal life if wrong. Under these circumstances, he concluded the rational course is to believe.

All the Prophets and Messengers sent by Allah to their people came forward with all kind of miracles to prove that they were truly Messengers from God.

However, only the Qur'an has survived the test of time as being the eternal miracle. Prophets Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others (peace be upon them) had their miracles. But only those who were eyewitnesses to the event could judge the validity of the miracle. The Qur'an, the miracle given to the Prophet Muhammad is different in being the living miracle of all.

Now, we turn to the Islamic stand regarding the definition of the Deen (Faith). In fact, the whole answer has been summed up in the very first word that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which is "Iqra" (Read): "Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created [all that exists]" (96:1).

The Qur'an is the very foundation of Islam. It contains hundreds of verses which address the human mind, invite man to think, to reflect, and to ponder the creation of the universe in all its details: the stars, Sun, moon, rain, animals, plants, and ourselves.

The Qur'an often challenges the human mind to ponder: "Behold! In the creation of the Heavens and the Earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah

sends down from the skies and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the Earth; in the change of the winds and the clouds, which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the Earth; [here] indeed are Signs for a people that are wise" (2:164).

One of the very beautiful verses in the Qur'an elevates the status of scholars as distinguished people: "Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours. And in the mountains are tracts white and red of various shades of colour and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle are they of various colours. Those truly fear Allah among His Servants who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving" (35:27-28).

Islam is a religion that respects the human intellect to the highest level possible. The Qur'an often condemns those who follow the faith of their forefathers and ancestors in blind imitation. Allah honoured Adam (pbuh), by asking the angels to bow to him after He showed them that Adam (pbuh) had the knowledge of things that they did not have themselves.

Islam does not accept for a Muslim to build his belief on shaky ground, on a maybe-maybe scenario.

Here we draw the line between Islam as a way of life and the false concept of religion as being an irrational experience that cannot be proven. I, as a Muslim, have no problem whatsoever in challenging humanity to prove that the Qur'an is a man-made product. I am more than confident that they will fail.

Why? Because they already have, as the challenge has been around all along: "And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers [if there are any] besides Allah if your [doubts] are true. But if ye cannot, and of a surety ye cannot, then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith" (Qur'an 2:23-24).

Yes the open challenge has been there all along and that's why the Qur'an is the living miracle of Islam. Now, I can summarise the basic foundation of the Islamic Aqeeda (Belief). We believe that Allah (swt) created life, man, and the universe from nothing, and that there is life after death, and on the Day of Judgement, every person will be held accountable and responsible for all he did or failed to do, based on the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) that was revealed to

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

How do we tie it all together? Man has been created for a purpose. Namely, TO WORSHIP NONE BUT ALLAH (God). However, this form of worship has to be in accordance with the Deen revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and nothing else. Allah made it very clear that the Qur'an contains the solution to every issue that may face man in his life: "We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a guide, a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims" (16:89).

Now, why do we say that Islam is the way of life that all human should adopt and follow? To begin with, the cornerstone of Islam is the Aqeeda (Belief). As I mentioned earlier, the Islamic Belief rests upon solid proof and evidence. We don't have the dichotomy between faith and knowledge. Belief must be based on sound knowledge, not wishful thinking or some mystical assumptions that cannot be proven.

Next is the fact that Islam is a divine system. By "system" I mean that it's designed in a specific manner that must be respected as an integral whole. Anyone, and I mean anyone, who attempts to abuse the Islamic system will be backfired. As you all know, the car's engine is engineered with a specific design. If someone decided to play around, take it apart and put it back, misplacing some component, it's no longer a working engine.

Similarly, if somebody decided he can abuse Islam by claiming to implement part of it in a crooked way, say like the governments of many Muslim countries do, then it won't work and it'll explode in their faces.

Thus it's not enough for me to say, "Well, all I need to care about is to strive to be a good Muslim and that's as far as I can go. I'll take care of myself, my family, and I'll be a good Muslim."

No, it's not that simple. Again, Islam is a system that must be respected as such. Islam organised man's relationship with himself, with other men, and with his Lord, all in a beautifully interwoven interdependence. To begin with, man is supposed to have an unshakeable belief in Allah, in His Books and Messengers. Then, that belief compels him to see to it that every bit of his life is governed by the Shari'ah (the Islamic Law), as revealed to the Prophet (pbuh).

If he feels that there are things that he cannot do, then he needs to go back to the drawing board and reconsider that he may be missing something. Allah does not place on a soul a burden greater than it can bear. To say otherwise, i. e., that Allah asked us to do things beyond our abilities, is a gross mistake.

Imdadul Islamic Jamat's Boat Cruise: An Event to Remember

by Sister Wilma,
Staff Reporter

In the early morning hours of July 15, 2000, we gathered together patiently waiting to board the two PMCL buses that were to take us to our eagerly anticipated destination, a destination we had all looked forward to since we bought our tickets a few months ago.

With the final passengers scurrying aboard, the buses started full to the brim with happy adventurers anticipating a good day. The smooth ride in the luxurious tour buses, with their air conditioning, video units, and tape decks helped make the ride back and forth very comfortable.

The organisers and the cheerful drivers helped pass the time travelling in a very entertaining way with their wise cracks and jokes.

As we whizzed by on the smooth pavement, cows placidly looked up as if to wonder who we were, and why we were in such a



hurry. Stately pine trees, grey trunks lean and tall, their branches waving in the breeze, stood like soldiers at attention, as we drove past them. Farmers' fields, some full of vegetables, swayed in the wind as if in greeting to us.

Big barns dotted the horizon with adjoining farmhouses, some homes made of brick, and some not, some with pets in the yard, others with horses and cows out in the fields. Freshly washed clothes fluttered in the wind.

When we reached our destination, Midland, Ontario, we boarded a comfortable and clean sightseeing boat that would take us through some of the 30,000 Islands.

The trip through the sparkling waters of Muskoka-Georgian Bay is one of the finest sailing rides in North America and runs for two and a half hours.

For those who wished, the deck above was open to the wind, while those who preferred more shelter could sit and look out the windows on the lower deck.

Tiny islands, their rugged moss-covered rocks dotted with trees, jutting above the surface of the lapping water, and larger ones, stately houses gracing them, were seen as our boat knifed through the blue-green water.

Among the more notable islands there was Delawana Inn, where tourists come for pleasure and relaxation; Lambert Island, where the famous Wright brothers came to spend the summer months; Snake Island, where water snakes were said to swim to but do not stay; and Kindersley Island, where Samuel de Champlain visited in 1615 CE.

All too soon, our cruise was over. It was a wonderful experience for all!

Our drivers took us to a local waterfront park to enjoy a brief visit until we were forced to leave by heavy rain. Videos entertained us, as tired but happy adventurers travelled back to Toronto.

It was a day well spent.

Muslims are home-schooling their kids

by Michael Paulson, (Boston)
Globe Staff, 2000/8/2.

