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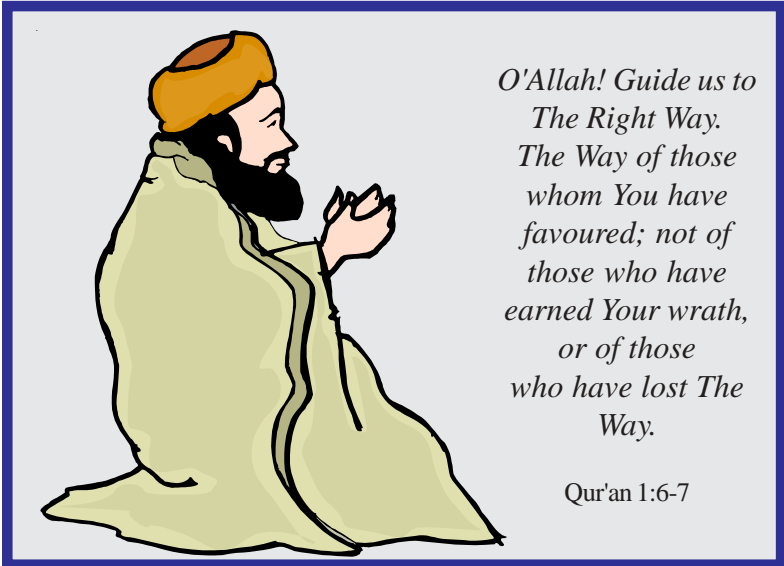
The First Journal for Young Muslims in Canada (since 1987)



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O'Allah! Guide us to
The Right Way.
The Way of those
whom You have
favoured; not of
those who have
earned Your wrath,
or of those
who have lost The
Way.

Qur'an 1:6-7

Islam: The Next American Religion?

The U.S. began as a haven for Christian outcasts. But what religion fits our current zeitgeist? The answer may be Islam.

By Michael Wolfe

Americans tend to think of their country as, at the very least, a nominally Christian nation. Didn't the Pilgrims come here for freedom to practice their Christian religion? Don't Christian values of righteousness under God, and freedom, rein-

force America's democratic, capitalist ideals?

True enough. But there's a new religion on the block now, one that fits the current zeitgeist nicely. It's Islam.

Islam is the third-largest and fastest growing religious community in the United States. This is not just because of immigration. More than 50% of America's six million Muslims were born here. Statistics like these imply some basic agreement between core American values and the beliefs that Muslims hold. Americans who make the effort to look beyond popular stereotypes to learn the truth of Islam are surprised to find themselves on familiar ground.

Is America a Muslim nation? Here are seven reasons the answer may be yes.

Islam is monotheistic. Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christians. They also revere the same prophets as Judaism and Christianity, from Abraham, the first monotheist, to Moses, the lawgiver and messenger of God, to Jesus—not leaving out Noah, Job, or Isaiah along the way.

The concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition only came to the fore

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Isra' wal Mi'raj

What are they and why are they important to Muslims

by Samana Siddiqui
(From files of Soundvision)

He was depressed and dejected. His beloved wife Khadija, a source of comfort and support, was dead. His uncle Abu Talib, his "second father," a pillar of strength who defended him against the vicious attacks of his enemies, was also gone. His mission to Taif had been unsuccessful. He had tried to invite the people to Islam, but in hateful and humiliating retaliation, they had sent their children after him, throwing rocks on him until he bled. It was truly a Year of Sorrow. It was in this context that the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) was taken up to the heavens in a miraculous and profound journey Muslims know as Isra' and Mi'raj. This took place on the 27th night of the month of Rajab [the 10th month of Islamic lunar calendar]

Isra' and Mi'raj in the Qur'an and Hadith

"Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship, the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer." *Al Isra (17:1)* This is how Allah describes this journey, also referred to in Surah An Najm (53:1-18). Its mention is not just relevant to the specific journey but also for its description of Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and its neighborhood" as blessed. Masjid Al-Aqsa is the third holiest mosque in Islam. In one Hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Journeys should not be undertaken except to three mosques: the mosque (in Madinah), the Sacred Mosque (in Makkah), and Al-Aqsa mosque" (Bukhari). These facts clearly indicate the sacredness and holiness of this area for Muslims. Isra' and Mi'raj are 2 stages of One Journey.

Isra' refers to the Prophet's journey from his home in Makkah to Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and back in one night, something that was considered unthinkable in a time and place where the only means of long-distance transportation was the camel and it took months to make this journey. Here's what happened: the Prophet (pbuh) rose in the middle of the night to visit the

Ka'aba in Makkah. After worshipping for some time, he fell asleep near the Ka'aba. The Angel Gabriel (peace be on him) came and woke him up, taking the Prophet to the edge of the Ka'aba, where a white beast with wings, called Al-Buraq, was waiting. The Prophet mounted Al-Buraq and traveled with amazing speed northwards with Gabriel, towards Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. When they reached Jerusalem the Prophet (pbuh) prayed in the area of Masjid Al-Aqsa with Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other Prophets, peace be upon them all. The Prophet Muhammed led this prayer. It was from the rock inside what is known as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem today, that the Prophet began the next stage of his journey, called Mi'raj.

Mi'raj refers to the ascension of the Prophet from this rock to the Upper Heavens and his return to his home in Makkah in the same night. The Mi'raj took place on the same night as the Isra'. It was during this second part of the journey that the Prophet (pbuh) directly spoke with

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International Muslims Organization of Toronto (IMO) in conjunction with COMO (Coalition of Muslim Organizations) is co-sponsoring with The United Church of Canada (400 churches in the GTA) a September 11 Peace Event

It will be on Wednesday, Sep 11 at 6:30 PM at IMO.

65 Rexdale Blvd.

(at Islington Ave., N of 401)

The theme is:

"Planting the Seeds for Peace: Our Urgent Common Call"

Speakers

Imam Hamid Slimi and

Rev. Jim Cairney

Please attend and let your neighbours come. We have

already received many

confirmations from the churches.

It will be a great event and Muslims should be present.

Is Allah Omnipresent?

We cannot understand, visualize or imagine anything that we have not personally perceived or experienced.

by Ayub Hamid

I was recently asked the following questions: Is it wrong to say that Allah is present everywhere? Is it Shirk and Kufr to say that He is present everywhere? Is it that Allah is not present everywhere but His knowledge is present everywhere? Does saying 'Allah is present everywhere' imply that He is present even in dirty places like toilets?

Here is my answer:

Let us first understand a few basic facts. The fact is that we, human beings, are finite and we can properly understand only matters that are finite. Also, we cannot un-

derstand, visualize or imagine anything that we have not personally perceived or experienced in the past. It is also a fact that Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) is infinite. Our finite minds can neither comprehend His infinity or His nature, nor can we fully understand or specifically define his image, appearance or attributes. We can know about Him only what He Himself tells us in terms of His attributes. Even for the attributes He reveals about Himself, we cannot be very specific. We just get a general idea about Him through the attributes He Himself reveals, but His specifics are totally beyond our comprehension.

Considering these facts, Muslims must accept His attributes as they are mentioned in the Qur'an. We must never attempt to define the specifics about His attributes or discuss His attributes through human examples or draw similarities between Him and the things of this world. Thinking of Allah in human terms or devising similitude for Him

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Kidz Korner

Back to School, When you look at me, Girl and Mom.. 15

Please treat this Islamic Journal with respect!

Five Good Reasons to Advertise in The Ambition

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| 1. The Ambition goes to thousands of Muslims regardless of their ethnicity. | 2. Unlike most ethnic papers, it has fewer ads and yours catches more attention. | 3. It has Islamic knowledge so people don't throw it away after reading it once. | 4. Your ad has a long life of two months, not just one week or so. | 5. With The Ambition , your money goes a long way. |
|--|--|--|--|---|

Editorial

Reflections on Sept. 11

September 11, 2001 is the date that will be remembered in our recent history as the day that changed the world, as we had known it. It was a unique act of terrorism that had no parallel to it.

And that is not because of the magnitude of the attack or the number of people it killed: There have been many terrible acts of atrocities against humanity that have been recorded in the history. We don't have to go very far back in the history to recollect the awful memories of the atomic destruction of Hiroshima or Nagasaki; the near annihilation of Jews and the Holocaust; or the Gulf War, about which the then President of the United States reportedly rejoiced by saying: "The sky lit up like the 4th of July." The killings in Rwanda didn't change anything in the world. Even the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia did not stir up the world's emotions; neither does anyone bat an eye upon the state terrorism against the Muslim population in Chechnya, Kashmir, India or Palestine. People have inflicted death and destruction upon each other since the beginning of time. So what is so special about 9/11?

The special reason is that this was an act of devastation brought upon the world's only Superpower of the time by a handful of people who, supposedly, used the name of Islam — the fastest growing religion in the world, to fulfil their heinous desires. They justified their crime by putting the label of religion and hence brought the two civilizations face to face, regardless of the fact that about 1/3 of the victims were Muslims. They took out their political grievances against the West by destroying the symbol of its power: The Trade Centre. They didn't have the means, courage or unity to declare an open war and so they satisfied their ugly desires by tarnishing the name of Islam.

I have used the word "supposedly." That's because we don't know for sure who were the perpetrators of these attacks (and probably will never know, since there are many theories surfacing in Europe and North America and the final results of any investigation of the attack are not being made public.)

Whoever may be behind the terrorism in the United States, the fact is that it has resulted in two totally opposite and parallel phenomena: On one hand, there is a surge in Islamophobia, and on the other hand, there is the increasing quest to learn about Islam.

One is negative. The other is very positive.

It's true that Muslims across the globe have suffered due to the after-effects of this terrorist attack. They have been made to feel embarrassed and even guilty due to association. They have been humiliated and deported. They have suffered the loss of livelihood and businesses. They have even been denied the freedom of legal process in the land that claims to be the symbol of freedom.

Islam has also been in the headlines in the media.

Despite all the negative coverage of projecting Islam as a religion of terror and violence, God has His own mysterious ways of spreading His words: The most influential man on the Earth had to say on television, in front of the whole world, that **Islam means peace**.

The President of America talked positively about Islam and lit a candle of pursuit about this religion in the minds of the intellectuals. People started learning about Islam, the true peaceful Islam, and started reverting to their Creator in record numbers (as reported by mosques across the country).

Allah works in His own ways. But we should do our part too. Today, as we are reflecting on the past, we must do some soul searching and ask ourselves some questions. Do we know the community that we live in? Do our neighbours know us as Muslims? What have we done to dispel their misconceptions about Islam? Have we ever invited them over for coffee or tea? Do we mingle with them and share their joys and sorrows?

Do we have volunteerism? Are we ready to take part in community projects? Do we care about the country that we live in? Are we active in *doing things*, not just talking about them?

Let's get up and go. Let's be role models and an ambassadors of Islam wherever and whenever possible. Let's forget about our petty differences and be one Ummah. Let's unite with people of other faiths to promote goodness. Let's be tolerant towards others and promote humanity. Let's call for self-restraint, discipline, knowledge, action, and patience.

Another thing we must realise, especially at this time, is the uncertainty of this life. Who had known, on that unfortunate day of September, that the people in the WTC would not return to their loved ones? But again, are we sure that we will take the next breath? Life is the most fragile thing in the world, and yet, we spend all our energies establishing, improving and beautifying it. We don't even **talk** about death. We ignore the one and only reality in life, which is death. If we remember our destiny, we will be more careful about our actions, more compassionate toward others and more just to all. If we realise that this life is but a transit to the eternity, we will not whine about the difficulties in this world and will strive for the best in the Hereafter.

In the end, for all of us who reflect, here is a verse from the Word of God: "We shall surely test your steadfastness with fear and famine, with loss of property, life, and produce. Give good news to those who endure with patience; who, when afflicted with calamity, say: 'We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.' Such are the people on whom there are blessings and Mercy from Allah; and they are the ones that are rightly guided" (2:155-157).

Asma Warsi

Letters / Opinion

Qur'an, Lottery, and Immigration

Where is the destiny of Muslim Ummah now a days?

Quran has been revealed for all the mankind as a guidance and complete code of life. Today, some selfish people have commercialized it by claiming to provide 100% guarantee against any type of problem through spiritual treatment against payment of money! They also claim to help in "testing your luck in lottery" and "chances of winning" by announcing "spiritual treatment through holy verses" and "through three days of AMAL Inshah Allah."

The above quotations are from two specific advertisements from self

made DEMIGODS, who appear to be Muslims by their names. These advertisements are repeatedly appearing on TVs and in newspapers of North America. Previously these SPIRITUAL HEALERS, CLAIRVOYANTS (aamils), PROFESSORS, ASTROLOGERS etc. etc.

were confined to Asian countries only, but now they have invaded North America. Among them, there are women as well. Their continuous innocent looking dvertisements, with sweet words, on TVs and in community newspapers are attracting innocent, ignorant, uneducated and less educated Muslims, particularly

Birthdays and wedding anniversaries

Something new started by an individual gradually becomes a tradition, if accepted and practised by a large number of a group. A further adoption by others makes the practice a custom of people or a country. Generally a custom is confined to the people of a region. It may, therefore, be defined as recognized usage or practice of a people. Sometimes, however, certain interested parties, for their personal benefit, manoeuvre to circulate the idea in such a way that it is equally acceptable by the other regions.

