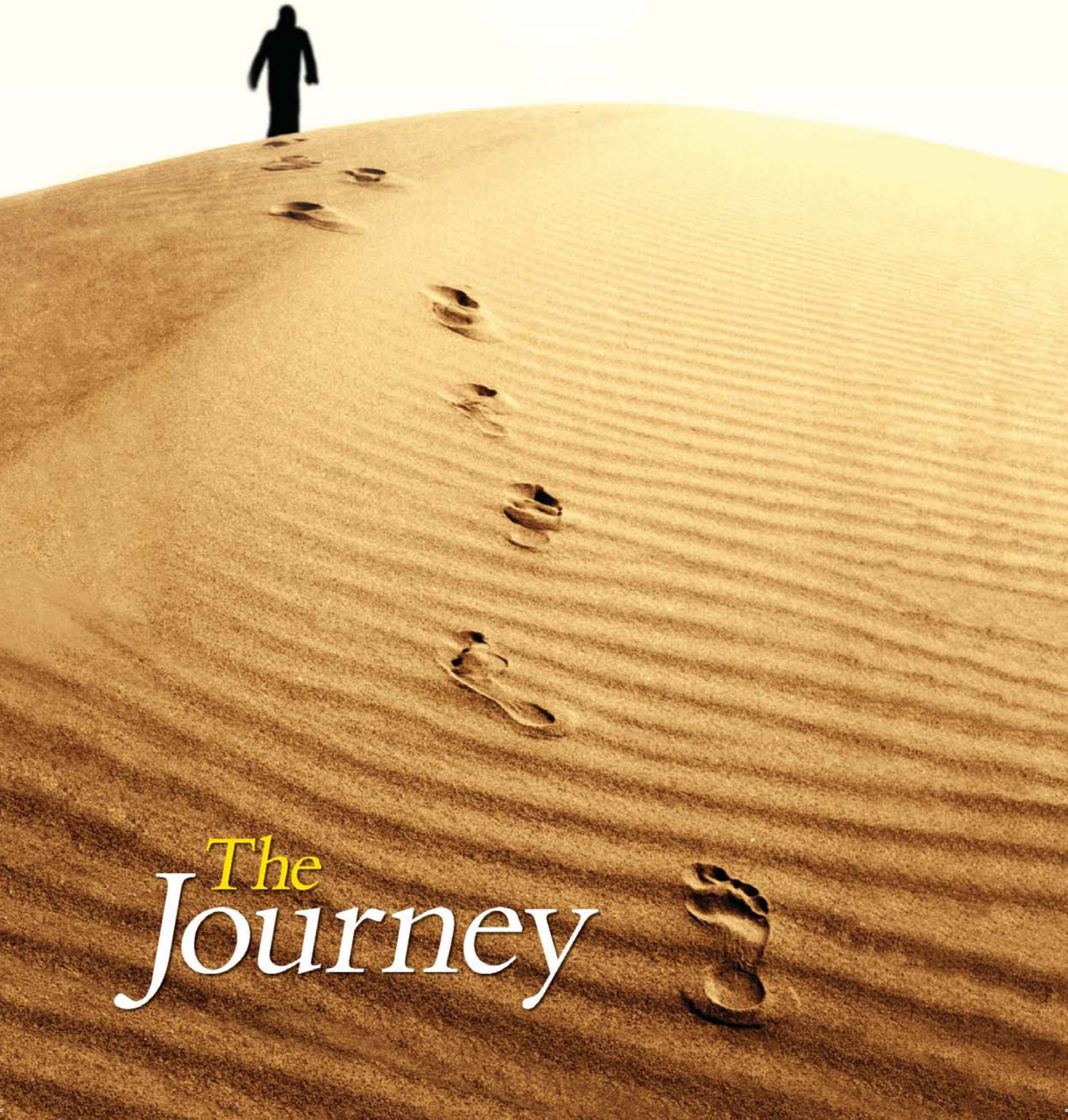


THE MESSAGE

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The
Journey

Seeds of Goodness in Ramadan



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Portrait of a Traveller



Let the journey begin...

Imam Al Fudayl ibn Iyaadh - Rahimahu Allah - once sat with an elderly man and asked him, "How old are you?"

The man replied, "60 years old."

"Did you know," said Al Fudayl, "that for 60 years you have been travelling towards your Lord, and that you have almost arrived."

The man was reduced to silence. He whispered, "Inna lillaahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raaji'oon (To Allah we belong and to Him we return)."

Al Fudayl asked, "Do you know the meaning of that statement. You are saying that you are Allah's slave and that to Him you are returning. Whoever knows that he is the slave of Allah, and that to Him he shall return, should know that he shall be stopped on the Day of Judgment. And whoever knows that he will be stopped let him also know that he will be responsible for what he did in life. And whoever knows that he will be responsible for what he did, let him know that he will be questioned. And whoever knows that he will be questioned, let him prepare an answer now!"

"What then shall I do," asked the man.

"It is simple," said Al Fudayl. "Do good in what is left of your life, forgiven shall be your past. If not, you shall be taken to account for the past and what is to come."