"Once upon a time, immigrant families turned to the public schools to Americanize their children: Teach them English, introduce them to the broader culture, and point them in the direction of the streets paved with gold.

"But today, as the melting pot metaphor is eclipsed by multiculturalism, more Americans are rejecting public schools and turning to home schooling in an effort to safeguard their children's cultural and religious identity.

"Muslims, one of the United States' fastest-growing populations, are following the lead of other groups, including evangelical Christians, in opting out of American public schools . . ."

http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/215/metro/Trying_not_to_fit_in+.shtml

Journey to Islam

Highlighting the experiences of new Muslims

Making the Transition to Islam

We have a social, financial, and spiritual responsibility to all new Muslims.

by Aneesah Nadir

People all over America are converting to Islam every day. Recently, I was blessed with the opportunity to witness two *Shahadahs* (declarations of faith) within one hour. Before Ramadan, two women declared the *Shahadah* in our *Islamic Fundamentals* class, a course for new Muslims and non-Muslims interested in Islam. Men and women, young adults and those in their middle years are accepting Islam as their way of life. People from all walks of life, ethnicities, and racial groups are declaring that there is no deity but Allah (swt) and that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the

Last Messenger.

When young Dahir Nasser of Phoenix, Arizona, who was raised a Muslim, considers the process of people converting to Islam, he likens the experience to selecting the best article of clothing to buy in a crowded department store: "Those who have been raised Muslims only have to button the shirt they already have on," he says. But for those who are called to become Muslims later in life, the process is much more complex and memorable.

They have to go through the selection process looking for the best, most appropriate shirt. Then they have to determine whether or

not it will fit after trying on or at least examining many different styles and brands. Once they find the one that fits, the best choice, they button it up. Because the selection process was much more involved, many believe their conviction is much more intense.

Does our responsibility end once someone declares his or her *Shahadah*? How do we assist our new brothers and sisters in making the transition to Islam? How do we welcome them to their community, a community in which they have more than a billion brothers and sisters in faith all over the world, from different walks of life, cultural, and racial groups? Are we as a community able to recognise the special needs of our new brothers and sisters and address them?

It is clear from the example of the early Muslims that we have at least a social, financial, and spiritual responsibility to our new brothers and sisters. Not only are we responsible for using our own wealth to free Muslims from bondage and oppression as we saw in the case of Abu Bakr (ra) and Bilal ibn Rabah (ra), but we must also use the Zakat funds to assist those new to Islam with their financial needs.

During the early days, new Muslims were welcomed into the community, enabling them to develop strong social ties even with those who were previously considered enemies of Islam. The rights ordained by Allah on each Muslim were likewise the rights of new reverts. And of course as people accepted Islam it was the responsibility of those who had knowledge of Islamic behaviour, duties, and practices, to teach those who were new to the fledgling community.

Certainly, it is our duty to follow the example set by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his early companions. Many of today's reverts are also sacrificing their relationships with family, friends, and employers to accept Islam as

their way of life. Many look forward to developing strong ties with their Muslim brothers and sisters because their blood brothers, sisters, and parents have rejected them and Islam. It is important to arrange opportunities to invite new reverts for social occasions and family gatherings so they may develop relationships among the Muslims and learn the proper etiquette. These invitations should occur across cultural lines as is exemplified by the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Open houses for families and friends of non-Muslims should be held regularly so that they may learn about the new religion their son or daughter or sibling has just become involved with. Family members are often not supportive because they are afraid of Islam as a result of negative media messages. Often they do not understand why someone they have known for so long would choose Islam. They often see this change of religion as a personal attack on their cultural traditions and the way they were raised. These open houses should allow family and friends to ask questions and also recognise that Muslims are honest, moral and open people, not cult members who would hurt new reverts and divide them from their family. They should be told that Islam promotes strong family ties and to sever ties between family members goes against God's teachings.

New Muslims need classes to teach them the fundamentals of Islam, starting with how to say their prayers. They need to learn about their purpose in life, the articles of faith, the five pillars, what is permissible and what is not. They need to learn what is appropriate and what is not between genders and in relationships with new Muslims. Those who have been a part of the community have to be patient as new Muslims develop their Islamic personality, providing gentle guidance and

advice, and being careful not to drive them away with a harsh judgmental manner.

Support and social groups are also important for new Muslims who will need opportunities to spend time with Muslims who are farther along in developing their Islamic personality and can relate to their feelings, losses and experiences. People who are used to being active and involved will require opportunities for engaging in sports and other social and community outlets in a Halal way. New Muslims may also need Islamic social service assistance to help with their financial needs and perhaps address some of the social and family problems they may have.

Practical information such as where to obtain Islamically appropriate clothing, purchase meat and reading materials, and the process of finding a future spouse and preparing for marriage must be made available for those new to Islam.

More than anything, we have to have open hearts and a welcoming spirit so that our new brothers and sisters will embrace their new way of life with fervour and excitement, becoming enthusiastic representatives of Islam and joining those who invite others to an Islamic way of life.

Please visit <http://www.islam-online.net/iol-english/dowalia/society-21-2-2000/society1.asp>

All articles in **The Ambition** are well researched and checked by the editors.

Being human, we may overlook something. If this happens, please call us and correct our mistakes.

Minnesota county approves interest-free real estate contracts

(Minneapolis, MN, 2000/7/21) The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners has unanimously approved a real estate contract that permits interest-free purchase of tax-forfeited properties. The initiative was sponsored by the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group. (Islamic beliefs prohibit dealing in interest.)

CAIR Minnesota Director Hanif Crutchfield worked with Hennepin County Assistant Attorney Robert Burck to jointly draft the interest-free contract. Sheikh Waleed Edrees Meneese, Professor of Islamic Studies at American Open University in Virginia, the Imam of Dar Al-Farooq Masjid in Minneapolis and Sheikh Ali Alsaloos of Qatar University provided religious guidance during the drafting process. The contract is based on the Islamic concept of Bai-al-Ajal, or purchase over time using installment payments.

The Islamic advocacy group coordinated public awareness of the effort and arranged testimony in support of the contract at a public hearing before the County Commissioners in June.

Patrick O'Connor, the Hennepin County Auditor and Treasurer of Taxpayer Services Department, supported the interest-free contract and sponsored it through the approval process.

"This contract is a major step forward for Islamic real estate contract finance in the United States. It will allow Muslims and other interest-adverse communities to acquire homes from the county without compromising their religious principles," said Crutchfield. He added that county officials clearly demonstrated their commitment to accommodating the religious beliefs of the citizens of Minnesota. We encourage other counties in Minnesota and around the country to follow this precedent by adopting similar types of interest-free contracts," said Crutchfield.