The custom of birthdays and wedding anniversaries was started in the Western countries to create occasions of celebration, which as originally was confined to a simple feast among relatives and friends. The businessmen saw an opportunity of making money by playing upon the sentiments of the people. They advanced the idea that the occasions like these called for giving some kind of gifts to enhance the joyousness of the celebration. This custom was, then, propagated to different parts of the world. Since it was a foreign implantation in the body of a different culture, it was initially rejected by the masses at many places but the rich people and those persons inclined to approve any idea coming from the West, accepted and practised it and gradually it became a part of their "new culture."

We live in a Western society, where this custom is a part of its culture. Apparently the custom looks very innocent in its concept. Some of us have adopted the custom without thinking for a moment about the consequences it might bring and the drawbacks of the custom never come to the surface.

One fails to understand why birthdays and anniversaries be considered such happy occasions as to make the members of one's family and friends to bring gifts. This ritual looks like an annual tax offering imposed on the relatives and friends. Even the children are victims of this custom. They also have to abide by its rules by giving some kind of gifts to their parents and peers. Since they can not afford to buy expensive gifts, their presents usually end up in the next year's garage sale or in the garbage. Islam advocated gift-giving but it does not dictate that the ritual be repeated annually.

With the gift goes the card, which

is often quite expensive. The card is simply waste of money as it is thrown in the trash the moment it is read. As birthdays have become an annual ritual, they often annoy people, who have to think about the kind of gift with a dollar value on it.

One may wonder why relatives and friends should wish well only on birthdays. Date is meant only for reckoning the passage of time. Why should the people be constrained to send the message of good wishes only on a particular day of the year? As a matter of fact, they could wish well whenever they feel like it.

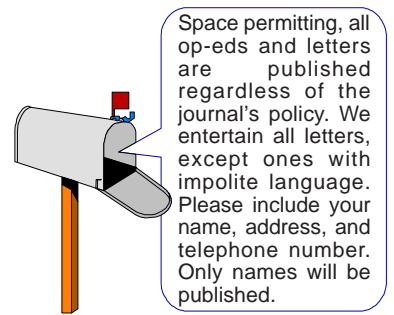
Wedding anniversaries have gained importance to such an extent that forgetting the day is almost tantamount to an act of crime. Forgetful spouse is penalized and the relations between the couple become strained for a long time.

We should realize that this custom has the sinister support of the business community who wants to sell its products all the year round to have perennial source of income.

We can invite our friends to share our happiness at any time and exchange gifts whenever we feel like it. Let not the annual limit of celebration jeopardize our sentiments.

At the same time we should avoid waste and conspicuous consumption as Allah says in the Qur'an, "But waste not by excess for Allah does not love wasters" (6:141).

A. Hadi
Mississauga



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women, who are loosing thousands of dollars through these self made DEMIGODS. These DEMIGODS are taking them away from true teachings of Holy Quran and Hadith and looting them in the name of religion by offering/selling them AMULETS (TA'AWIZ), CHART (NAQSH), SLAB (LOH) etc., which are HARAAM and SHIRK.

These DEMIGODS are writing in their regular columns of Urdu language community newspapers that if you wear a particular SLAB or CHART, it will bring lots of wealth. The question arises that why don't these DEMIGODS themselves wear such SLAB and CHART to acquire lots of wealth, so that they would not bother to cheat these innocent Muslims in the name of religion.

Even, they announce in their ads. and in their regular columns that they can solve their immigration problems and cases as well through AMULET (TA'AWIZ) and INCANTATION (WAZEEFA) etc. From this, do we take it granted that a time will come when these self made DEMIGODS will be appearing in immigration courts instead of Attorneys and Lawyers???

Let me quote here only two Quranic verses: "Nor sell My signs (ayats) for a little price, and fear you Me." (2:41) "O Believers, many of the priests and the monks eat the wealth of the people falsely and bar from Allah's way." (9:34)

The burning question is how these innocent and ignorant Muslims be guided properly to shun these HARAAM and SHIRK things and how these self made DEMIGODS be stopped from their evil practice? Our learned intellectuals have to find some answer to this question. Can any learned intellectual come forward to start a Jihad against them?

M. Qamar Abbas
Mississauga

Allah's Beautiful Names

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (ra) that The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said "Verily Allah has 99 Names - one hundred less one - whoever learns, understands and believes in them will enter paradise".

The first Name in the text refers to the Attribute of Allah. The repetition preceded by 'Ya' refers to the appeal to that Attribute.

AL-MUHAYMIN

The Protector: He who watches over and protects all things.

YA-MUHAYMIN

It is said that who repeat this Name and have complete ablution, their inner being will be luminous. W'ALLAHU A'ALAM.

AL-MU'MIN

The Guardian of Faith: He who places faith in the hearts of His servants, protects those who seek refuge in Him, and gives tranquility.

YA-MU'MIN

It is said that he who repeats this Name will be free from harm. W'ALLAHU A'ALAM.

AR-RAHMAN

The Beneficent: He who gives blessings and prosperity to all beings without showing disparity.

YA-RAHMAN

It is said that he who repeats this Name will have good memory, a keen awareness, and be free of a heavy heart. W'ALLAHU A'ALAM.

Islamic Psychology of the Self: "The Various States of the Self and Cultivating Its Good"

By Nosheen Mian, U of T
(From the lecture series by
Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui)

We spoke last time about the people who have never tasted of the sweetness of the *Jannah* [Paradise] of this *dunyaa* [this life, world] - love of, and longing for Allah - never tasting the *Jannah* of the hereafter as some early scholars have said. Sometimes in moments of solitude or retreat we feel so filled up that we don't want anything else, and we feel a joy and a longing... sometimes that is a taste of that *Jannah* of this *dunyaa*. But when the heart is not properly cleansed and polished, that *Jannah* will never be felt because the *nafs* of ours is perhaps a *nafs* [self] that we've never tried to understand. We spend, as you know, a lot of time and resources on our physical bodies, learning about them, curing them, and enhancing the way they look - that external image again, that we spoke about last time. Yet rarely are we as concerned with that inner image, the internal self. So we don't even know our *nafs*. And if we don't know our *nafs*, then we don't know how to help it take on that journey

back home to Allah, to *Jannah*!

What is the *nafs*? What makes up the *nafs*? What is the happiness of the *nafs*? And how to attain its happiness, and how to avoid its misery? When we don't understand our *nafs*, then we are not on the proper course on that journey back home to *Jannah*.

Some words about what the *nafs* is, by what some of our earliest scholars teach us, from the analysis of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Beloved Messenger of Allah (pbuh), and the words and experiences of the Companions is what is called, Islamic Psychology.

What is my *nafs*, this psyche? They [the scholars] say, and it is something demonstrative, and can be rationalized and argued in very strong arguments, that our *nafs* is comprised of different states or levels. In each one of us there are four states or manifestations of the *nafs*. Number one, they say, is the "cattle-like" *nafs* - and Allah describes the non-believers whose hearts were veiled at the time, when He says, "they are like cattle, nay worse". And we all have that cattle-like *nafs*,

that state of the *nafs*, which like cattle, pursues its happiness by eating, drinking, sleeping, and copulating. Do we have an instinct to eat, drink, sleep, and copulate? - Yes, otherwise we would starve, and there would be no human species, but the point is, for the cattle, that is the focus of its felicity. The fulfillment of the cattle is in cultivating and developing, and having more and more of those, and only those in general.

When a person cultivates and develops that cattle-like *nafs*, until perhaps it becomes overdeveloped if you will, then that person lives the life of cattle, their *nafs* is a cattle-like *nafs*, and therefore finds its happiness in eating, drinking, sleeping, and copulating. These concepts are then sophisticated and institutionalized in homes, communities, societies, and civilizations, and even become philosophies of life. The sophistication of human beings in terms of achieving those instincts of the cattle-like *nafs* will obscure it to the unfamiliar amongst us, and we will continue to develop/cultivate that type of cattle-like *nafs* and then we are interested mostly, or only in how to have better food, drinks,

sleep, and more food, drinks, sleep, and what is called "sexual freedom". Parties for what? - More eating, drinking, and copulating, even clubs and meetings and so on for those very instincts. Working hard so that at the end of the week we can satisfy that cattle-like *nafs* by partying and indulging. All types of inventions and "smart ways" to enhance the fulfillment of the cattle-like instincts in us. So if I have a cattle-like *nafs*, then I shall of course do my best to maximize that kind of happiness - and human beings like that do exist.

There is another state of the *nafs* which the 'ulema call the "predator-like" *nafs*, a predator such as a hyena. And this *nafs* besides eating, drink-

ing, sleeping, and copulating, has something else that is not found in a chicken, cow, or goat - the instinct to kill, attack, usurp, and take territory.

The predator's self-satisfaction lies in predatory things and we have this element in our *nafs* as well. This is seen in usurping the rights of others at all levels, at the individual, community, societal, and international level, and we institutionalize them as well. Even in simple situations we have an urge to satisfy them, and if a person's life is spent in fulfilling such urges, you have a person who is predator-like. You may have a person whose *nafs* is both cattle-like and predatory, or if one is more cultivated than the other then that will be dominant. Which one dominates? Which one do you have? Which one do I have? We have to take time to ponder and reflect on my *nafs*?

The third type of *nafs* is the Shaytani [Satanic] *nafs*, which finds its satisfaction in deceiving, cheating, committing evil, spreading hate, developing the above cattle-like, predatory *nafs*, finds delight in power and belittling the rights of others, wanting to be lords over others, boastfulness, backbiting, sin, and other evil traits. If this *nafs* is cultivated most, then it will be dominant, and you will have a person who is more Shaytani than cattle-like or predatory, or again, perhaps a combination of the three define the *nafs* of that person, or community, society, nation, or even civilization. Where do I belong? Which *nafs* do I have? Which element have I most cultivated so far? Have I been to this point rightly aware of these sides, have I been watchful of which side I am cultivating? WE must ponder upon these questions.

Finally, *Alhamdulillah*, Allah has instilled the Angelic *nafs* within us, that *nafs* which is nourished from above, from the world of the *rooh* [spirit], nourished by the Divine values, Divine guidance, and by the *akhlaaq* (manners) of the Messengers of Allah. What is the happiness of this *nafs*? - Is it to eat? - No, because it is heavenly, the space-like fulfillments of eating, drinking, sleeping, and copulating do not nourish it. It needs attainment of 'ilm [knowledge] that leads to *ma'rifah* [knowing] Allah, loving Him, and longing for Him because that is the origin of this *nafs*, the place where it wishes to be, and must therefore be nourished from its own world.

The scholars say, that this body is mounted by the *nafs* (spiritual heart, soul, self), so the physical body is like the horse, and the *nafs* is like the rider. So when the horse gets hungry, what do you do? - You get off of the horse and let it graze. Do you eat grass with the horse? - No, this is not how we

From the Qur'an

But Allah doth call to the Home of Peace: He doth guide whom He pleaseth to a way that is straight.

To those who do right is a goodly (reward) yea more (than in measure)! No darkness nor shame shall cover their faces! They are Companions of the Garden; they will abide therein (for aye)!

(10:25-26)

From the Hadith

Narrated Um Kulthum bint Uqba That she heard Allah's Apostle saying, "He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar."

(Sahih Al-Bukhari)

nourish ourselves, anyone who did so would be called a fool. Yet we starve this *nafs* of ours in a world that is strange to it, we force upon it earthly food and nourishment - like a rider getting off of his horse and eating grass and dung with it! We need to properly nourish our Angelic *nafs*. In our lives, a balance must be struck.

As we said last time, the equa-

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This Journal is dedicated to:

Professor Syed Aley Ahmad Abdi, Former Principal, Government Education College, Multan, Pakistan

In the Interest of Islam

By Farhan Bokhari

"Those who benefit from interest shall be raised like those who have been driven to madness by the touch of the devil; this is because they say: 'Trade is like interest' while Allah has permitted trade and forbidden interest." (4:130-132)

The words of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, revealed to Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago, speak clearly against *riba* – interest set in advance. Reconciling religious norms with the global, interest-based financial system is a clear challenge to millions of devout Muslims in the modern world.

Although Islam's main Shia and Sunni sects differ in their interpretations of how to offer daily prayers or divide inheritances, there is little disagreement when it comes to *riba*. Islam considers interest to be usury – lending money for a profit – and proclaims it *haram*, or illegitimate.

Islamic scholars point out the fundamental injustice – both to borrowers and lenders – of predetermined interest: man cannot predict events, so how can rates be set in advance? Islam, which in its essence means submission to God, views any attempts by man to anticipate the will of Allah as blasphemous.

Under *Sharia* (Islamic jurisprudence) it is more acceptable for depositors to become investors or partners in ventures to which banks lend money. If borrowers make a profit, depositors stand to gain – perhaps even more than the returns under a fixed-interest regime. But if borrowers go bankrupt, the depositors must share the loss.

While few Muslim countries have sought to replace the international banking system with Islamic finance, many individuals are quietly pursuing their own financial *jihad* –

or struggle.

Mushtaq Chhapra, managing director of Transpak, Pakistan's largest manufacturer of plastic bottles and containers for motor oil, is one Muslim who has risen to the challenge of applying the strict tenets of Islam to business. Transpak – which employs about 100 people and has annual sales of \$5m (3.4m) – might be modest in global business terms, but he is something of a pioneer in the Muslim world.