In the not-so-far-away days of old, whenever a journey was to be undertaken proper provisions had to be prepared. The deserts were long, hot, and harsh. Unmerciful. There were no truck stops to fill up with Doritos, or rest stops to buy a coke from a vending machine. In fact, there was not even a human in sight for miles upon miles of barren sand dunes.

Thus, you had to have the provision with you before you made the journey. Enough food, enough water, enough everything to carry you to your destination.

From here, in the verses dealing of Hajj, when everyone shall have to make some sort of journey to reach the Ka'bah, Allah tuned the attention of His slaves to another journey, a journey every soul is travelling, whether they know it or care to just remain heedless. Allah turned their attention to the journey to the Hereafter, to Paradise or Hell.

[And take a provision (with you) for the journey; verily the best provision is Taqwa (piety and righteousness).] - Al Baqarah 2:197

Ibn Umar narrates: one day I was with the Messenger of Allah (Sal Allahu

Alayhi wa Sallam). He then turned to me, held my shoulders with both of his blessed hands, and said: "Be in this life like a stranger or a traveller."

And whenever Ibn Umar narrated this to his disciples he would add: "If you reach the evening, do not await (to be alive) by dawn, and if you reach dawn, do not await (to be alive) by evening. Take advantage of your Health before you fall sick. And take advantage of your life, before you die." - Bukhari

The Prophet - Sal Allahu Alayhi wa Sallam - said, "What have I got to do with the material world. The example of the material world and I is that of a traveller. Travelling in the afternoon heat, he stopped to rest under the shade of a tree for some moments. Then, he rose and left it." - Ahmad, Tirmidhi.

The journey: life. The destination: Paradise or Hellfire. Ali - Radi Allahu 'Anhu - used to say, "The material world has gotten up to leave you and the Hereafter has gotten up on its way towards you. Both of them have children, so be from amongst the children of the Hereafter and not from the children of the material world. For verily, today is deeds and no accountancy, and tomorrow is accountancy and no deeds."

A wiseman once said, "Strange is he who has the material world walking away from him and the hereafter walking towards him. How could he busy himself with what is leaving him and turn his back to that which is coming towards him."

This is the journey that we are all travelling; now it is up to us to take advantage of the time. Muhammad ibn Waasi' - Rahimahu Allah - was asked once how he was feeling. He replied, "What's your opinion of someone who travels a mile towards the hereafter every single day?"

Dear brother, dear sister. Every soul is on this journey. Some have understood this and are spending their days in preparation for the questions to come, for the repayment. Others are living life 'to the fullest' as they say, heedless and negligent of the hereafter. Allah - Subhanahu wa Ta' Ala - describes the day that they will finally wake up and smell the fire: [(It will be said to the sinners): "Indeed you were heedless of this, now We have removed your covering, and sharp is your sight this Day!"] - Qaaf 50/22. All that concerns these types of people is a new car, a bigger house, and a handsome mate. Some wake up in this life with time to repent. Others will hear the above verse when regret will be worthless.

By Mohammed Adra

Reference: Portrait of a Traveller by Muhammad Al-Shareef



Follow the Yellow Brick Road

The following question has been transcribed and summarised from the “Absence of tolerance” panel, which was presented by Dr Zachariah Matthews, Sheikh Kamal Taleb and Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman. The full lecture can be downloaded from islamicmedia.com.au

Question: How do we approach the disunity of the commencement of Ramadan? Many families are disunited on this issue and end up fasting on different days which is a cause for division and disappointment.

Dr Zachariah: There is a quite distinct difference of opinion on this issue, whether it is the sighting of the moon or using calculations to determine the commencement of Ramadan and Eid. My recommendation is to follow the Masjid you belong to. That is: the Masjid you pray at regularly and the Imam that you follow. If you have an opinion that you strongly believe in which differs from the opinion of the Masjid you follow, try and convince them. But at the end of the day even if they choose a method different to yours, follow the Jama'ah (majority). Because this is an issue where if we allow it to continue in the way it is going, we will allow this to be a cause of a greater issue which is division, like a cancer cell that is dividing and growing. So my recommendation is to follow the majority opinion.

Sheikh Kamal: My personal opinion on the issue is to apply the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S), which is to fast when we sight the moon and to break our fast when we sight the moon. Some people may laugh at this because unfortunately there is no unity on applying this important hadith in this country. However, I think that the leaders of this community need to meet and tackle this issue much better. We should learn from our past and disunity/division. I believe that a representative from each community should meet, wisely tackle the issue, be tolerant towards each other, and come to a conclusion or at least an opinion that the majority of them would agree on and implement it.

Sheikh Shady: I personally do not believe that the Muslims around the world will begin their fast and break their fast on the same day until Allah (Swt) grants us a Khilafa to follow and unite upon. However I want to highlight the reason why the scholars disagree on this topic so that each side can at least understand the points of view put forth so that we can at least tolerate each other's opinion. To summarise it quickly, the issue is all based upon the hadith

that Sheikh Kamal mentioned, which is to sight the moon with your eyes. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S) there were no telescopes. When the moon is born, you cannot see it with the naked eye only until after 16-18 hours after its birth. The disagreement lies with the telescope: if you use it you will see the moon at its birth, however if you see it with the naked eye, you will not be able to see it until 16-18 hours after it is born. That is the disagreement that the scholars have: are we permitted to see it with a telescope? Some say yes, we have the technology to sight it, so technically we have seen it. Others say no, we do not need to use the telescope as we need to sight it with the naked eye as the Prophet (S) did. By understanding this big difference of opinion, we can see the different opinions each side follows and at the very least tolerate it.