The interest-free contract provides for installment payments over ten years for the auction purchase of any tax-forfeited residential or non-agricultural commercial property in Hennepin County. No credit approvals are needed and there are no income requirements. A 20 percent down payment is required, and single annual installment payments are due each year. The county waives the normal annual interest charge, but will increase the purchase price of the property in order to recapture a portion of what it forfeits in interest income.

The County will also issue an annual cash rebate to the buyer to purge any excess profits that it realizes as a result of such increased purchase price. Partial prepayments are credited to the next annual installment payment due. Early payoffs are allowed without penalty. The County charges a one-time \$75 administrative fee to cover the manual processing of the contract.

The "Halal Contract for Purchase of Tax-Forfeited Property" (formerly known as the "Alternative Financing for Sale of Tax-Forfeited Residential Property to Persons of Interest-Adverse Cultures") is expected to be available to purchasers in mid-August 2000.

Invitation to Muslim Health Care Givers

This is an open invitation to Muslim doctors and health care professionals worldwide to help the Muslim Ummah. The largest number of refugees and displaced people in the world are Muslims. DFGR is an organisation set up to provide medical relief to the needy in the world. It is first of its kind effort from Muslims. Needless to say it is long overdue of Muslim doctors to chip in their share for the Ummah.

Please encourage your health care professional friends to join DFGR. Visit www.dfgr.org or call 1-888-969-DFGR.

News Room

Two for the Price of One

by Sister Wilma, Staff Reporter

Once again, on July 9, 2000, TARIC Islamic Centre's Education Department, under the direction of Shaikh Mohamed Saffie, Director of Education, hosted a delightful and edifying event.

Speakers for the occasion included brothers Fuad El-Ghahugi, Kayume Khan, and Mohamed Saffie. The Qur'anic recitation was melodic and reverently given by Br. Soud Fasih and the English translation was then eloquently read by Br. Ansar Khan.

The basic theme was educating adult Muslims in what the Qur'an teaches, so as to be equipped to face life better prepared spiritually and emotionally. We all must pattern our lives on this great Book so that our young may learn from us and our example on how to live an Islamic lifestyle. The Qur'an must be the Book which is used primarily for learning, and the Hadith as well, provided that it agrees with the Qur'an. It was stressed that the Qur'an emphasises that Muslims must study from the cradle to the grave. Thus learning is an important part of the Islamic lifestyle.



Taco Bell re-hires Muslim who asked to grow beard

(OTTAWA, 2000/8/15) — A Taco Bell restaurant in Ontario has offered to re-hire a Muslim employee after he was not called back to work for growing a religiously mandated beard.

A manager told the Muslim employee, who was employed by a Taco Bell in Oakville, Ontario, that employees were not allowed to wear beards. The manager's claim apparently contradicted company policy in that the Taco Bell's Employee Handbook provides for a religious exemption to the no-beard policy. (Employees granted this exemption must wear a beard-net.)

When the employee offered to wear a beard-net, the manager requested documentation proving that beards are religiously mandated in Islam. She then questioned the credibility and authenticity of a letter from a local Islamic scholar that supported the employee's right to wear a beard for religious reasons.

The offer to re-hire the Muslim worker came following intervention by the Canadian office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN).

"While it is commendable that Taco Bell allow religious exemp-

Several members of the class spoke next on what the class meant to them and what they had learned. It was good to hear what they had to say in their own ways.

At the end of the well thought out topics, a surprise was announced to the assembled class and their guests. A wedding was to be performed and everybody was invited to participate in this happy occasion.

All eyes turned to the radiant bride in her lovely white dress and Hijab and on her Wali, TARIC Chairman Haroon Salamat beside her. They were followed by the groom, attired in a neat navy-blue suit, and two witnesses, Br. Husein Cehic and Br. Esmat Rashid, and made their way up to the front of the hall and onto the platform. Shaikh Saffie performed the Islamic wedding ceremony, which was simple and to the point, and the couple were united in marriage. May Allah (swt) bless the newly married couple, Sr. Emina Rashid and Br. Samir Taleb.

Picture taking, congratulations, and best wishes to the newly married couple followed this happy occasion. A delicious dinner that every one partook of was served buffet style. In honour of the wedding, Br. Adnan Sirajuddeen favoured us with traditional wedding songs in his melodious voice.

It was a most memorable and happy event, one to remember and to cherish! Well done, students and teachers!

tions for their no-beard policy, it is obvious that such information needs to be communicated to all of its managers. The policy should be in effect in each Taco Bell outlet," said Nancy Neville, National Communications Director of CAIR-CAN.

For further information, contact CAIR-CAN at (613) 798-0003 or email ottawa@cair-net.org.

International con artists continue to target Canadian Muslims

(WATERLOO, 2000/8/13) — Arabic-speaking financial con artists who have exploited Muslims in Canada and the US recently, attempted to victimise a Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) executive late last week.

Claiming to represent an Islamic bank, the well-informed individuals, who possessed convincing knowledge of North American Islamic organisations and had a good command of English, said they were stranded at London's Heathrow Airport en route to Canada.

Peaceful Protest Against the Promotion of Homosexual Curriculum in Schools

The Toronto District Muslim Education Assembly (TDMEA), in co-ordination with other groups who share common concerns regarding the above issue, are sponsoring and supporting a parents' protest that is planned to take place on **September 27, 2000 at Queen's Park at 3:00 p.m.** For further detail, visit TDMEA's website (www.tdmea.com) or phone (416) 245-0696.

"It is up to the parents to speak up and oppose the social engineering agenda or accept it at the expense of their children. After all, it is your children's education, well being, and future at stake" says Mr. El-Sayyed, the TDMEA President.

"Only parents can put pressure on the Board and on the politicians to correct the situation and respect their wishes and human rights. Start with yourself and do not hope that others will protect your children, since it is your direct responsibility as parents.

"Freedom of Speech is one way to express your concerns. No one has the right to impose any ideas or programs that inflict on your beliefs, morals, and values. As taxpayers and parents, you have the right to speak up and protect your children from unsafe and poisonous environments.

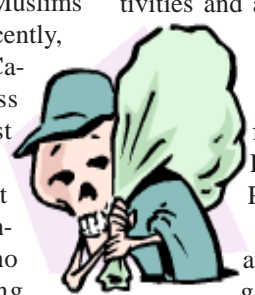
"By not acting, you are sending an unspoken message to the educational authorities that you accept the promotion and teaching of homosexual lifestyles for children in the public school system."

Mr. El-Sayyed urges parents to exercise their rights and stand behind their beliefs and principles. "We urge you to do the right thing, for the benefit of all," he said.

They asked the CIC member to send emergency funds overseas via Western Union, but the intended target of the fraud quickly became suspicious of their argument and reported it to law enforcement agencies in both Canada and the UK.

"We are warning Muslims everywhere, especially in Canada and the US, of these criminal activities and appeal to readers to forward this warning to everyone on their e-mail lists," said Professor Mohamed Elmasry, National President of CIC.