Mushraq runs his four companies according to the teachings of the Qur'an. As a devout Muslim, he maintains only interest-free current bank accounts, while his business loans are raised through formal instruments extended by banks or informal arrangements with fellow Muslim businessmen.

"Our commitment to Islamic finance runs deep. We do not take any regular, interest-based loans from banks", he says.

Businessmen such as Mr Chhapra have been greatly helped by the growth in Pakistan over the last 20 years of leasing – where clients receive a loan to buy an asset, then put up equity and pay a monthly charge. Some Islamic scholars believe the monthly charge, although fixed, is the payment in rent on the asset, with the leasing company financing most of the initial cost. In many instances, such transactions are similar to hire-purchase agreements.

"To a businessman in Pakistan, there are more Islamic options [available] now than ever," says Mr. Chhapra.

One traditional Muslim practice is the "committee", in which a group of partners pools an agreed amount of money at the beginning of each month and then gives the entire sum

to one committee member, rotating each month until every member has received a sum.

The committee functions as an informal saving and lending instrument in which members can be guaranteed a large sum on which they repay regular interest-free installments.

Although Islamic finance is widespread in the Muslim world – there are 176 Islamic banks currently operating – the system is not without its problems. Iran, for example, has had to accept credit from western banks to finance many of its imports. Malaysia, on the other hand, has set up private Islamic banks to offer the devout deposits and loans in accordance with religious norms.

However, it is Pakistan that has taken the most steps towards adopting Islamic finance as an alternative to the western banking system. Last December, the country's supreme court ruled *riba* un-Islamic and gave the government until the middle of next year to introduce an Islamic financial system. The decision followed a ruling by Pakistan's top Islamic Shariah court in 1991 that rejected 32 of Pakistan's financial laws as insufficiently Islamic.

Senior officials say the verdict does not affect the status of Pakistan's foreign and domestic debt, where the terms already agreed would be honoured. The future of Pakistan's financial system rests on how quickly the government can change to an interest-free economy without damaging investor confidence.

However, Pervaiz Said, head of business development at the Karachi-based Al-Meezan Islamic investment bank, believes the transition should take place without difficulty. Mr. Said argues that banking instruments acceptable under Islamic finance are similar to those practised elsewhere in the world by regular investment banks.

"The problem is that a lot of people think of [Islamic banking just] in religious terms. [But] it is as functional [a system] as any other busi-

ness activity," he says.

Earlier this summer, Mr. Said's bank launched a plan for Pakistani depositors, promising to lend only to borrowers who follow Islamic principles and return the earnings to depositors under a strict Shariah-driven plan of sharing losses and earnings rather than assured fixed interest.

Mr. Said estimates that with worldwide deposits of up to \$150bn in instruments that could be compatible with Islam, "there is no reason why a paradigm shift should be so difficult."

But businessmen warn that irrespective of the merits of Islamic finance, opportunities for many businesses seeking loans are limited.

S.M. Salim, chairman of Hub Leather Products, a Karachi-based leather goods' exporter, is another businessman committed to Islamic finance. He warns: "we can not change conditions imposed by those who lend money to us, although all of our own bank accounts are non-interest bearing current accounts".

In Mr Salim's experience, financing projects worth more than \$1m "becomes difficult because there are few that would be strictly Shariah-compliant when the amount becomes larger. Nobody wants to take risk beyond a certain point."

One conclusion to the debate over where Pakistan is going will come from the country's central bank, which has appointed a high-level commission to examine the present state of, and future outlook for, Paki-

stan's financial system.

Ashrat Hussain, governor of the central bank, says: "There is no country in the world that has completely crossed over to the Islamic system. There are pockets. We have to do it without destabilising the economy."

Bankers note that one of Mr Hussain's difficulties is that the government itself is a large borrower, using treasury bills to raise debt from the domestic market to finance its budget deficit. "Without the assurance of predetermined interest, who is going to lend to the government?" asks one banker.

For Muslims, the best hope may be that government introduces new Islamic instruments – or even launches a fully Islamic bank.

At the same time, the government may have to return to the Supreme Court to seek more time for the changeover, on the grounds that a comprehensive transition may not be possible in view of the need to continue financing the budget.

Managers such as Mr. Chhapra, who "hope to God that we make a transition to Islamic finance," may be disappointed in the short term. But other ideologically-committed businessmen are already dreaming of walking through the doors of the world's first spiritually clean bank.

Source: <http://news.ft.com/ft/gx.cgi/ftc?pagename=View&c=Article&cid=FT3M74ILOCC&live=true&useoverride=IXLZHNNP94C>

The Kosher Tax

The "Kosher Nostra Scam" on the American Consumer

by Ernesto Cienfuegos

Some time ago we received an e-mail asking us if we knew the significance of the small encircled letter "U" or letter "K" that can be found printed on many food cans, food packages and on other kitchen products. The message gave us some clues and suggested that we do some research into the subject. What we found certainly was "news" to us and it both shocked and angered us.

On arriving at my residence, I immediately went to the pantry to verify that what I had just learned was actually true. Sure enough, most of the packaged and canned foods from major companies, like Proctor & Gamble and others, did have the (U), the (K) or other similar markings. The Arrowhead water bottle, the instant Folgers Coffee, the Kelloggs box, the Jiff Peanut Butter, the Pepper container, the Trader Joe's tea box and even the Glad's plastic sandwich bags carton had the (U) or (K) mark on them.

We needed a little more verification so we called two major compa-

nies to ask some questions. We chose Proctor & Gamble that markets the Folgers Coffee and the Clorox Company that manufactures the Glads plastic zip lock sandwich bags. Each of the two companies, as well as most others, have 1-800 telephone numbers printed on their packages for consumers to call in case they have any questions about their products. When we asked the Proctor & Gamble representative what the (U) meant on their Folgers Coffee container, she asked us to wait until she consulted with her supervisor. She came back and informed us that the mark meant that the coffee was "certified kosher".

We then asked her how and who certified the coffee to be "kosher" and whether it cost any money to do so.

She refused to answer these and other questions. She suggested that we write to their Corporate Public Affairs Department. We then called the Clorox Corporation to ask what the (U) meant on the package of their

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Radio Islam
Your communities' Voice
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Every Sunday 7-8 pm
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Major Islamic personalities on
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www.RadiolIslam.ca

Angels: An Islamic Perspective

The basis of faith consists of faith in Allah, His Angels, His Prophets and Messengers, His Divine Scriptures, on the Day of Judgement and life after death, as well as on the Divine Pre-Ordainment. Among the numerous creations of Allah are the innumerable angels who carry out his orders continuously without any disobedience, and worship Him day and night. These creatures are created from light, unlike man who is created from soil and are assigned different tasks by Allah. For example, Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) is assigned the task of conveying Allah's Message to His Prophets. They also encourage believers to do good deeds and assist them in other aspects of their life.

"The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers..." (2:285). From this, as well as other verses in the Qur'an, we see that belief in the angels is part of faith. Just as a building collapses if one block is removed from it, so does our faith if we deny the belief in any one of these faiths.

As believers, we must believe that angels exist even though we cannot see them and have limited knowledge about them. Whatever we know about angels is through revelations from Qur'an and Sunnah. There are certain things in this world that we perceive while others that we do not. The unseen is further divided into the absolute hidden, meaning those things that only Allah knows, for example, the Hour of the Day of Judgement. The other unseen is in the relevant sense, for example, angels that prophets, messengers, and some believers can perceive.

The basis of faith is all based on the unseen. No one has seen Allah, nor have all the believers seen angels, prophets, messengers, and all the divine scriptures or when the Hour will come or what is in store for us in the future. Belief in the unseen

is part of the test for the believer in this life, like belief in Allah and following His commands while surrounded by evil everywhere.

Angels are not given the freedom of choice as humans and *jinn* are given, therefore they worship Allah day and night without tiring and never disobey. They lack any feelings such as pride from worshipping Allah as some humans do. Just as there is a Ka'bah on Earth for believers to make pilgrimage to, similarly, there is a Bait al-Ma'moor in the Heavens where seventy thousand angels come to worship everyday. The Hadith tells us that the same seventy thousand angels worship only once; so everyday there is a new batch of them and from this we can imagine how great their number is (Bukhari).

The pagans considered angels as being females, then as daughters of Allah and eventually this led them to begin worshipping them, but they are servants of Allah just as humans and other creatures are and so they lack any quality of deification as it says in the Qur'an: *"Nor would he order you to take angels and prophets for lords (gods). Would he order you to disbelieve after you have submitted to Allah's Will?"* (3:80). There are different opinions on who has higher rank, humans or angels, but there is general consensus among the Ahlus-Sunnah scholars that righteous humans hold a higher rank and are therefore superior to angels.

Whether they are superior or inferior to humans is irrelevant because a believer's attitude towards them should be one of love since they seek their benefit from Allah. Unlike the *devil* that each person is born with who encourage humans to do evil (Qareen), the angels that each person is born with encourages a believer to continue on the path of truth. They fortify a believer's faith and love for Allah by reminding him of the Hereafter and punishment. Humans are constantly in need of reminders because it is easy to be caught in

Satan's web. Believers should be thankful to Allah for endowing the angels for them to protect, strengthen, and remind them.

In addition to assisting the believers, angels are assigned a number of tasks by Allah. A few angels are mentioned by name in the Qur'an and Hadith, the most important of which are Jibreel, Mika'il, and Israfil. Some narrations mention Izra'il as the fourth important angel, but there is no authentic Hadith pertaining to that. In the Qur'an, Jibreel is mentioned by name three times and referred to in other verses. He is responsible for bringing down revelations to messengers and it was he who brought down the glorious Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and in turn to all the believers. Thus, no angel, especially angel Jibreel who brought the light for our hearts and souls, should ever be seen with eyes of hatred.

Every angel plays a vital role in running this universe by the will and power of Allah. Angel Mika'il is responsible for bringing down rain to us, without which life on earth would be almost impossible to bear. Israfil is the angel who will blow the trumpet, which will bring back the soul to all bodies. Other angels perform other duties, such as those who bring down yearly decrees on Lailatul Qadr and those who carry deeds and souls of humans. Angels bring glad tidings to believers and some examples of this are the news Maryam (Mary) received that she would have a son, as well as to Prophet Ibrahim, who would also have a son. This Hadith narrated by Ans ibn Malik relates to this:

The Prophet said, *"Allah has appointed an angel in the womb, and the angel says, 'O Lord! A drop of discharge (i.e., of semen), O Lord! A clot, O Lord! A piece of flesh.' And then, if Allah wishes to complete the child's creation, the angel will say, 'O Lord! A male or a female? O Lord! Wretched or blessed (in religion)? What will his livelihood be? What*

Christian-Muslim dialogue at World Youth Day a historical success

Syed Asad Dean
Director, United Muslims

Over 300 Muslim and Christian youths packed the salon room in Exhibition Hall A to discuss their faith under the theme "Living your faith in a secular society". The United Muslims (producers of Radio Islam) and the co-ordinator of the Islamic Council of Imams, Imam Abdul Hai Patel, held a joint session of Muslim Youths and Christian Youths at World Youth Day on Wednesday evening July 24th. "This is a miracle what happened today," said Father Ray O'Toole of Scarborough Missions. "It is high time Muslims share their faith with people around them to cultivate an understanding and respect of our lifestyle" said Syed Asad of United Muslims. Media outlets from throughout the globe witnessed the sharing of faiths of the World's largest religions. One speaker from the Catholic side and one speaker from the Muslim side gave a speech on

their faith and experiences. Syed Asad Dean, host of Radio Islam was the keynote speaker from the Muslim side and Christine Malan, was the speaker from the Catholic side. Group sessions were then held and Muslims and Christians were given an opportunity to share their experiences followed by an opportunity for group members to share their discussions with the rest. This unique dialogue was initiated when one of directors of United Muslims, Omar Kalair, approached the organizers of World Youth Day. A key organizer Nicolas Papalardo responded positively.

The Muslim Community of GTA hosted Pilgrims in their homes and provided volunteers for this event. Some of the Mosques were ready to provide accommodation if needed. When asked by the reporters why Muslims are helping the Catholic event? Imam Abdul Hai Patel said: *"We see this as a Canadian event not just Catholic event. Canada is the*

host to the World for this event and we want to extend the best hospitality to them. We want the World youths to take a positive Canadian message of peace and tolerance, that here in Canada how different Faiths, Ethnic groups despite their differences are living in harmony."

Imam Patel was also present among the 700 Cardinals and Bishops at the opening Ceremony at the Exhibition ground on July 25, where he found many religious leaders of different denominations, including Bishop of Rome, were very pleased with this historic and miraculous event of the first ever Muslim-Catholic dialogue as part of the World youth day event.

In his closing remarks, Imam Patel mentioned that Muslims and Catholics form 50% of the World population and we need to work together for the "reconciliation with God" and to promote the slogan: "FAITH PROMOTES PEACE"

Helpful Hints

by Sister Shirin Patel

Q

I need to know 'what is love'?

A

I'm assuming you're talking about a male-female relationship as opposed to your mother or father. Let me first clarify the situation where such type of love can breed – "a wise man is he who does not marry the one he loves, but loves the one he marries." You will only truly know a person when you live with them, and I don't mean living with them as a common-law spouse, as those situations hold no commitment or responsibility hence the couple is inclined to give up before using an effective problem solving method. That situation (common-law spouse) is not lawful in Islam anyway. To answer your question, love in its truest and most sincere form can only come after marriage. Marriage builds love through the different situations that it brings. And through these situations love is formed – either by being kind to each other, understanding each others situation, supporting one another, tolerating whatever little annoyance you have between yourselves, making sacrifices, being respectful etc. Therefore, love is marriage, and marriage is all the above mentioned plus more. God knows better. May the Almighty help you with everything that may come your way... Ameen.

Q

I have/had a good friend (Muslim) who hurt me and caused many unnecessary problems in my life. What do you think I should do about our relationship?

A

True friends are very hard to come across these days, as we live in a very selfish society. It is said, "Be merciful to others and Allah (subhanahuwatalla) will be Merciful to us," Insha'Allah. So forgive your friend for the sake of Allah and do not hate him/her, or do bad to him/her. Your "friend" is still your brother/sister in Islam, and so you still have an obligation of helping them in a time of need, or greeting them with peace when you see them. However, this does not mean you have to remain their "friend," where you hang out together, etc. We are taught to choose our friends wisely, because those who we are around have a great effect on our behavior and attitudes towards certain things. If your friend does not help you in regards to your religion, and if these problems your friend causes are harmful to your religion, it is best for you to avoid him/her. If you believe your friend had sincere intentions, and didn't try to hurt you, or you can still trust him/her then perhaps you should give your relationship a second chance. But this is only if you do not fear any loss in regards to your relationship with your Creator. Be with those who don't only live Islam externally but also internally and who help you become a better person. May the Almighty grant peace in your heart, and show you what to do. Ameen.

will his age be?' The angel writes all this while the child is in the womb of its mother" (Al-Bukhari 4:550).

Since these angels are with us all the time and are always seeking our benefit, we should have utmost respect for them and honour them. They are described as beautiful creatures made from light and having wings. These strong beings dwell in the heavens and bless the believers for every step that he takes towards righteousness.

Pass this copy of The Ambition to a friend after reading. Help us bring the message of Islam to others

Always remember those who serve

In the days when an ice-cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him.



"How much is an ice-cream sundae?" he asked.

"Fifty cents," replied the waitress.

The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice-cream?" he inquired.

Some people were now waiting for a table and the waitress was a bit impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely.

The little boy again counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice-cream," he said.

The waitress brought the ice-cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice-cream, paid the cashier and departed. When the waitress came back, she began wiping the table and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies — her tip.

Around the World

Islam in the British Isles: Some Key Events and Dates

There are between 1.5 million to 2 million Muslims in Britain today, mainly in the large metropolitan areas of London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow. The majority are British-born with family origins in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. There are significant numbers of Cypriot, Turkish, and Yemeni Muslims, together with more recently settled refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, and Albania. There are also a growing number of Muslims of Afro-Caribbean and European origin.

The mercantile and commercial links between Britain and the Muslim World stretch back a very long time. The first records of Muslims from Britain commence in the 16th century. By the 19th century, there were Muslim naval settlements in most ports of England and Scotland. There was also a transitory Muslim student population from the Colonies. However, a significant British Muslim presence is comparatively recent, with its roots in the immigration of Muslims particularly from the Indian sub-continent since the 1950's.

The First Contacts

8th Century: Offa of Mercia (d. 796 CE) was a powerful Anglo-Saxon King who had coins minted with the inscription of the *kalimah* in Arabic, indicating commercial ties with Muslims in Spain, France, and North Africa.

16th and 17th Centuries: The first British Muslim whose name survives in an English source, *The Voyage Made to Tripolis* (1583 CE) was "a son of a yeoman of our Queen's Guard . . . his name was John Nelson." The universities of Oxford and Cambridge established Chairs of Arabic in the 1630's and scholars in Britain relied heavily on translations from Arabic in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine throughout the medieval period and the Renaissance. A rendering of the Qur'an in English was produced by Alexander Ross in 1649 CE, and this edition had two imprints — attesting to its wide circulation. (Source: Matar, N. *Islam in Britain: 1558-1685*, Cambridge University Press, 1998)

The Colonial Period (to the 1940's)

In 1897, a map of the British Empire would include Nigeria, Egypt, India, and Malaya, all large territories with significant Muslim populations. Muslim lands provided the work force and material resources that contributed to the prosperity of Victorian and Edwardian England. The colonial encounter first brought Muslims to Britain as seamen, soldiers, or students. The seamen, known as 'lascars,' established the first communities in the main ports of England and Scotland. By the turn of the century, there were also several hundred Muslim peddlers, who even ventured to the remoter parts of Scotland with their wares and medicines.

Organized activities in London owed much to the Indian Muslim Justice Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1928 CE), who came to live in England after his retirement in 1904. The former Indian civil servant, barrister and Qur'anic scholar, Abdullah Yusuf Ali (d. 1953 CE) also settled in London in 1914, and the pair became effective advocates of British Muslim concerns at home and abroad.

1860: Existence of a mosque at 2 Glyn Rhondda Street, Cardiff, recorded in the Register of Religious Sites (now maintained by the Office of National Statistics)

1886: Founding of the Anjuman-i-Islam in London later renamed the Pan-Islamic Society.

1887: William Henry Quilliam (Shaikh Abdullah Quilliam) embraced Islam and led a small community in Liverpool. In 1891 CE, the community rented a house in Broughton Terrace, West Derby, to serve as a prayer hall.

1889: Establishment of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, with an adjoining student hostel.

1910: Syed Ameer Ali convened a public meeting at the Ritz Hotel for the establishment of the London Mosque Fund for "a mosque in London worthy of the tradition of Islam and worthy of the capital of the British Empire."

1913: First issue of the journal

Muslim India and The Islamic Review, later renamed the *Islamic Review*, Woking. The journal was published for sixty years.

1914: Friday prayers held under the auspices of the London Mosque Fund, first in Lindsay Hall, Notting Hill Gate, and later at 39 Upper Bedford Place. The venue then shifted to 111 Campden Hill Road, where prayers were conducted until October 1928 CE.

1916: British Muslim Lord Headley (Al-Haj el-Farooq) writes to Secretary of State Austen Chamberlain for allocation of state funds for the purchase and construction of a mosque in London "in memory of Muslim soldiers who died fighting for the Empire."

1928: Formation of the London Nizamiah Mosque Trust Fund by Al-Haj el-Farooq. These funds were subsequently transferred to the London Central Mosque Fund (present-day Islamic Cultural Centre in Regents Park).

1930: A branch of the Western Islamic Association was formed in South Shields by Khalid Sheldrake. In 1936, there was also a Sufi *zawiya* in South Shields at 45 Cuthbert Street. By 1938, the Muslim community was 700 strong.

1933: Muslim Society of Great Britain, under the presidency of Ismail de Yorke, organises Islamic events at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street.

1934: Formation of the Jamiat Muslimeen, East London, under the presidency of one Dr. Qazi.

1937: The Peel Proposals for the partition of Palestine stirs British Muslims and Abdullah Yusuf Ali addresses meetings in London, Cambridge, and Brighton to draw public

attention to these concerns.

1940: Churchill, at a war cabinet meeting on October 24th, authorizes allocation of funds for the acquisition of a site for the London mosque.

1941: East London Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre opened by the Egyptian Ambassador, Dr. Hassan Nahjat Pasha. The mosque was subsequently managed by the Jamiat Muslimeen.

1943: Formation of the Jamiat Ittihad Muslimeen, Glasgow. The Jamiat's first mosque was at 27/29 Oxford Street, Glasgow.

1944: King George VI visits the Islamic Cultural Centre in Regents Park for its official opening.

Recent Times (1950 onwards)

If the main emphasis of Muslims in the earlier period was the establishment of proper prayer facilities, the emphasis would shift towards the establishment of social, educational,

1962: First meeting of the Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS) in Birmingham, bringing together Muslim student organisations from a number of British universities. The same year saw the publication of the student Islamic magazine *Risalatul Akhbar*, later *The Muslim*.

1970: Formation of the Union of Muslim Organisations (General Secretary: Dr. Syed Aziz Pasha).

1971: Jamiat-ul-Muslimeen, Manchester, commence work on a purpose built mosque in Victoria Park.

1973: Establishment of the Islamic Council of Europe, with headquarters in London (Secretary-General: Salem Azzam).

1973: Establishment of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester (subsequently relocated in 1990 to Markfield) and now a major publisher.

1974: Opening of the Dar-al-Uloom, Holmcombe Hall, Bury.

1974: Publication of the *Draft Prospectus of the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning*, by Dr. Kalim Siddiqui.

1977: Belfast Islamic Centre established. It is estimated that there are about 3,000 Muslims in Northern Ireland.

1978: Completion of the new *markaz* of the Tableegh Jamaat in Dewsbury.

1982: Opening of the Dar-al-Uloom, Saville Town, Dewsbury.

1983: Yusuf Islam starts the Islamia School in North West London.

1997: M. Sarwar (Govan, Glasgow) elected first Muslim MP (Labour Party).

1997: Publication of the Runnymede Trust's report on Islamophobia.

1998: First General Assembly Meeting of the Muslim Council of Britain at Brent Town Hall (Secretary-General: Iqbal Sacranie).

1998: Two Muslim peers appointed: Lord Nazir of Rotherham and Baroness Polla Uddin.

Source: *The Muslim Council of Britain* (www.mcb.org.uk)



and welfare institutions. *Impact International*, the authoritative Muslim newsmagazine, has been published in London since May 1971. The 1990's have seen the emergence of British Muslim community newspapers, represented by the *The Muslim News* and *Q-News*.

How American Muslims Really Responded To September 11

by *Riad Z. Abdelkarim and Jason Erb*

As our nation approaches the one-year anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, American Muslims around the country will join their fellow citizens in pausing and reflecting upon the horrors of that day and its aftermath. Some media pundits and other well-known figures—including notable evangelist Franklin Graham—have recently accused Muslims of remaining silent after the terrorist attacks. Such charges, which have been covered widely but superficially in the mainstream media, deserve serious analysis.

In reality, even a cursory review of press releases, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, and internet websites reveals that Muslims were uniformly shocked, saddened, and outraged at the vicious attack on our own soil—and they did not hesitate to voice their unequivocal condemnation. In fact, American Muslim and Arab-American organizations and leaders were among the first to react in an organized fashion to condemn the terrorist attacks on that very same day, long before it became clear that individuals calling themselves Muslims were involved in the attacks.

On September 11, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest grassroots American Muslim civil rights and advocacy group, distributed a statement which read: "We condemn in the strongest terms possible what are apparently vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. No cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts. All members of the Muslim community are asked to offer whatever help they can to the victims and their families. Muslim medical professionals should go to the scenes of the attacks to offer aid and comfort to the victims."

CAIR also issued an alert to the Muslim community on September 11, urging that the following additional actions be taken: "Muslim relief agencies should contact their counterparts to offer support in the recovery efforts. Individual Muslims should donate blood by contacting the local office of the Red Cross...They should also send donations to those relief agencies that are on the scene of the attacks."

Similarly, the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) issued the following unequivocal statement: "We feel that our country, the United States, is under attack. All Americans should stand together to bring the perpetrators to justice. We warn against any generalizations that will only serve to help the criminals and incriminate the innocent. We offer our resources and resolve to help the victims of these intolerable acts, and we pray to God to protect and bless America."

And in a September 11 letter to President Bush, community leaders

stated: "American Muslims, who unequivocally condemned today's terrorist attacks on our nation, call on you to alert fellow citizens to the fact that now is a time for all of us to stand together in the face of this heinous crime." This letter was signed by the leaders of CAIR, MPAC, the American Muslim Alliance, the American Muslim Council, the Muslim American Society, the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, the Muslim Alliance in North America, and American Muslims for Jerusalem. These groups represent most of the seven million Muslims in the United States.

Muslims abroad were also unequivocal in their condemnation of the attacks. The 57 member Organization of Islamic Conference issued a communiqué stating: "The Conference strongly condemned the brutal terror acts that befell the United States....It further reaffirmed that these terror acts ran counter to the teachings of the divine religions as well as ethical and human values...."

In the West Bank thousands of Palestinians attended candlelight vigils to express their grief and solidarity with the victims of the attacks, and Palestinian school children observed five minutes of silence. In Tehran, Iran (one third of the President's proclaimed "axis of evil"), the main soccer stadium observed one minute of silence in sympathy with the victims of the attacks.

Despite the unanimous and vocal condemnations by American Muslim and Arab-American group and leaders nationwide, some in our country were not satisfied. In subsequent weeks and months, numerous unsubstantiated references appeared in newspaper opinion columns and on television talk shows about American Muslims' alleged "silence" after the terrorist attacks. Such claims were clearly not based on facts, but rather were the products of either outright ignorance – which is inexcusable – or deliberate defamation by some with thinly-veiled Islamophobic agendas – which is utterly deplorable.

This accusation of silence in the face of the September 11 attacks is now coupled with increasingly aggressive rhetoric about Islam being an "evil" religion and Muslims a "fifth column." Efforts to even teach about Islam in public schools and universities are now routinely attacked if they do not focus on the most extreme interpretations. When Muslims try to correct uninformed statements about Islam, we are labeled apologists. Open and honest discussion about Islam in the public is increasingly silenced by the bigoted attacks of individuals like Franklin Graham, who recently called for Muslims to apologize for the 9/11 attacks.