"These con artists are particularly dangerous because they present convincing arguments, they speak in English well, and they use religious phrases in their speech. We hope they are arrested soon."



New Product: Electronic Salaat Timetable

(TORONTO, 2000/8/26) — ARAF TECH Inc., a Muslim-owned manufacturer of high tech Islamic products has come out with a unique and long over due product for the Muslim market, the "Electronic Salaat Timetable" for mosques, homes, and offices.

In the past, people would directly use the sun and the moon to measure when the prayer times began and ended. With technology, the start and end time was calculated to the exact minute for each area. This information would be displayed in a written format within mosques or homes. Many watch versions displaying this information in a digital format recently came into the market, such as the Casio "Prayer Compass Watch." However, until now, a larger wall display was not available.

Things have changed now, since ARAF TECH Inc. formed five years ago, and today with Soleman Rajahbalee, a mechanical/electrical engineer who left his day job and spent two years full time, has come out with a product that will change how people are informed about prayer times.

The word "ARAF" is the name of a Surah in the Qur'an. It means "height" or "high" and symbolises the high tech and high quality products ARAF TECH wishes to manufacture.

The new "Electronic Salaat Timetable" gives a high tech dimension to the formal prayers, giving Muslims all the prayer information they desire. The Masjid (mosque) unit (3 feet by 2 feet) includes programs to electronically display the five congregational prayer times, the start time for all the prayers, the Islamic Hijri date, and it also has a message board to display information such as future prayer time changes, announcements, funeral notices, etc.

The Home and Office unit is half the size of the Masjid version and has the Islamic Hijri date and the start time for the prayers elec-

tronically displayed. The design of the product is what draws excitement in most people. Boxed in a high quality, durable frame, its front panel is printed in black and gold, has Qur'anic text and large, sharp pictures of the Ka'bah and minaret from Madinah, along with the informative electronic displays.

So far, in the Toronto market, more than ten mosques have already purchased this high tech unit and have been using them happily for close to a year. Some now are planning to purchase more for other areas of the mosque, such as the lobby, women's section, etc. After hundreds of requests and due to the appreciation of the Masjid version, the Home and Office version is now ready for sale, giving Muslims at home the information to pray at the correct hour, and the current Islamic Hijri date, in a beautiful high tech format.

The product comes with a one-year warranty, however, with the high quality parts, it is estimated that the "Electronic Salaat Timetable" will last longer than fifteen years. It adds value to any mosque, home, or office, costing only pennies a day over its lifetime.

This is only the first product by ARAF TECH Inc. In the near future, they plan to bring in additional high tech Islamic products to better serve the Muslim market. The next product release will be the "Electronic Qur'an and Hadith" and the "Electronic Hijra Calendar."

The "Electronic Qur'an and Hadith" will display famous, and Islamic Hijri date-specific, Qur'anic verses and Hadith (e.g., Jumu'ah prayer Hadith on Friday, Eid Hadith on Eid, etc.). The "Electronic Hijra Calendar" will display a large moving moon going through its phases and have all twelve months, with important dates, displayed. Again, both these products will be for the mosque, home, or office.

For more information, visit ARAF TECH Inc. online at www.araftech.com.

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Liz Claiborne Recalls Jeans with Qur'anic Verses on Back Pocket

(WASHINGTON, DC, 2000/8/16) — Al-Hamdulillah, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) announced today that Liz Claiborne Inc. (NYSE: LIZ) is recalling a line of DKNY jeans deemed offensive by Muslims because verses from the Qur'an (Surah Ya Sin) were incorporated in its design.

In a settlement with CAIR, the company also agreed to: (1) offer an apology to Muslims worldwide, (2) institute changes to its design process, (3) conduct sensitivity training to prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future, and (4) dispose of the recalled jeans as recommended by Islamic scholars and consultants.

CAIR asked for the recall after receiving complaints about the jeans from members of the American Muslim community. Muslims were particularly offended that the Qur'anic verses (36:65-67) were printed on the back pocket of the jeans. That would mean that those who wore the jeans would be sitting on the verses.

A delegation from CAIR met recently with Liz Claiborne officials in New York City to discuss the incident. At that meeting, company representatives explained the origins of the offensive design. They told CAIR that it reflected a trend in uses of Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern imagery. The design used on the jeans was purchased from an outside source that misinformed the company that the text, apparently taken from a photograph of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, had been rendered "nonsensical."

A statement of apology issued by Liz Claiborne read in part: "We . . . offer our sincere apology to the Muslim community world-wide for this unfortunate mistake . . . We are profoundly sorry that any of our products reflected insensitivity toward the Muslim faith, as this was certainly never our intent."

"Liz Claiborne officials demonstrated their regret through the swift and sensitive way in which they reacted to this unfortunate and apparently unintentional incident," said CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad. CAIR Board Chairman Omar Ahmad added: "This case proves that any corporation dealing in the international marketplace will increase its chances of success if it is sensitive to diverse religions and cultures. We thank the members of the Muslim community who contacted CAIR about this product."

The jeans, sold only in the United States, were shipped to stores in February as part of the launch of the DKNY Jeans junior line.

In 1994, designer Karl Lagerfeld apologised to Muslims world-wide for a low-cut dress in his Chanel collection that was printed with a passage from the Qur'an. The dresses were later destroyed. A similar incident in 1997 involved the recall of a pair of Nike shoes that used a design resembling the Arabic word for "Allah," or God.

To view the Liz Claiborne/DKNY jeans, go to <http://www.cair-net.org/images/news/000001-pocket.jpg>

Swimming for Muslim Brothers at Pearson C. I.

Recreational swimming for Muslim brothers is available once a month in Scarborough. This is a great opportunity to exercise, socialise, and meet new brothers.

The pool at Pearson Collegiate Institute has been booked for the last Friday of every month (except during Ramadan). Brothers of all ages, from babies to seniors, are welcome. The cost is only \$3 per person.

Directions: Hwy 401 to Markham Road, north on Markham, east (right) on McLevin, turn right just before the lights and you will see the school.

For more info, e-mail Saqib Meer at smeer2@rci.rogers.com or telephone him at (416) 935-3729.

UAE Minister to Build 50 Mosques in Kosova

(DUBAI, 2000/8/19) — The United Arab Emirates' defence minister, Shaikh Mohammed ibn Rashid Al-Maktoum, has offered to build 50 mosques in Kosova at his own expense. The project would be carried out with the help of UAE troops serving in the NATO-led peacekeeping force in the province. It is not known how much the project would cost. The UAE has about 1,200 troops in Kosova and another 250 soldiers operating nearby.

ISNA withdraws invitation to Malaysian PM

(WASHINGTON, DC, 2000/8/19) — The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) has withdrawn its invitation to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad to address its annual convention in September because of the trial and conviction of the country's former deputy prime minister.