While Muslims join most Americans in seeking unity and solace with their fellow citizens, some Americans are sowing seeds of hatred and ignorance. As Americans we are all confronted by a number of daunting challenges that we must face together, including concentrated efforts to tear

A guessing game

By: *Mohamed El Sayed Said*

Do President Bush's most recent statements, as interpreted in the American press, suggest that the war on Iraq is now on hold? Or do they mean the opposite? Perhaps the only certain thing is that we will spend a great deal more time making "informed" guesses about the likelihood, or not, of war. The whole process is based on leaks to the press by senior figures in the Pentagon and other relevant departments or agencies. So systematic are the leaks, so ubiquitous their reporting, that one can only assume they have themselves become a policy tool. Their real purpose is to manipulate the psychological and political climate inside and outside Iraq. This plethora of press leaks outlining battle plans and military exercises aims at inducing

"The cost of the war, especially one that lacks any clear exit strategy, may wreck the fragile American economy."

Iraq to behave in a way the US might use as an excuse to attack and invade. If the war against Iraq is certain, then it is in Washington's interest to pressure Iraq to behave in such a way as might serve American war plans. One of the spin-off benefits of the leaks, from the Pentagon's point of view, is that they might also deceive the Iraqis, serving as a cover for the real invasion plan, forcing Iraq to deploy its forces in the way America's military planners want. A secondary, but no less important goal, is to ready regional and international actors to jump on the war bandwagon. Taking the hidden agenda of the leaks, as well as official statements, into account, it would be foolhardy to leap to definitive conclusions. Such is the confusion that a recent, informal meeting in Washington of Arab observers, including ambassadors and seasoned reporters, was split down the middle between those convinced that war is inevitable and those who rule out or play down any impending American aggression. From those who see war as inevitable came the following arguments: the Bush administration is infatuated with the idea of launching a war to oust Saddam Hussein; the long preparation of American public opinion for war is unlikely to have been for nothing; the administration has taken a strategic decision to curb Arab radicalism once and for all; the most recent polls reveal 70 per cent support for the idea of war against Iraq; the hawks within the administration are in the ascendant, not only on the issue of Iraq but also on Iran and Pal-

estine, while those hostile to the idea of war against Iraq are now a minority within Congress. A formidable list of points. Those less sure, though, argue that there is no guarantee of an easy military victory against Iraq and that, should there be any question of Iraq actually possessing weapons of mass destruction then any invasion could cost a vast number of American lives. It is this latter point, along with other, logistical considerations, that is reported as being the reason the American military remains cool about any invasion. Yet Iraq's assumed possession of weapons of mass destruction is the argument most used by the pro-war camp both inside and outside the administration. Social and economic factors may also conspire to make war less, rather than more likely. It is argued, for example, that the cost of the war, especially one that lacks any clear exit strategy, may wreck the fragile American economy. The factionalism and weaknesses of the Iraqi opposition are also well known, and the recent meetings between the opposition and state department planners merely served to reinforce such impressions. Perhaps the most important argument, politically speaking, made by those who remain unsure about the inevitability of an attack, is the lack of any legitimate reason for invading Iraq and ousting Saddam. Certainly, growing opposition to the war within the Labor Party in the UK—the British government's own lawyers have advised that any invasion of Iraq would be illegal under international law—has caused alarm bells to ring among American experts. And cer-

tainly no one has yet been able to produce any conclusive proof linking Iraq with international terrorism. Yet if the arguments bandied by the Arab observers who met are difficult to choose between, there can be no denying that within the



tainly no one has yet been able to produce any conclusive proof linking Iraq with international terrorism. Yet if the arguments bandied by the Arab observers who met are difficult to choose between, there can be no denying that within the

American press, in the nation's op-ed columns, there has been a snowball effect with the idea of launching a war against Iraq having steadily gained momentum since the toppling of the Taliban, however false the premises that the writers use are. Meanwhile, the Bush administration remains in desperate need of a convincing political frame for any invasion decision, which is why it has been reduced to using systematic leaks as a policy tool. The ploy will pay-off if the Iraqi regime is goaded into behaving foolishly, either within Iraq or beyond its borders, thus providing Washington with the excuses it is seeking to invade, and to make that invasion palatable to its more hesitant partners.

[Dr. El-Sayed Said is the deputy director of the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, Egypt. He is also the editor-in-chief of the Arab Strategic Report since 1994, and the editor-in-chief of Rwaq Arabi (a periodical specialized in human rights).]

Source: www.ahram.org/eg/weekly

First ever Muslim MP in New Zealand

Reported by *Tarek Fatah*

In the recent elections in New Zealand, the left-wing Labour Party won a majority, and among the winning parliamentarians from the winning party, was the first ever Muslim elected to the New Zealand Parliament.

Aziz Choudhary, who migrated to New Zealand from Pakistan, made history yesterday when he took the oath of office by swearing allegiance on the Quran.

Professor Choudhary is a PhD in Agricultural Engineering and teaches scientific research in agricultural and natural resource engineering at Massey University. As Chairperson of Palmerston North Labour Party, this Pakistani-Kiwi has been active in the politics of his adopted country since he arrived there in the mid-seventies.

Professor Aziz Choudhary has traveled widely to promote New Zealand education, consultancy, represent NZ and trade organizations, and as a guest lecturer. He has worked for many National and International agencies including United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Development Programme, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific. His work as a scientist has taken him to USA, UK, China, Philippines, Iran, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Uzbekistan and his country of birth—Pakistan.

However, Dr. Choudhary is not the only prominent Muslim or Pakistani in New Zealand. Khalid 'Billy' Ibadullah who opened for the Pakistani Test Cricket team in the sixties, also settled in the South Pacific nation decades ago and is a very well known sports broadcaster.

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[Riad Z. Abdelkarim, MD, is Western Region Communications Director and Jason Erb is Governmental Relations Director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest grassroots American Muslim civil rights and advocacy group.]

Newsroom

Toronto Imam dies at 66

Reported by Abdul Hai Patel

With regret we announce the death of an Icon of Toronto Imam Said Zafar at the age of 66. He served Muslim Community in Canada for over 40 years. He served as Imam in Toronto when no one was available to perform Nikah or Islamic burial and later as Imam in Windsor from 1968-1970. He was the founding member of Islamic Foundation, Islamic Propagation Centre (Now Cooper Masjid), Islamic Council of Imams-Canada, MSA of UofT and MSA National, ISNA among many institutions in North America.

May Allah bless his soul and grant him comfort in the grave and access to Jannatul Firdaus without reckoning.. Ameen.

He is survived by his wife Sabine, son Shahin, and three daughters.

Salatul Janaza was held at Jami Mosque after Zuhr on Saturday August 24.

Agent Suspended For Anti-Muslim Slur

DETROIT (AP, 9/8/2002) — A Secret Service agent who admitted he scrawled anti-Muslim statements on a prayer calendar during a search will be suspended for six months without pay, a federal prosecutor said Friday.

US Attorney Jeffrey Collins said the agent won't face criminal charges. He said the suspension, which amounts to a financial loss of about \$40,000, and other sanctions were greater punishment than any misdemeanour charge would have been.

On July 18, federal agents searched the Dearborn home of Omar Shishani, who has pleaded innocent to smuggling \$12 million in bogus cashier's checks into the United States.

Members of Shishani's family said they discovered after the search that "Islam is Evil" and "Christ is King" had been written on the calendar.

The agent, identified only as a 10-year veteran, will be transferred out of the Eastern District of Michigan and has written a letter of apology to Shishani and his family.

"We're satisfied with the decision," said Hodan Hassan, a spokeswoman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which had asked Attorney General John Ashcroft to investigate. "And we hope that the punishment meted out would be a signal to others that such bigotry would not be tolerated."

Canadian Muslims speak regarding life after 9/11

The Ottawa-based Council on American Islamic Relations CANADA, held a press conference on Thursday, September 5th, 2002, to publish and discuss the results of its recent survey, "Canadian Muslims One Year after 9/11."

The first of its kind, the survey results provide a window into the Canadian Muslim community one year after September 11th. The survey addresses topical issues such as changes in the quality of life, the impact and scope of discrimination, outreach efforts by Canadians in general, and media reporting. According to the results of the survey by a national Islamic anti-discrimination and advocacy group, a majority (60 percent) of Canadian Muslims say they experienced bias or discrimination since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A similar number (61 percent) also experienced kindness or support from friends or colleagues of other faiths.

The survey, published by the Council on American-Islamic Relations CANADA (CAIR-CAN), polled 296 Muslims from across Canada and is intended to provide a window into the lives of Canadian Muslim during the last year.

Surveys were e-mailed to Muslim individuals and organizations nationwide and were made available at local events, conferences and lectures.

Other survey results include the following:

- A large number of respondents (82 percent) said they knew of a fellow Muslim who experienced discrimination.
- 33 percent of respondents said that their lives changed for the worse, 39 percent said they experienced no change, and 22 percent said their lives changed for the better.
- Those who indicated that their lives changed for the better cited

becoming more committed Muslims, being presented with opportunities to remedy stereotypes about Islam and becoming more involved in community affairs.

- Those who indicated that their lives changed for the worse felt disliked by fellow Canadians, were subjected to rude and hostile behaviour, faced emotional distress, and were concerned about the safety of themselves and their families.

- The most frequent forms of bias were verbal abuse, religious or ethnic profiling, and workplace discrimination.

- 56 percent of respondents said that the media have grown more biased against Islam and Muslims while 13 percent said that coverage improved.

- Respondents felt that the most biased outlets were those owned by Canwest: the National Post, Global and the Ottawa Citizen.

- CBC, the Toronto Star, and the Globe and Mail were named as media outlets worthy of praise for their coverage.

- 24 percent rated Prime Minister Jean Chretien's interaction with the Muslim community as poor, and a further 45% said he was below average.

- Respondents criticized the Prime Minister for his indifference to the Muslim community and his lack of clear action against the wave of anti-Muslim hate. He was praised for immediately condemning acts of terrorism.

Half of the respondents hailed from Ontario (which is home to more than half of Canada's Muslims) with significant representation from Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. Respondents from other provinces included Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and P.E.I.

There are an estimated 600 000 Muslims in Canada and some 1.2 billion worldwide.

Medical Human Rights Abuse in Turkey

(3/7/2002) — Doctors Worldwide supports the decision of Turkish Human rights organisations to take Istanbul University Hospital's administrators to court over the death of 72-year-old Medine Ercan last week.

Hospital administrators at the hospital had denied the seriously ill lady life-saving dialysis because they insisted this frail lady reproduce her medical card but without a headscarf.

This inhuman act, in direct contravention of the Geneva Declaration came as a direct result of a decision made by the University Chancellor only a few weeks earlier. The university hospital thus became the sole hospital in Turkey to deny treatment to any women simply for wearing a headscarf on their medical card.

Hospital doctors were forced to turn the lady away, despite her grave condition, as they feared repercussions from the administration if they treated her.

Doctors Worldwide (www.doctorsworldwide.org) also urges the Turkish Government to intervene and halt this draconian and ultimately fatal decision made by the University.

Jewish Podiatrist Charged, Mosques Target

FLORIDA (UPI, 24/8/2002) — One day after a stash of rocket launchers, antipersonnel mines and plastic explosives was seized, a Jewish podiatrist has been accused of planning to attack 50 mosques and Islamic centers, The Tampa Tribune reported Saturday.

Federal agents say they found a "mission template" with details on how to destroy an Islamic education center in the home Robert Goldstein shares with his wife.

In the plan, agents say Goldstein uses a derogatory term to describe the Muslims he hoped to kill, and there was a reference to placing napalm under a dirt road as part of a contingency plan to hold off any police officers arriving at the center.

"Set timers for approximately 15-20 minutes to allow for enough time to get out of the area, but to confirm explosions has been successful," reads the small print in the plan, which was attached to the federal complaint filed against Goldstein, the Tribune reported. "Hand to hand (combat) is unlikely but be prepared to liquidate [Muslims] up close," is another entry in the alleged bombing plan.

State Judge Finds That Islamic Promise Is Valid Contract

NEWARK, NJ (AP, 2/8/2002) — Just before she was married at her parent's home six years ago, Houida Saadeh and her groom, Zuhair Odatalla, signed their Islamic marriage license. It included the terms of the traditional gift a groom makes to his bride.

Those terms, known as a "mahr" agreement, said Odatalla was obligated to pay "prompt one golden pound coin; postponed ten thousand US dollars." During the ceremony, he handed Saadeh a gold coin. Eight days later, they were also married in a civil ceremony. In October 1999, the couple separated and the \$10,000 Saadeh believed she was due from the mahr agreement became part of the divorce lawsuit.

Now, a landmark ruling by a state judge found that the traditional promise is fair game for civil authorities, and that Odatalla should pay. The ruling on the clash of secular law with the religious custom of the

Postage Stamp Celebrating Muslim Holiday To Be Re-Issued

WASHINGTON, DC (PR Newswire, 12/8/2002) — The US Postal Service is pleased to announce that the Eid postage stamp will be re-issued on Oct. 10, 2002, at the current First-Class rate of 37 cents.

A 34-cent Eid stamp was first issued on Sept. 1, 2001, at the annual Islamic Society of North America's convention in Des Plaines, Ill. The new version will be available beginning Oct. 10 at Washington, DC post offices and at post offices across the country starting the following day.

"This is a proud moment for the Postal Service, the Muslim community, and Americans in general as we re-issue a postage stamp to honour and commemorate two important Islamic celebrations," said Azeezaly S. Jaffer, Vice President, Public Affairs and Communications for the Postal Service. "The Eid stamp helps us highlight the business, educational and social contributions of the estimated six to seven million Muslims in this country whose cultural heritage has become an integral part of the fabric of this nation..."

The Eid stamp, designed by Mohammed Zakariya of Arlington, VA, features the Arabic phrase "Eid Mubarak" in gold calligraphy on a blue background. English text on the stamps reads "EID GREETINGS..."

mahr is believed to be the first in New Jersey, and only one of a handful around the nation.

The judge agreed with Saadeh that the court could intervene without violating the constitutional separation of church and state. Superior Court Judge John E. Selser III reasoned he did not have to interpret any religious doctrine to make the ex-husband pay up...

"I think if courts are used to enforce agreements in a wide variety of contractual issues, I think this is appropriate," said Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the Council on American Islamic Relations in Washington, DC...

The ruling is also important because a mahr is part of all Islamic marriage contracts, Saadeh's lawyer said. Abed Awad estimated there are about 1 million such contracts in the United States...

"With this decision, I believe it will make it easier for wives to recover their rightful mahr. In addition it will give religious clerics more teeth for enforcement," Awad said.

Hundreds Missing In India May Have Been Killed

AHMEDABAD, INDIA (Reuters, 21/8/2002) - Nearly 500 Muslims reported missing after India's worst religious riots in a decade may have actually been killed because there is no trace of them six months later, private groups said on Wednesday.

Officials say more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in a wave of revenge killings in Gujarat after a suspected Muslim mob burned a train with 59 Hindu activists in February. Human rights groups put the toll from the riots at more than 2,000.

"Five hundred people missing after the riots have all been killed," said Mohsin Qadri, head of Citizen Relief Service, a charity group in Gujarat.

The recovery of two skeletons earlier this week from a drain in Ahmedabad, Gujarat's largest city that bore the brunt of the violence, is proof that the people said to be missing were slaughtered and their bodies concealed, they said.

The government said that 377 people went missing after the riots on the basis of complaints filed with police. But non-governmental organizations peg the number at around 500.

"The recovery (of the skeletons) only underlines what we have been saying all through," Qadri said.

The skeletons recovered earlier this week from the Muslim-dominated old quarter of Ahmedabad were those of two Muslim youth who went missing on February 28, when ma-

UN Official: China Using 'War On Terrorism' To Crush Dissent

BEIJING (AP, 20/8/2002) — The top UN human rights official said Tuesday that she worries that China is using the post-Sept. 11 war on terrorism as an excuse to widen a crackdown on Muslim minorities and members of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement.

In the past year, China has passed laws that appear to increase the authorities' powers of arrest and detention, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson. She said the government has renewed an anti-crime campaign that speeds up trials and widens the use of the death penalty.

Targets of the new measures have been Falun Gong members and Uighur minorities in Xinjiang, a restive, predominantly Muslim region in China's northwest, she said.

"For the Uighur population and also for Falun Gong members, this has meant that the climate is harsher and tougher," the former Irish president told reporters during her last official trip to China before she steps down next month...

rauding Hindu mobs hacked and torched alive scores of Muslims.

"I think this is only the beginning. There would be much more coming," said Cedric Prakash, a Jesuit priest heading the Center for Human Rights, Justice and Peace.

Mandela To Observe Fatah Leader's Trial

(The Guardian, 15/8/2002) — In a major embarrassment to Israel, Nelson Mandela has agreed to observe the trial of a Palestinian leader formally indicted yesterday on charges of murder and terrorism.

A lawyer for Marwan Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian legislative council and secretary general of the Fatah movement in the West Bank, revealed he had been in South Africa last week to invite the former president to the trial.

"He said he was enthusiastic about coming," Khader Shkirat said. He quoted South Africa's most famous political prisoner as saying: "What is happening to Barghouti is exactly the same as what happened to me. The government tried to de-legitimise the African National Congress and its armed struggle by putting me on trial..."

Greyhound Again Profiles Muslim Bus Passenger

Traveler removed from bus in Ohio after driver notes Muslim name
WASHINGTON, DC (30/7/2002) — CAIR is calling for a meeting with Greyhound Lines Inc. following what it says is the second case of anti-Muslim profiling within a month.

The latest incident involved a Muslim passenger from Pennsylvania who told CAIR he was removed from a Greyhound bus early Sunday during a stopover in Cincinnati, Ohio, after the driver made note of his obviously Muslim name. (The man's last name is "Muhammad.")

The 40-year-old African-American passenger, who was traveling with his wife from Philadelphia to Nashville, says he moved to one of the front seats of the bus during the stopover, but was told he could not sit directly behind the driver. (The Muslim passenger, who is on disability because of injuries resulting from an industrial accident, wished to sit in the front seat to stretch out because of pain in his knees. The man's wife wore Islamic attire.) He was given permission to move to the front seat across the aisle.

The driver then began taking tickets from the passengers, beginning in the back of the bus. When he reached the Muslim passenger, he allegedly looked at the Islamic name on the ticket, said it out loud, and then told the passenger he had to move again. (No other passenger names were verbalized.)

When questioned as to why he was being asked to move for the second time, the driver brought a supervisor who told the passenger all the front seats were reserved for handicapped travelers. The Muslim passenger informed the supervisor that he is

handicapped, but agreed nonetheless to move to his original seat.

At that point, the driver left the bus and summoned a police officer who told the Muslim passenger he would have to leave the bus because of an "altercation" with the driver. As the passenger was leaving the bus, the driver allegedly threw his ticket on the floor. The passenger was then forced to wait three hours for a second bus.

In a similar incident on June 29, a Muslim passenger from New York was kicked off a bus in Washington, DC, apparently because of his faith and ethnicity. He was told that other passengers did not want to travel with him.

"There appears to be a systemic problem with Greyhound and its treatment of Muslim passengers. The company needs to meet with American Muslim representatives to address this issue in a manner that will allow Muslim travelers to feel comfortable riding on its buses," said CAIR Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper. He also suggested a company-wide audit of policies and training designed to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future.

Hooper added that his group believes Greyhound's actions violated the public accommodation clause of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That clause states:

"All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges,

More Muslims Home In To Educate Children

(Washington Times, 29/7/2002) — More Muslim Americans are choosing to home-school their children, making them one of the fastest growing minority groups within the national home-schooling movement.

Muslim parents are educating their children on their own for reasons common to most home-schooling families: improving academics and controlling social interactions.

The value clash between public-school teachings and Islamic beliefs, combined with the dearth of Muslim schools in many communities, leads many of the parents to educate their children independently, proponents of the movement say...

Nationally, Christians make up 75 percent of the nearly 2 million children who are home-schooled, said Brian Ray, president of the Oregon-based National Home Education Research Institute. But the proportion of minority groups, including Muslims, choosing to home-school is steadily increasing, he said...

The religious context for Muslim home-schooling parents is different than it is for Christians, but, Mr. Ray said, Muslim parents are like any others: They want to provide the best possible education for their children. "The key things being taught to [Muslim] children are different, but the thing that is very similar is that parents care very much about their children," he said.

**Peace to all.
Submission to
Only One.
That is Islam.**

Iran Cola Challenges US Brands in Saudi Arab

RIYADH (Reuters, 21/8/2002) - An Iranian soft drinks firm is cashing in on a popular boycott of American products in Saudi Arabia by offering an "Islamic alternative" to US brands such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola.

The Saudi distributor of Zamzam Cola, named after a sacred water well near the Muslim holy city of Mecca, said on Wednesday that demand was three times higher than forecast in the first week the drink went on sale in the east of the kingdom.

"The campaign of boycotting American products and the good quality of Zamzam Cola have given us excellent sales," al-Majarrah Foodstuffs Establishment general manager Firas Khawaja told Reuters by telephone.

Popular anger against the United States over its support for Israel amid the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation has sparked a campaign to boycott American products which slashed US exports to Saudi Arabia by more than 40 percent in the first three months of 2002.

Majarrah said more than four million cans of the soft drink, which also comes as a diet version, were sold in the first week.

The company says it is more concerned about the ability of the Iranian supplier to meet demand when distribution begins in other parts of Saudi Arabia...

advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation ... without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin."

CAIR has received more than 200 reports of profiling by airport and airline personnel since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

All articles in The Ambition are well researched. Being human, we may overlook something. If this happens, please call us and correct our mistakes.

Russian Forces Killing Dozens of Chechens Each Month

MOSCOW (AFP, 23/7/2002) — The head of a top world rights watchdog on Tuesday accused the Russian military of killing up to 80 Chechens a month, many of them young males, via abductions and murders. "The process by which young Chechen men are being abducted and murdered ... is claiming more lives than the bombing campaigns of the two wars," said the executive director for the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Aaron Rhodes.

"If you look at the evidence from reliable, non-partisan human rights organizations, between 50 and 80 people are being murdered every month," Rhodes told reporters on his return from a three-day visit to Chechnya and neighbouring Ingushetia. Rhodes said that given Chechnya's relatively small population — estimated at between 300,000 and 600,000, but impossible to verify — the scale of killing in the republic is almost unprecedented.

"This violence is on a huge scale in the world context. It is difficult to find an analogy to this," he said. "We have a very hard time finding such numbers in other historical cases."

Russian troops stormed into the southern republic in October 1999 in a self-declared anti-terrorist operation after the predominantly Muslim republic in the turbulent north Caucasus won de facto independence in a first war, which lasted from 1994-96.

Noting that some rights organization refer to "disappearances," Rhodes remarked: "Let's call a spade a spade — (disappearance) means death..."

WAMY Chief Johani Dies In Car Crash

RIYADH (Arab News, 5/8/2002) — Maneh ibn Hammad Al-Johani,

Israel Set On Tragic Path, Says Chief Rabbi

(The Guardian, 27/8/2002) — Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, today delivers an unprecedentedly strong warning to Israel, arguing that the country is adopting a stance "incompatible" with the deepest ideals of Judaism, and that the current conflict with the Palestinians is "corrupting" Israeli culture.

In a move that will send shockwaves through Israel and the world Jewish community, Professor Sacks departs from his usual policy of offering only public endorsement of Israel, and broad support for moves toward peace, by giving an explicit verdict on the effect that 35 years of military occupation and decades of conflict are having on Israel and the Jewish people.

He goes on to speak of being "profoundly shocked" at the recent reports of smiling Israeli servicemen posing for a photograph with the corpse of a slain Palestinian. "There is no question that this kind of prolonged conflict, together with the absence of hope, generates hatreds and insensitivities that in the long run are corrupting to a culture."

And the rights group accused the West of standing idly by while Russia — which has emerged as a key ally in the US-led "anti-terror" war — continues its brutal campaign.

"The West is not conducting itself properly. It must know what is happening," said the Helsinki group's representative Vladislav Weisman.

secretary-general of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and a member of the Shoura Council, died yesterday in a road accident near the King Khaled International Airport. He was 60.

Johani was on his way to the airport to take a flight to Jeddah for a meeting with Prince Abdullah, the regent. He was admitted to KKIA's Community Services Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Bomb Errors May Have Cost 800 Civilian Lives

(The Scotsman, 22/7/2002)

— The US aid and advocacy group Global Exchange, based in San Francisco, claims survey teams sent into Afghan villages have compiled a list of 812 Afghan civilians killed in air strikes.

But more damaging for the public image of the Pentagon may be yesterday's report in the New York Times. The newspaper said its survey of 11 locations put the death toll at up to 400 civilians.

The latest and probably most notorious botched bombing was early this month. Reports have suggested that gunfire celebrating a wedding in Oruzgan Province was misinterpreted by US warplanes and Special Forces troops as anti-aircraft fire. US officials have claimed their ground forces operating in the area came under repeated fire.

Whatever sparked the US raid, the result was an American AC-130 gunship spewing fire from the air on four Afghan villages. Local officials counted 54 fatalities, mainly women and children.

KGB Successor Implicated In Moscow Bombings

MOSCOW (AP, 26/7/2002) — A former Russian security agent offered evidence Thursday meant to support his claim that the KGB's successor, not Islamic militants, engineered a series of deadly bombings that thrust Russia into a new war in Chechnya in 1999.

In a video link with Britain, where he fled two years ago, Alexander Litvinenko said he received the evidence in a statement from Achimez Gochiyayev, who Russia claims was paid \$500,000 by a rebel warlord to organize two apartment-building bombings in Moscow...

A few weeks after the last of four apartment-building explosions in September 1999 - two in Moscow and two in southern Russia - President Boris Yeltsin and his prime minister, former KGB agent Vladimir Putin, sent Russian troops into Chechnya. Russian officials blamed the blasts on Chechen rebels, though rebel leaders denied involvement and suggested the security service organized them to justify the military campaign...

5,000 copies of The Ambition are printed and distributed every two months in and around Toronto, including Burlington, Oakville, Erinmills, Markham and Richmond Hill. You can pick up your free copy at many mosques and Muslim grocery stores.