ISNA members were distraught over a high court's verdict against Anwar Ibrahim. On August 7, he was convicted of sodomy and sentenced to nine years in prison on top of the six years he is already serving for corruption. Ibrahim, who was sacked by Mahathir and arrested in September 1998, denies the charges, saying they were fabricated by his political enemies to end his career.

"Because of the strong protests we are receiving from our members, we are unable to assure a favourable reception for the Prime Minister," Sayed M. Syeed, the ISNA's Secretary-General, wrote in a letter to Malaysia's US ambassador.

The perception of Malaysia among ISNA members changed after the Prime Minister ousted Anwar Ibrahim. Opinion dipped even further after Anwar Ibrahim was convicted through an ill-conceived "judicial process."

ISNA and its membership are concerned that Dr. Mahathir did not conduct the trial fairly, even under the recognised laws of Islam, where whoever accuses someone of adultery or a sex crime has to prove his claim by bringing forth four witnesses, who are known to be truthful and who have all seen the act with their own eyes.

Joe Saunders, the deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, adds: "The verdicts are another blow to justice in Malaysia. If you're out of favour with the political leadership — no matter how high you rise in the government — you have very little protection."

The Malaysian embassy in Washington confirmed that the Prime Minister had accepted the invitation but declined further comment.

Meanwhile, several academicians from the prestigious Cam-

Somalis in Canada

by Abdulrazak Siad

The influx of the Somali community in North America and particularly in Canada started back in the late 1980s. To understand the overall state of affairs of the Somali community in Canada, it is necessary to provide a brief background of the causes for their coming to Canada.

In 1969, the late Siyad Barre rose to power in Somalia. Shortly thereafter, he implemented a military policy based on acquiring a large supply of weapons from the former Soviet Union.

In 1977, he led the country into a war with Ethiopia. After the war, however, Siyad Barre's militant regime became more authoritarian and corrupt. During his rule, the resulting political power and social confrontations overshadowed the social order. Even, the basic necessities, including social, economic, and religious activities were politicised and personalised to the extent that many people fled for their lives, and many others were killed, jailed, or expatriated.

The oppression of opposing forces increased and caused wide-ranging animosity toward the military regime. Organised opposition factions emerged in mid-1980s, first in the north. They pushed the army toward the south until they succeeded in overthrowing the military regime in 1991.

In January 1991, the factions ousted Siyad Barre, and a power struggle between Ali Mahdi and the late Mohamed Farah Aideded led the country into turmoil. Lawlessness and devastation, accompanied by severe droughts, led to the famous UN Humanitarian Intervention headed by American forces in 1992 (UNOSOM Resolution 746 and UNITAF). The United Nations ended its involvement in Somalia in 1995.

A breakaway northern Somalia declared itself to be an independent Somaliland government in mid-1991. The eastern province also declared itself as Puntland.

The unfortunate course of events in the last twenty-some years has caused the dispersal of the Somali society into many parts of the world. There are approximately 100,000 Somalis in the Greater Toronto Area according to *The Toronto Star*, residing mostly in the western portion of the city. This makes Toronto the largest home for Somalis in North America.

The Somali community has been facing numerous difficulties and challenges, which I will try to illustrate, based on my experience as a Settlement and Community Economic Development Counselor.

IMMIGRATION: Due to the absence of a Somali government

bridge University in the United Kingdom have indicated that they will boycott a seminar to be officiated by Mahathir in Cambridge this October.

to provide authentic IDs, Somalis lack satisfactory identity documents required for the permanent residency process. The Undocumented Conventional Refugee Class in Canada (UCRCC), introduced in 1995, requires people without proper identification to wait for five years before they can apply for permanent residency. This situation further has complicated the integration process of many Somalis in the fields of employment and higher education.

HOUSING: For various reasons, many Somalis in Toronto are homeless and in shelters, and many others are facing evictions for various reasons. The housing situation was made worse by the social policy changes of the current Conservative government of Ontario. Most Somalis are refugees and came to this country empty-handed. The housing problem is even more acute for large families and single-parent families. Solutions to such complicated problems require the education of Canadian policy makers and business leaders about the beliefs (especially in the area of finances) and special needs of the Somali community.

EDUCATION: The main difficulties that the Somali community faces in this field can be summarised as follows: A lack of mentoring (educated parents) for the elementary and middle schools students, especially for children of single parents, and a lack of adequate and affordable Islamic schools. The UCRCC program, which prevents Somalis from access to college and universities, is also a problem.

To cope with these tremendous challenges and difficulties, the Somali community has established several weekend schools, and is organising on a regular basis, a wide range of social activities, including sports, recreational programs, summer camps.

Some of the active organisations include SISCA, Khalid Bin Walid Mosque, Badar Islamic Centre, and the Somali Youth Association of Toronto (SOYAT).

http://americanmuslim.org/canadian_muslim.htm

Smoking is grounds for divorce in Egypt

Anti-smoking campaigners in Egypt have enlisted the help of religion in their fight against tobacco. A controversial new religious ruling, or *Fatwa*, says that smoking is a legitimate ground for divorce. It was requested by anti-tobacco campaigners after a ruling against cigarettes earlier this year was largely ignored.

About half of all Egyptians smoke, and officials say it's on the increase among young people and women. The BBC Cairo correspondent says the debate in Egyptian society now is whether the health risks of smoking outweigh the risk of family break-up.

Egypt's mufti, Farid Naser Wasel, issued the *Fatwa* at the request of an anti-smoking group.

Ascension of the Prophet

Continued from page 1

but a revelation revealed, taught to him by one intense in strength [i. e., Gabriel] — One of soundness. And he rose to [his] true form while he was in the higher [part of the] horizon. Then he approached and descended and was at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer. And he revealed to His Servant what He revealed [i. e., conveyed]. The heart did not lie [about] what it saw. So, will you dispute with him over what he saw? And he certainly saw him in another decent at the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary — Near it is the Garden of Refuge [i. e., Paradise]" (Qur'an 53:2-15).

These verses clearly account for and give us proof for the Prophet's journey to Heaven.

Here Allah (swt) commands us to believe what the Prophet (pbuh) says and this is a specific injunction to accept Qur'anic revelation and sayings of the Prophet, which is regarded as Hadith.

In Al-Bukhari and Muslim, there is a very long Hadith that describes his journey step-by-step. Due to limited space, I cannot write the entire Hadith. However, some salient features of the journey are mentioned below:

The Prophet (pbuh) departed from Hateem (near the Ka'bah) for Masjid Al-Aqsa on Buraq, a conveyance that does not match any Earthly creature. In today's language, it can be called a spacecraft. There he led the congregational prayer of all the Messengers and Prophets that came in to this world. Thereby, he received his title: *Imam-ul-Anbiya* (Leader of All Prophets). In the company of Gabriel, he started his ascension to the Heavens, where he met several Prophets. He met — peace be upon them all — Prophet Adam on the First Heaven, Yahya (John) and Jesus on the Second, Yusuf (Joseph) on the Third, Idrees on the Fourth, Haroon on the Fifth, Musa (Moses) on the Sixth, and Ibraheem (Abraham) on the Seventh Heaven.