Islamic Psychology of the Self

Continued from page 3

tion of life is very simple, and very simply the mission of Rasoolullah (The Prophet, pbuh) was to help us go to Jannah instead of the Naar [Hell], and in Jannah there are levels of happiness. The equation is simple, the rest are just details and consequences, which is why some scholars say that the purpose/objectives of this *deen* [way of life] are, number one *Tawheed* [Oneness of Allah], number two *tazkiyah* [purification], and the rest are consequences, what some call an Islamic civilization. Islamic civilization is a consequence of *Tawheed* which breeds/generates *akhlaaq* and that will lead to a civilization, but to speak only of the good things externally of *da'wah* [inviting to Islam], political/social activity, of all types of beneficial activity, to speak about them and to practice them without this concept of *akhlaaq* [inner state reflected in external actions] then, is like the empty shell that has nothing inside, it looks attractive, it may look solid, but if you press it, it will implode. Without the core, without a proper state of the *nafs*, all of these activities are like that empty shell. That is why on the Day of Judgment Allah does not accept the good deeds of a *Mushrik* [idolater] because they are externally good, but they do not emanate from a *nafs* that is properly pol-

ished. This is why Allah says, "But the Unbelievers their deeds are like a mirage. In sandy deserts, which, the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, He finds it to be nothing" (24:39). Another example Allah gives is that the actions of such people who act well externally but whose *anfus* [pl. of *nafs*] are empty, is that their actions are like ashes in the wind (14:18), what happens to ashes in the wind? - Nothing is left of them!

In addition to this *nafs* there is Shaytaan (devil), and we must believe in this, not doing so is an act of disbelief. Shaytaan is a part of the unseen world, and he knows that our most prized possession is our *qalb* [spiritual heart], and he has therefore made an oath to occupy that *qalb*, which he does by developing the three lower *anfus*, and when we follow those lower states we follow our lower desires, anger, injustice, miserliness, and so on. He knows that the gates to the fortress called your heart are your desires, and the very characteristics you choose to have and therefore invite the devil by! And Allah has said to the devil that "he has no authority over His slaves, except those who go astray". When Shaytaan resides in the heart, then truth becomes falsehood, falsehood becomes truth, or partly so because

the heart is veiled and so knowledge/judgment becomes obscured, rationally speaking. That is why Allah says, "Do not obey those whose hearts are oblivious to My remembrance and who follow their own desires" (18:28). Ibn Abbas in his commentary on Surah al-Nas (114) says, "The devil stands on guard watchful over the heart of the child of Adam so when the individual is in a state of negligence, the devil attacks, but when the 'abd [slave of Allah] returns to the remembrance of Allah the devil runs away!"

Developing the exalted *akhlaaq* of the Angelic *nafs* over the other three lower *nafs*, avoiding sin, and indulging in things disliked by Allah and keeping the tongue in the remembrance of Allah are the gates by which we enter Jannah. Otherwise the *nafs* is forsaken; the *qalb*, the family, the community, the culture, and civilization are forsaken. Each one of us must begin there and continue there, and hopefully we will go to Allah at the individual level first and then at the community level with a *nafs* that is in a state of balance or at least close to that.

(Insha'Allah Ta'ala the third part of this 4-part series appearing in the Nov/Dec issue of *The Ambition*, will look at "Seven keys to Safeguarding the Self.")

Is Allah Omnipresent?

Continued from page 1

from worldly phenomena is very dangerous. This is because in order to give a valid example or appropriate similitude, full knowledge of both the objects is necessary, and we do not have knowledge of the true nature of Allah's attributes. Allah can give examples for Himself because he knows the true nature of everything, but we cannot. Hence, Allah commands: "Do not devise similitude (examples) for Allah. Allah certainly knows, but you do not know." [16:74]

Coming to the questions raised, there is no direct mention of Allah being Omni-present in the Holy Qur'an. However, the Qur'an tells us: "He is with you, wherever you are." [57:4]

"There is neither a gossip among three except that He is fourth of them, nor among five except that He is the sixth of them; nor less or more than these numbers except that He is with them wherever they are." [58:7]

He also told us that He is closer to us than our jugular vein [50:16] and that when someone is dying, He is there, but we cannot see [56:85].

We cannot determine the exact nature of His being with everyone or being closer to jugular vein. All we can surmise is that He is around everyone everywhere in some way that we cannot understand. Hence, on the

basis of these verses of the Qur'an, its not *Kufr* or *Shirk* to say that Allah is everywhere. However, it is better to say, as the Qur'an has said, that He is with everyone, wherever a person is.

As far as His being present at dirty places is concerned, it is an example that we should refrain from using because Allah has prohibited us from doing so due to the lack of our knowledge and understanding.

The expression that Allah's knowledge is present everywhere is absolutely meaningless phrase. Indeed Allah's knowledge is perfect, ultimate, infinite and eternal and it covers everything in the universe, but it is with Allah, not residing anywhere separately from Him. It does not seem to make any sense to say "His knowledge is present everywhere." We should not devise our own phraseology for Allah. Let us use only the expression Allah uses for Himself, such as: "His knowledge encompasses everything"; "He is knower of everything."

However, there is one concept that is really a concept of *Shirk* and *Kufr* which has, unfortunately, found its way into beliefs of some sections of Sufis. That concept is called "Wahdatul-wajood" or a theory of 'single entity.' It is described as "Everything is Him." According to that misleading, false and satanic theory, everything in this universe is part and parcel of Allah (swt) - part of a single entity, which is Allah; everything we see, everything that exists, including ourselves, is constituted of Allah himself.

This theory contradicts the very basic tenets of Islam and essentially renders all Islamic teachings meaningless. The concept of good, bad, reward and punishment all become incomprehensible because according to this way of thinking any concept of recompense would mean Allah rewarding and punishing Himself. It also negates Allah's creative powers because it suggests that Allah has apportioned himself in different shapes, not really created them. The fact Allah has very clearly told us is that He has created everything from nothing, quite distinct from His own Being.

eventually help stop this swindle of the American consumer.

[The article was published in *La Voz de Aztlan*, Los Angeles, Alta California in April this year, and was sent to The Ambition by e-mail.]

Illinois Deputy Wins Right To Hijab

WASHINGTON, DC (6/7/2002) — Alhamdulillah, praise be to God. CAIR today applauded a decision by Illinois' Cook County Sheriff's Department to allow a Muslim and a Jewish deputy to wear religiously-mandated head coverings while on the job. That decision came after concerned Muslims from across America contacted the sheriff's office to request reasonable religious accommodation for the two officers.

Last week, CAIR launched a public campaign in support of the Muslim deputy who was denied the right to wear an Islamic headscarf at work since converting to Islam in January of this year. One day after that campaign went public, an Orthodox Jewish deputy was stripped of his police powers and reassigned to clerical duties after he refused to remove his yarmulke, or religious skullcap. The Washington-based Islamic advocacy group offered to support his accommodation request along with that of his Muslim colleague.

Both deputies will cover their religious head coverings with a department-issued cap or hat.

Continued from page 4

Glads plastic sandwich bags and she also said that the (U) meant that the plastic bags were "kosher" but refused to answer questions concerning payments the Clorox Corporation

"We applaud the decision to offer accommodation and thank all those who contacted the sheriff's department to support the religious and legal rights of the two deputies," said CAIR Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper. "This case demonstrates that issues of religious diversity in the workplace can be successfully resolved if there is mutual goodwill and a willingness to explore creative solutions," said Hooper.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals because of their religious beliefs or practices. The act requires employers to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee, unless to do so would create an undue hardship. CAIR publishes a booklet, "An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices," designed to prevent these types of incidents.

The Kosher Tax

has to make in order to be able to print the (U) on their products.

What we learned next, pretty much floored me personally. I learned that major food companies throughout America actually pay a Jewish Tax amounting to hundreds of million of dollars per year in order to receive protection.

This hidden tax gets passed, of course, to all non-Jewish consumers of the products. The scam is to coerce the companies to pay up or suffer the consequences of a Jewish boycott. Jewish consumers have learned not to buy any kitchen product that does not have the (U), the (K), and other similar markings.

Another shocker was learning who is actually behind these sophisticated "Kosher Nostra Scams." It turns out that the perpetrators of these elaborate extortion schemes are actually Rabbinical Councils that are set up, not just in the U.S. but in other western countries as well. For example, the largest Payola Operation in the U.S. is run by those who license the (U) symbol, that provides protection for many products sold here in Aztlan and in the United States. This symbol is managed by The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations with headquarters at 333 Seventh Avenue in New York City.

The scam works like a well-oiled machine and is now generating vast amounts of funds, some of which are being utilized by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis to support the Ariel Sharon Zionist government in Israel. The website of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations is full of pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian propaganda.

The "Kosher Nostra" protection racket starts when an Orthodox Rabbi approaches a company to warn the

owners that unless their product is certified as kosher, or "fit for a Jew to eat", they will face a boycott by every Jew in America. Most, if not all of the food companies, succumb to the blackmail because of fear of the Jewish dominated media and a boycott that may eventually culminate in bankruptcy. Also, the food companies know that the cost can be passed on to the consumer anyway.

The food companies have kept secret from the general consumer the meaning of the (U) and the amount of money they have to pay the Jewish Rabbis.

It is estimated that the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, which manages the (U) symbol protection racket, controls about 85% of the "Kosher Nostra" certification business. They now employ about 1200 Rabbi agents that are spread throughout the U.S. Food companies must first pay an exorbitant application fee and then a large annual fee for the use of the (U) copyright symbol. Secondly, the companies must pay separate fees each time a team of Rabbis shows up to "inspect" the company's operations.

Certain food companies are required to hire Rabbis full time at very lucrative salaries. The amount of money that the non-Jewish consumer has paid the food companies to make up for the hidden Jewish Tax is unknown, but it is estimated to be in the billions, since the scam first started. The Orthodox Jewish Councils as well as the food companies keep the amount of the fees very secret. The Jewish owned Wall Street Journal wrote about the problem many years ago, but they have stopped writing about it now.

Only public awareness concerning the "Kosher Nostra Scam" will

Voice of a destitute and paraplegic person

Please help J. Iqbal, a legal Canadian entrant on a Minister's permit who became completely paraplegic in a car accident. By the Grace of God he survived after long hospitalization. The insurance company has exhausted all the specified fund on his treatment.

Now he totally depends on the community for help. He does not have any access to the OHIP or assistance until 2004.

Please generously spare even a dollar for him. May God help you, bless you and reward you in this world and in the Hereafter. My heartfelt thanks to those who have donated.

Please make cheques payable to:
Javed Iqbal
900 Dufferin St., P.O. Box 24147
Toronto, Ont. Canada M6H 4H6
Tel: 416-516-6686



You may send it directly to his bank account no. 3140340, transit no. 16042-004, TD Bank, 948 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto, Ont. M6C 1C8

Pointers!

Don't put a question mark where Allah puts a period.

Are you wrinkled with burden? Come to the mosque for a face-lift.

When praying, don't give Allah instructions — just report for duty.

Islam: The Next American Religion?

Continued from page 1

in the 1940s in America. Now, as a nation, we may be transcending it, turning to a more inclusive "Abrahamic" view.

In January, President Bush grouped mosques with churches and synagogues in his inaugural address. A few days later, when he posed for photographers at a meeting of several dozen religious figures, the Shi'ite imam Muhammad Qazwini, of Orange County, Calif., stood directly behind Bush's chair like a presiding angel, dressed in the robes and turban of his south Iraqi youth.

Islam is democratic in spirit. Islam advocates the right to vote and educate yourself and pursue a profession. The Qur'an, on which Islamic law is based, enjoins Muslims to govern themselves by discussion and consensus. In mosques, there is no particular priestly hierarchy. With Islam, each individual is responsible for the condition of her or his own soul. Everyone stands equal before God. Americans, who mostly associate Islamic government with a handful of tyrants, may find this independent spirit surprising, supposing that Muslims are somehow predisposed to passive submission.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The dictators reigning today in the Middle East are not the result of Islamic principles. They are more a result of global economics and the aftermath of European colonialism. Meanwhile, like everyone else, average Muslims the world over want a larger say in what goes on in the countries where they live. Those in America may actually succeed in it. In this way, America is closer in spirit to Islam than many Arab countries.

Islam contains an attractive mystical tradition. Mysticism is grounded in the individual search for God. Where better to do that than in America, land of individualists and spiritual seekers?

And who might better benefit than Americans from the centuries-long tradition of teachers and students that characterize Islam. Surprising as it may seem, America's best-selling poet du jour is a Muslim mystic named Rumi, the 800-year-old Persian bard and founder of the Mevlevi Path, known in the West as the Whirling Dervishes. Even book packagers

are now rushing him into print to meet and profit from mainstream demand for this visionary.

Translators as various as Robert Bly, Coleman Barks, and Kabir and Camille Helminski have produced dozens of books of Rumi's verse and have only begun to bring his enormous output before the English-speaking world. This is a concrete poetry of ecstasy, where physical reality and the longing for God are joined by flashes of metaphor and insight that continue to speak across the centuries.

Islam is egalitarian. From New York to California, the only houses of worship that are routinely integrated today are the approximately 4,000 Muslim mosques. That is because Islam is redicated on a level playing field, especially when it comes to standing before God. The Pledge of Allegiance (one nation, "under God") and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (all people are "created equal") express themes that are also basic to Islam.

Islam is often viewed as an aggressive faith because of the concept of jihad, but this is actually a misunderstood term. Because Muslims believe that God wants a just world, they tend to be activists, and they emphasize that people are equal before God. These are two reasons why African Americans have been drawn in such large numbers to Islam. They now comprise about one-third of all Muslims in America.

Meanwhile, this egalitarian streak also plays itself out in relations between the sexes. Muhammad, Islam's prophet, actually was a reformer in his day. Following the Qur'an, he limited the number of wives a man could have and strongly recommended against polygamy.

The Qur'an laid out a set of marriage laws that guarantees married women their family names, their own possessions and capital, the right to agree upon whom they will marry, and the right to initiate divorce. In Islam's early period, women were professionals and property owners, as increasingly they are today. None of this may seem obvious to most Americans because of cultural overlays that at times make Islam appear to be a repressive faith toward women—but if you look more closely, you can see

the egalitarian streak preserved in the Qur'an, finding statement in contemporary terms. In today's Iran, for example, more women than men attend university, and in recent local elections there, 5,000 women ran for public office.

Islam shares America's new interest in food purity and diet. Muslims conduct a month-long fast during the holy month of Ramadan, a practice that many Americans admire and even seek to emulate. I happened to spend quite a bit of time with a non-Muslim friend during Ramadan this year. After a month of being exposed to a practice that brings some annual control to human consumption, my friend let me know, in January, that he was "doing a little Ramadan" of his own. I asked what he meant. "Well, I'm not drinking anything or smoking anything for at least a month, and I'm going off coffee." Given this friend's normal intake of coffee, I could not believe my ears. Muslims also observe dietary laws that restrict the kind of meat they can eat. These laws require that the permitted, or halal, meat is prepared in a manner that emphasizes cleanliness and a humane treatment of animals. These laws ride on the same trends that have made organic foods so popular.

Islam is tolerant of other faiths. Like America, Islam has a history of respecting other religions. In Muhammad's day, Christians, Sabians, and Jews in Muslim lands retained their own courts and enjoyed considerable autonomy. As Islam spread east toward India and China, it came to view Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism as valid paths to salvation. As Islam spread north and west, Judaism especially benefited. The return of the Jews to Jerusalem, after centuries as outcasts, only came about after Muslims took the city in 638. The first thing the Muslims did there was to rescue the Temple Mount, which by then had been turned into a garbage heap.

Today, of course, the long discord between Israel and Palestine has acquired harsh religious overtones. Yet the fact remains that this is a battle for real estate, not a war between two faiths. Islam and Judaism revere the same prophetic lineage, back to Abraham, and no amount of bullets or barbed wire can change that. As The New York Times recently reported, while Muslim/Jewish tensions sometimes flare on university campuses, lately these same students have found ways to forge common links. For one thing, the two religions share similar dietary laws, including ritual slaughter and a prohibition on pork. Joining forces at Dartmouth this fall, the first kosher/halal dining hall is scheduled to open its doors this autumn. If the American Pilgrims were watching now, they'd be rubbing their eyes with amazement. And, because they came

here fleeing religious persecution, they might also understand.

Islam encourages the pursuit of religious freedom. The Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock is not the world's first story of religious emigration. Muhammad and his little band of 100 followers fled religious persecution, too, from Mecca in the year 622. They only survived by going to Madinah, an oasis a few hundred miles north, where they established a new community based on a religion they could only practice secretly back home. No wonder then that, in our own day, many Muslims have come here as pilgrims from oppression, leaving places like Kashmir, Bosnia, and Kosovo, where being a Muslim may radically shorten your life span. When the 20th century's list of emigrant exiles is added up, it will prove to be heavy with Muslims, that's for sure.

All in all, there seems to be a deep resonance between Islam and the United States. Although one is a world religion and the other is a sovereign nation, both are traditionally very strong on individual responsibility. Like New Hampshire's motto, "Live Free or Die," America is wedded to individual liberty and an ethic based on right action. For a Muslim, spiritual salvation depends on these. This is best expressed in a popular saying: "Even when you think God isn't watching you, act as if he is."

Who knows? Perhaps it won't be long now before words like salat (Muslim prayer) and Ramadan join karma and Nirvana in Webster's Dictionary, and Muslims take their place in America's mainstream.

[This article originally ran on www.beliefnet.com and is republished with permission. Michael Wolfe's next book, *Taking Back Islam*, will be published by Rodale in the fall of 2002.]

Isra' and Mi'raj

Continued from page 1

Allah, and the 5 mandatory daily prayers were given as a gift to the Prophet for his Ummah (all Muslims.) The Prophet was ascended up to the 7th sky and heavens, where he witnessed a number of scenes from Paradise and Hell. These are documented in a number of the Prophet's traditions.

The Makkans had a hard time believing the Prophet about the journey. Even a number of Muslims had their faith shaken, as they could not understand how he could have completed this journey in one night. For the disbelievers, it made them more stubborn in their disbelief. But for the true believers, it only strengthened their faith. For example, the Prophet's trusted Companion, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) didn't flinch when confronted with this miracle. He firmly believed in it. It was because of this conviction that he was given the title "as-Siddiq" (the truthful one). Given today's advances in technology, where jumbo jets can send us across the ocean in a span of mere hours, how can we deny this miracle of travel, especially from the Being Who has no limits, be it of time or distance? As well, those who object to the possibility of such a journey are forgetting the story of Prophet Sulayman (peace be upon him), who lived several centuries prior to Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). It was during his lifetime that the throne of the Queen of Sheba was

transported about 1,500 miles from her country to his kingdom.

This blessed journey is definitely one of great significance for Muslims for its miraculous nature and, among other things, for its establishment of the second crucial pillar in Islam: Prayers – five times in a day. It is also important because it clearly shows Islam's connection to and importance for Jerusalem and Palestine, in an era where terrorists, zealots and fanatics are bent on and have succeeded in wresting control of the blessed land from Muslims. May Allah Save the third holiest mosque and the city around it from the impure claws of the non-Believers.

The 27th night of Rajab is known as "the night of Mi'raj" and voluntary prayers during this night have been emphasized by all religious scholars and Sufis. It should be a night of special reflection, recitation of the Qur'an and prostration by performing "nawaafil." It's a great opportunity to make special Duaa or supplications – a believer's special tool to gain Allah's forgiveness and strongest guard against evil. May Allah let us benefit from this night every year by making Du'a, asking for forgiveness for our sins, asking for strength in our faith in order to follow Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), asking for beauty and essence in our prayers [Husn-e-Ibaadah], asking for Allah's bounties in this world and in the life Hereafter.

Russia's Muslim Women Sue For Right To Wear Headscarf In Passport

(AFP, 19/7/2002) — A Russian court opened hearings Friday into a suit filed by three Muslim women in the central region of Tatarstan who accuse the local government of treading on their constitutional rights by barring them from wearing headscarves in their passport photographs.

The Interfax news agency reported that the unprecedented case opened in Tatarstan's capital Kazan with opening statements from the plaintiffs who cited the Koran in their defence. The defendants, represented by a local interior ministry officials, argued that headscarves make it impossible to properly identify a woman in her documents.

The next hearing has been set for August 2, Interfax reported from Kazan. "We understand perfectly well that we cannot tread on religious freedoms. But orders are orders," Galina Fakhruddinova, in charge of the local passport agency, was quoted as saying by IZVESTIA earlier this month.

Some 51 percent of Tatarstan's 3.8 million population are Muslim ethnic Tatars.

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Kidz Korner

Back to School...

Farheen W.

As the weather gets a little cooler and the days become shorter, we sadly realize that summer is coming to an end and the seasons are about to change once again. With summer ending, the one thought that looms in everyone's mind is: Back to School.

Children are saddened by the thought of having to go back to school. No more late

nights. No more playing outside in the daytime. No more long visits to grandparents or aunts and uncle's homes.

But the idea of going back to school should not make you sad. You should view the beginning of the school year as a brand new opportunity. An opportunity to see old friends and make new ones. An opportunity to gain more knowledge. An opportunity to join in various

activities, such as hockey or music. And finally, an opportunity to help others around you.

Every year, the classes are filled with both familiar and unfamiliar faces. While it is great to see your old friends and share summer vacation stories with one another, don't forget about the new people. If you have a new student in your class, try to be his or her friend.

It is scary going to a new school and not knowing anybody, and you can make a person feel more welcome just by saying hello or asking them to sit with you at lunch.

As much as you all dread schoolwork, school provides you with an opportunity to learn about different subjects. Nowhere else will you be able to learn about so many new and exciting topics. And if there is something that is really interesting, you should ask your teacher to talk more about it. Or better yet, go to the library, research it and present the facts to your classmates. Remember, knowledge will always help you regardless of where you are.

At school you can join in all different types of activities like sports, music, drama and even chess! Not only will you have fun, but you will be able to meet people who enjoy the same activities that we do. And fun activities also help to make school more fun!

Finally, as you enter the new school year, you can use this as an opportunity to help others around you. Perhaps you are very good in math and can help a classmate who is having trouble with some math questions. Or maybe you are good at a sport and can help another team member improve his/her game. Although you should be proud of yourself if you are good at something, Allah will be proud of you if you share your talents and help others as well.

So as you head back to school on September 3rd, don't be sad that summer has ended, but think of all the good things that you will do this year and all the fun you will have with the people around you. Remember, only you can make this school year a success!

A page from the
Life of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Will return in the next issue, Insha Allah

When You Look At Me

By: Suzy Fouad (14 years old)

What do you see when you look at me
Do you see someone limited, or someone free
All some people can do is just look and stare
Simply because they can't see my hair

Others think I am controlled and uneducated
They think that I am limited and un-liberated
They are so thankful that they are not me
Because they would like to remain 'free'

Well free isn't exactly the word I would've used
Describing women who are cheated on and abused
They think that I do not have opinions or voice
They think that being hooded isn't my choice
They think that the hood makes me look caged
That my husband or dad are totally outraged

All they can do is look at me in fear
And in my eye there is a tear
Not because I have been stared at or made fun of
But because people are ignoring the one up above

On the day of judgment they will be the fools
Because they were too ashamed to play by
their own rules
Maybe the guys won't think I am a cutie
But at least I am filled with more inner beauty

See I have declined from being a guy's toy
Because I won't let myself be controlled by a boy
Real men are able to appreciate my mind
And aren't busy looking at my behind

Hooded girls are the ones really helping the muslim cause
The role that we play definitely deserves applause
I will be recognized because I am smart and bright
And because some people are inspired by my sight

The smart ones are attracted by my tranquility
In the back of their mind they wish they were me
We have the strength to do what we think is right
Even if it means putting up a life long fight

You see we are not controlled by a mini skirt and
tight shirt
We are given only respect, and never treated like dirt

So you see, we are the ones that are free and liberated
We are not the ones that are sexually terrorized
and violated
We are the ones that are free and pure
We're free of STD's that have no cure

So when people ask you how you feel about the hood
Just sum it up by saying 'baby its all good'

Four characters password!

My kids love going to the Web, and they keep track of their passwords by writing them on Post-it notes.

One day I noticed their Disney password was "MickeyMinnieGoofyPluto," and so I asked why it was so long.

"Because," my son explained, "they say it has to have at least four characters."

The Girl and Her Mother:

By Safa Maryam Mohammed, Grade 6
Russel D. Barber Public School

One day when a girl came from school she had a paper in her hand that she showed to her mother. Her mother looked at her in surprise. This is what it said:

For cutting the grass: \$4.00
For babysitting my sister: \$2.00
For cleaning my room: \$4.00
For setting the table: \$4.00
For vacuuming the house: \$2.00
The total was \$18.00

In her mind, her mother was flashing through her memories of when the girl was a baby. Then she took the hands of her daughter and said:

For changing your diapers: no cost
For cleaning your gushy: no cost
For taking care of you when you were sick: no cost
For keeping monsters from under your bed: no cost
And for so many other things I did for you, altogether my love costs nothing.

The girl started to cry.
Then she hugged her mother, took the paper and wrote on it in bold letters: **FULLY PAID!**

HEY KIDZ...WANT TO BE FAMOUS??

Tell us what you did over the summer holidays!
Did you go on an exciting trip, volunteer at an event or perhaps you wrote a cool story or poem.
Well, send us your adventures and stories to be published in an upcoming issue of

The Ambition.

Write to kidzkorner@theambition.com and share the
EXCITEMENT!!

(Please include your name, address, grade and school.
You can even send a picture if you would like!)

Chechen Refugees Describe Atrocities By Russian Troops

Villagers Tortured, Killed In Assault, Reports Say

NAZRAN, RUSSIA (Washington Post, 29/6/2002) — Kuslum Savnykaevna has no intention of heeding the Russian government's wish that she abandon the converted car repair shop where she and her five children live in Ingushetia and return to their former home in neighbouring Chechnya.

And if she ever had any doubt that they must remain refugees in this impoverished region in southern Russia, she said, what she witnessed in the last month erased it.

In mid-May, Savnykaevna went to visit her parents in Mesker Yurt, a village of roughly 2,000 about seven miles east of Grozny, the ruined capi-

tal of Chechnya, where separatist rebels have been battling the pro-Russian government. She had not been there long when Russian troops suddenly surrounded and closed off the village to conduct a *zachistka*, or cleansing operation, that lasted three weeks.

She said she saw some of the victims of the operation after their relatives carried them back from a field the soldiers had occupied at the edge of the village: a man whose eye was gouged out; another whose fingers were cut off; a third whose back had been sliced in rows with the sharp edge of broken glass, then doused with alcohol and set afire, according to his relatives. Her brothers and nephews were spared, she said, only because her family paid the soldiers a \$400 bribe not to hurt them.

"I have never imagined such tortures, such cruelty," she said, sitting at a small table in the dim room that has housed her family here for nearly three years. "There were a lot of men who were left only half alive."