At the ultimate spot of *Sidratul Muntaha* (Lote Tree) — where Gabriel could not even enter — the Prophet (pbuh) came closest to Allah (swt) and was presented with a parting gift of *Salat* (prayers), to be performed fifty times a day, as a Heavenly gift and the first act of compulsory ritual *Ibadah* (worship).

On his way to Earth, he again met the same Prophets. On the Sixth Heaven, Musa (pbuh) enquired about the gift and when informed about the fifty daily prayers, he pleaded with Muhammad (pbuh) to go back to Allah (swt) and seek a reduction in number. It is said that he made several trips until it was reduced to five times per day with the reward still equivalent to fifty. Musa (pbuh) still pleaded for a reduction, but this time Muhammad (pbuh) expressed regret and embarrassment for frequent pleas for reduction. He felt confident that

his Ummah would fulfil this five times-a-day prayer.

Let us ask ourselves, are we honouring his confidence or abusing it?

As the Prophet (pbuh) narrated his story, he was laughed at and ridiculed by many, with Abu Jahal being the chief among them. He saw Abu Bakr (ra) coming towards him and said, "Listen, we have tolerated all the preaching of your friend Muhammad, but today, he has over-stepped his line. He claims to have gone to Masjid Al-Aqsa last night and went to the Seventh Heaven to meet his Allah." Abu Bakr asked, "Did he really say that?" Abu Jahal replied, "Yes." Abu Bakr (ra) rushed to the Prophet (pbuh) and requested to hear the full account of his journey.

The Prophet (pbuh) began narrating his journey. Whenever he paused, Abu Bakr (ra) said, "You have said the truth." At the end, the Prophet (pbuh) conferred the title *As-Siddeeq* (the Truthful) upon Abu Bakr (ra). It shows that those who believe him will be ranked in the same order, whereas Abu Jahal became *Zindeeq*, the Wretched.

To verify his trip to Jerusalem, people enquired on the whereabouts of their travelling caravans, to which, with the help of Allah (swt), Muhammad (pbuh) provided all the details. Later, when these travellers arrived, they confirmed everything told by Muhammad (pbuh) to be absolutely correct!

Let us think for a moment that the journey was in the night on a fast-paced conveyance: To give such vivid descriptions of the caravans is not possible. This could only be done by the Power of Allah (swt), yet the listeners did not embrace Islam. So, the even bigger Miracle of *Mi'raj* could not convince the Kuffar. This was, once again, a test of faith and the true companions not only believed Muhammad's (pbuh) account, but also accepted the Heavenly gift of *Salat* with such conviction that they became the best worshippers after the Prophets (pbuh).

Was this journey physical or spiritual (a dream)? According to the consensus of the majority of scholars, it was physical. Spiritual journeys also took place later. But this was definitely physical, as is evident from the verses of Surah Al-Isra'. Allah (swt) says that he was in Masjid Al-Haram (Ka'bah) and he took him to Masjid Al-Aqsa (Dome of the Rock). Moreover, there is the use of the word *'Abd*, which is a combination of *body* and *soul*.

The exact date or year of the event is not clear. Some traditions and historical records point to the 27th of Rajab, in either the 9th or 11th year of Prophethood. The occasion has no commemorative status in the Ummah, as the Prophet (pbuh) never commemorated its anniversary in his life-

The Human Face of Tragedy

Continued from page 1

at the corner slowed him down. A trucker going about his business promised to call 911 when asked to do so. The Good Samaritan on the bike peddled off furiously to find a telephone also, while the woman stayed with the man who had passed out on the cold grey sidewalk.

People, many of them shortly stopping to stare, hurriedly averted their eyes and scurried off as fast as they could; a sad reflection of our society's wish of not wanting to get involved.

The screech of wheels and the wail of a siren announced the arrival of paramedics, who piled out of the ambulance to aid the man. Their professionalism and kindness was evident as they tried to convince the then aroused man to go to a detox centre or to a hospital emergency room.

Shortly after they left — without the man, who steadfastly refused to get help — a police woman drove up and offered him help as well, but to no avail. "End of incident" as far as the officials were

concerned, just more notes to be entered into their daily logs.

As for the man, his story is not unique unfortunately. Satan has him in a firm grasp through his alcohol dependency.

Why has this man, who once was a new-born with his whole life in front of him, gone so far down into degradation? What series of events have caused him to fall into this terrible trap? What is our responsibility to him and people in his situation?

There are countless other stories to be told, for homelessness is spreading as governments are cutting back on programs. To name only a few, there was the homeless man who was murdered at Bay and Wellesley; the fairly young man, mumbling to himself as he paced up and down near Broadview Station, whose worldly possessions were piled up around him; the young woman begging near the bank on Broadview; and the list goes on and on.

Each person is unique and has a different story:

A young man from a very

good home in his late twenties, his body swollen and unrecognisable, lying in a hospital bed — his drinking buddies in another hospital and his cousin burned to death — was brought to this sorry state through alcohol, drugs, and a feeling of inadequacy.

Davie, a parolee just released from prison, approached three women sitting on a picnic bench in a schoolyard, with crack cocaine in his pocket. The women took this as an opportunity for reaching out and talking about God. A seed was planted in his befuddled brain, waiting for kindness to help it flower.

Some are in this situation due to mental illness, which can strike anybody, others due to drugs and alcohol, and others due to loss of home through job loss or tragic circumstances.

The list can go on and on. We are fast becoming a city without a heart, and without a soul. Let us make a difference by volunteering our time and spending our money to help the fallen to come back to God, the source of all healing.

time, nor offered any special prayers or fasted on that day.

The month of Rajab is a reminder that Ramadan is not far away and we must start conditioning ourselves for this Holy Month. May Allah (swt) strengthen our faith and help us practice Islam as a complete way of life. Ameen.

5,000 copies of *The Ambition* are distributed free of charge every two months at several mosques in and around Metro, from as far as Ajax in the east to Brampton, Burlington, and Kitchener-Waterloo in the west, and as far as our volunteers go. You may also pick up your copy at many Muslim grocery stores and businesses.

Kids' Korner

The Prophet's Journey to Madinah

We had done the series on the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in Makkah, in previous issues. It was discontinued for a while as we were looking for someone to take the responsibility to carry on with his life in Madinah. Al-Hamdulillah, Sister Farheen has now taken the responsibility to look after this department. — Editors
by Farheen Zehra

The Muslims lived under great pressures while in Makkah. Not only did the Kuffar make their lives difficult, but they also tortured the Muslims and made them suffer. Because the conditions under which the Muslims lived were becoming unbearable, Allah instructed Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers to migrate to Madinah. The Muslims of Makkah had to leave their belongings and in many cases, family members (who had not accepted Islam) to migrate to Madinah where, the Muslims of Madinah had offered to help keep the Makkans safe.

When the Kuffar found out that many of the Muslims had left for Madinah, they became very angry and decided to kill the Prophet (pbuh). They brought their swords and waited outside his house to kill him once night fell.

As the Kuffar waited, Angel Jibreel (Gabriel), as ordered by Allah, disclosed the Kuffars' plan to the Prophet and instructed him to leave for Madinah. So, in the quiet of the night, the Prophet (pbuh) and his companion, Abu Bakr, left their home. Although they had to pass the Kuffar to leave the house, the Kuffar did not see them for Allah had made them blind for a short time.

Once the Kuffar realised that the Prophet (pbuh) had left to migrate to Madinah, their anger increased and they followed behind to kill him. To protect themselves from the Kuffar, the Prophet (pbuh) and Abu Bakr hid in the cave of Thawr. The Kuffar passed by the cave but did not go

inside, for on the outside they saw a bird's nest and spider web covering the opening. The Kuffar continued on with their search, believing that in order for the Prophet (pbuh) to have entered the cave, he would have had to disturb the nest and spider web. Allah (swt) had saved his Prophet (pbuh) from the anger of the Kuffar.

Abu Bakr (ra) and the Prophet (pbuh) stayed in the cave for three days before continuing their journey. On the way, they reached Quba, a small village just outside of Madinah. During his short stay in Quba, the Prophet (pbuh) built a small mosque, showing that wherever a Muslim goes, he must first establish a place to worship his Lord.

After ten days of travel, the Prophet (pbuh) and

Abu Bakr (ra) reached Madinah. The people of Madinah were overjoyed to see the Prophet (pbuh) and eagerly welcomed his gift of Islam. The day was a very festive one; people happily came on to the streets and children sang songs of joy.

The people of Madinah all wanted the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions to stay in their homes. In order not to disappoint anyone, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "I will stay where my camel stops." Everyone looked on eagerly as the camel wandered through the streets and finally stopped in front of the house of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari and his wife. It was with Abu Ayyub that the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions stayed until they were able to build houses of their own.

Back to School . . .

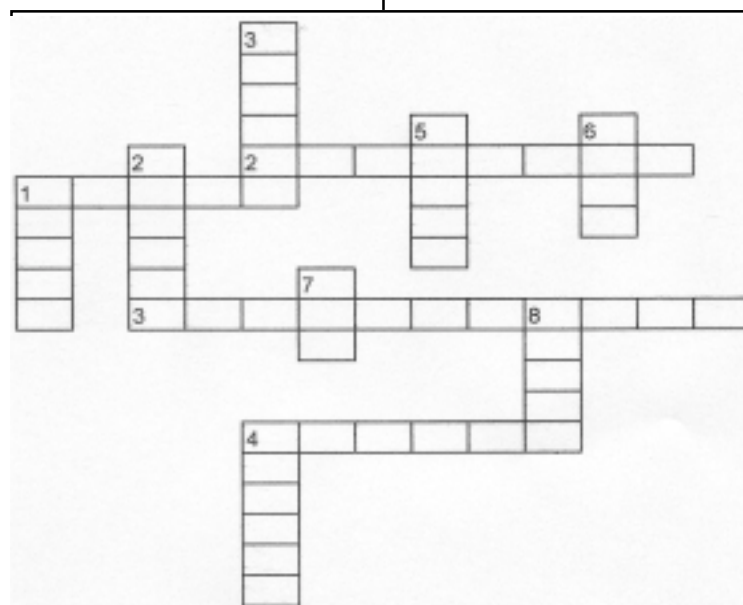
by Zarreen Warsi

Well, it's that time of the year once again – back to school. After a nice and relaxing summer everybody is getting prepared to go back to school. But as we



get ready to go back, we should take some time to think about some good things that we can offer to our friends and the people around us. Let's try to set some goals for ourselves and make a difference this year. Let's not make ourselves to be just "one of the others," but make ourselves to be leaders and set a positive example for others.

Make a decision to change some bad habits and try your best at everything you do, whether it be at school, work, or at home. Complete your homework on time. Join in extra-curricular activities. Volunteer at a mosque. Take some time to reflect upon the



ACROSS:

1. Cave where the Prophet (S) and Abu Bakr hid from the Quraish
2. Person whose house the Prophet (S) and his companions stayed at when they first arrived in Madinah

3. Warned the Prophet (S) of the Kuffar's plan to kill him
4. What the Prophet (S) built during his stay in Quba

DOWN:

1. The number of days the Prophet (S) and Abu Bakr stayed in the cave
2. Where did the Muslims of Mecca migrate to?
3. Non-Believers
4. Believers
5. Who made the decision where the Prophet (S) would stay when he arrived in Madinah?
6. Village outside of Madinah
7. Number of days it took the Prophet (S) to reach from Mecca to Madinah
8. While the Prophet (S) left his home in Mecca, Allah made the Kuffar _____

changes you would like to see in yourself. Write down the things that you would like to do this year. Write down how you can make a difference in not only your life, but in someone else's as well. Write down your academic goals for this year – do you plan on working hard to get all A's this year? Take a look at your notes and yourself at the end of this year and see if you have succeeded.

Try hard to really make this year count!

Manners Maketh the Man

by Mrs. Anwari Ali Khan

The three ordinary, every-day usage words, "Please, Sorry, and Thank you," in my opinion, are the key to one's conduct and character. Though insignificant and not carrying much weight, they play a great part in forming one's character. Many of us tend to overlook these three words, but when they are used at the proper time, they affect the person, especially the one to whom they are addressed, in a remarkable manner.



Good conduct contributes to being a good Muslim. Many references are given regarding this in the Qur'an and the Hadith. In Chapter 2, Verse 30, man is mentioned as God's vicegerent on earth, and in Chapter 95, Verse 4, man is said to be created in the best of

moulds. Further, referring to Prophet Muhammad's conduct and character, Allah (swt) says, "He is a beautiful pattern of conduct" (33:21), and also, to the Prophet (pbuh) He says: "And you stand on an excellent standard of character" (68:4). But what a pity we don't emulate these great examples!

In order to say "Please, Sorry, and Thank You," whether in English or in our own mother-tongue, we don't need any preparation or flowery speeches. It is just an outpouring of one's emotions. As it is mentioned in the Qur'an, on the Day of Judgement our tongues will also bear witness (24:24) and Angels are forever noting our actions (50:17-18, 23) those on our right, noting our good deeds, those on our left, our bad deeds. In Chapter 33, Verses 69-71, mention is made of good conduct and in Chapter 48, Verse 29, of righteous deeds respectively.

Sad to say, many of us, as Muslims, have become slack in observing these three but all-powerful words. In the mean time, the Westerners are so polite and never fail to use them, be it on the phone, at an office, at a congregation and so on, while we, on the other hand, are very curt and impatient.

We should make it a point to educate ourselves and our children to use these three words while they are still toddlers, as it is the base of good manners. May Allah guide us and may we never fail to use these words whenever the need arises, just as we smile at, or greet someone. Ameen.

Hey Kids! What Are Your Achievements?

- Tell us about a time when you did something very important.
- Did you do great in school, help somebody in need or volunteer at a mosque? Let us know!
- Write a brief story about your greatest achievement.
- Send a picture and a brief description of yourself and become a published writer!



Success Stories

University Elections

With the Muslim population rising quickly in North America, Muslim youth have to take prominent roles in the community.

by Ahmed Rafi Mian,
4th year, University of Toronto

Throughout the week of March 27, 2000, the University of Toronto's Governing Council held its annual elections for those seats that are stipulated for student representation. Al-Hamdulillah, Brother Muhammad Basil Ahmad and Sister Sofia Saleem rose to the occasion, and ran against a large and competitive field of candidates, in order to win the right to represent about 20,000 full-time undergraduate Arts & Science students that attend the University.

Muhammad and Sofia initially ran against six other candidates, but that number quickly dropped to four. They both ran a tremendously spirited and arduous month of campaigning, all the way up until the actual week of voting, when the Elections Committee no longer permits campaigning. Students from all three U of T campuses turned out to vote at the numerous polling stations and even on the Internet, as web-based voting was introduced for the very first time.

By Allah's Will and Grace, Br. Muhammad Basil finished second and Sr. Sofia Saleem came in a close third. The race was extremely close throughout and the top three candidates were separated by only 65 votes! Unfortunately, only the top two are awarded seats. Therefore, by the end of the day, Br. Muhammad Basil found himself a seat on the university's highest governing body, as one of its eight student governors. These seats are distributed among full- and part-time student representatives, including those from professional faculties. Br. Fayez Quereshy (Medicine) also won one of these seats.

(As an aside, it should also be mentioned that Brothers Junaid Yousuf and Asif Mohammed won the right to represent U of T's Erindale Campus on the Students' Administrative Council (SAC) and Br. Hasrat Gafoor won the presidency of York University's SAC, as well as a seat on York's Senate.)

As stated in the University of Toronto Act, 1971, the Governing Council is responsible for the government of the University, its property, revenue, business, and other affairs. As a student representative on Governing Council, Muhammad will also sit on its University Affairs Board, Planning and Budget Committee, and Academic Appeals Committee.

Recently, I had a chance to sit down with Br. Muhammad Basil to discuss his campaign, his newfound duties, and how having a Muslim on the Governing Council is of benefit for the Muslim student population at the University of Toronto at large. Below is what he had to say:

"I decided to run for the position because I saw that as Muslims, our concerns were not being addressed in an appropriate manner. For example, Muslims have been using the same Jumu'ah prayer space for decades and now it cannot handle the overflowing number of Muslims who attend.

Sometimes, we actually have to turn people away! Other issues include proper exemptions or relief for Muslim students who choose to celebrate their Islamic holidays, such as Eid, or need to be excused from a test or exam in order to break their fast during the month of Ramadan.

"However, I should point out that it would be unjust to only represent Muslims. I quickly learned of many other issues that affected the student population in general, such as the need for lower tuition fees, equity and diversity for teaching staff, more student activity space, increased financial aid, more housing units, increased accessibility for disabled students, less corporate involvement, and equal program funding. During my campaign, I raised these issues and now that I have been elected, I hope to raise them again on Governing Council."

Attempting to run a successful campaign over three campuses, with thousands of students, at such a large university must have been a daunting task. Muhammad Basil did not limit his campaign effort to Muslims alone. He took the time and initiative to address many large classes on all three campuses. In addition, the support provided by the MSA was instrumental in his victory, according to Muhammad. Flyers, countless e-mails, word of mouth advertising, and announcements at Jumu'ah, among other things, helped his campaign immeasurably. It allowed him to get the word out to as many students as possible, as efficiently as possible.

Come election week, many Muslim and non-Muslim students turned out to vote for Muhammad and Sofia. It was a refreshing and inspirational sight to see such coordination and unity amongst the Ummah, in order to ensure that their brother and sister in Islam who were running would have a chance to be victorious. In this aspect, the final result was not only Muhammad's victory but a collective accomplishment for every Muslim student on campus. Everyone deserves credit, in Muhammad's own words: "I would

like to thank, first and foremost, Allah (swt), to whom all praise is due. I would also wish to extend my gratitude to all the Muslims, and non-Muslims, who made a sincere effort to go and vote or showed an ounce of genuine concern or interest in my campaign. May Allah (swt) guide, protect,

and bless all Muslims on campus."

Insha-Allah, Br. Muhammad Basil will serve in his capacity as Student Governor until June 30, 2001. He intends to work closely with the MSA and Muslim students in order to en-

sure that our concerns are adequately addressed, as well as those of all other students on campus.

It should also be pointed out that anyone else interested in run-

ning for public office at their respective institutions of learning should not be deterred by the fear of losing or be left in awe in terms of how daunting the campaign process may seem at first. Insha-Allah, you will find that the battle will not be undertaken by you alone, and that within no time, many Muslims will band together and assist you in your endeavour to represent Islam to the community at large. This is a testimony to the uniqueness and beauty of our Deen. As well, any MSA and its resources are there to serve Muslim students and one should not hesitate to approach MSA Executives.

Having two seats on Governing Council held by Muslim students speaks volumes in itself, as it shows that Muslims are willing to, and do, play an active role in the non-academic life of the entire University and its student body. It is also a reflection of the undeniable fact that Muslims make up a large proportion of the population and can no longer be ignored.

In this particular case, it permits the Student Governors to work closely with the MSA Executive and act as a liaison between the Executive and the University as a whole. Issues pertaining to Muslim students, such as prayer

space, recognition of religious holidays, etc., can then be forwarded to Governing Council for discussion on implementation.

Since their intentions were largely to work for the Muslim community, with Allah's Mercy, things worked out in their favour. Insha-Allah, this in turn will be a source of inspiration for other Muslim students to run for similar political positions on the executive councils of the schools they attend, and to play an active role in their MSA's. Nonetheless, this must be undertaken in a coordinated manner.

Muslims are no longer remaining complacent with what society has given them, as many have chosen to in the past (a harsh, yet undeniable fact). With the Muslim population rising quickly in North America, Muslim youth have to take prominent roles in the community at large. Running for executive positions on various organisations is a good, firm beginning. The experience gained, and networks established, will further serve to help Muslims become established in a more firm manner in North American society. Insha-Allah, Muhammad's victory will serve to inspire other Muslim students to take on leadership roles in the near future.

"Issues that affected the student population in general, such as the need for lower tuition fees, equity and diversity for teaching staff, more student activity space, increased financial aid, more housing units, increased accessibility for disabled students, less corporate involvement, and equal program funding ... I hope to raise them again on Governing Council."

— M. B. Ahmad