Some people in the community mention that the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) need to resolve the issue and as the secretary of ANIC, I would like to mention a meeting that was held where over 40 Imams of different nationalities came and discussed the issue of the commencement of Ramadan. Neither side could be convinced of the opposite opinion, so if a decision was put forth to come to a consensus, many Imams would not take part. Therefore, my opinion due to this example is to follow the Masjid that you follow as Dr Zachariah mentioned. On that note, there is no need to refute a particular group and look down upon them for holding their opinion. At the very least we need to tolerate each other's opinion and avoid degrading one another for fasting on different days. May Allah guide us and unite us. Ameen

On a final note, The Message Magazine would like to highlight that the key message to take from this article is to appreciate other opinions and to tolerate each other when it comes to this issue. Unfortunately some families are divided where some members start to fast one day and others on another due to their difference of opinion. As demonstrated in the article, our Mashayekh could not come to a consensus (Allah willing, we will in the future some time), therefore we cannot expect our siblings or parents to conform to our thinking or school of thought. We must try at the very least to understand each other and tolerate the respective viewpoints without any discord and friction.

Wassalam

The Team from the Message Magazine

The Truth is Out There...

I was born in Australia of Polish Background. I was brought up as a Roman Catholic and used to attend church almost every Sunday. I have always been a believer and remember strongly believing and engaging in prayers as young as five years of age. By the time I was ten, I didn't fit in at school. My mind was always somewhere else, searching and pondering. I used to think, "I don't need these people as my friends anyway because I have God and Jesus."

Teachers would always say, on my school reports, that I was withdrawn. My games often consisted of my playing "priest" and giving religious sermons to my toys. By the time I was thirteen, I was planning for the coming of the Anti-Christ and came up with all these plans on how not to follow him, when he'd be pretending to be God. At this point, after a lot of reflection, I also decided to no longer pray to Jesus and pray solely to God.

During my teenage years, I used to spend hours wondering about, and searching, for truth and knowledge. I even wrote some letters to Christian organisations asking them for their interpretation of the meaning of life. "Surely it can't just be studying, working, and that's it?" I thought, but received no satisfactory replies. I didn't understand why I could in one way be so interested in God and religion, but on the other hand didn't connect with the Bible or the masses held at church. Because of this I continued in major confusion but still, even on my lowest days, would manage to thank God for that day and ask for help. In fact I used to frequently ask God to show me the truth and the purpose of life.

At around 19 years of age, I got to the point where I was completely fed up. I was now open to exploring totally different religions. I attended a private college where there were some overseas students of different faith, including Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. That was my first encounter with Islam, but unfortunately I couldn't find anyone to explain it to me. I came to know Muslims, but didn't know what Islam was!

I went to university and in the second year of my degree course I found out what Islam really was all about, through a Muslim who didn't drink alcohol or go night clubbing (unlike the other Muslims I had met at the private college). He had an amazing character, and this everyone noticed. So I asked him about the Muslims at my previous college. His reply was that according to Islamic teachings Muslims are not allowed to drink and go to night clubs. "Your friends were not practising Islam, and not practising the teachings of Prophet Mohammad (S)" he told me. I asked him to tell me more about this Prophet of whom he spoke. So he taught me about Prophet Mohammad (S) and his teachings. I wanted to know more about Islam but we had to finish our assignment.

I couldn't focus on my studies. In my mind I kept thinking, "Who is Mohammad? Why hadn't I learned about him at school? Who are Muslims? Why do some Muslims practise Islam, and why some Muslims do not?and so on."

The more I learnt about Islamic teachings, the more I gradually changed. My fear of God increased as I was becoming more aware of reality. I made sure that there was nothing like alcohol in my life, my manner of dressing changed to a more conservative look, etc. Each night I prayed to God, to show me the true religion; each time I would be shown Islam. Surely, "*The Truth is from thy Lord; so be not at all in doubt.*" Qur'an 2:147.

One night, sometime in 1999 I told God I needed to escape the worldly problems of my life. I needed to focus on Him alone. This was the night I reverted to Islam, right then! That immense fear of God in the context that I must not disobey Him; that I must start doing good deeds for His sake, and that the Day of Judgement is very real, was the catalyst which prompted my decision. It was a powerful, amazing night for me, and I felt extremely light, almost as if I were floating. I received a lot of guidance from the person whom I later married.

To this day my family is not willing to accept me as a Muslim, even though Islam has brought the best out in me by showing me how to respect my family, and especially my parents, as it says in the Qur'an:

"Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them to attain old age with thee, say not "Fie" unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little. Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds. If ye are righteous, then lo! He is ever forgiving unto those who turn (unto Him)." Chapter 17 Verse 23-25

My goal is to always strive in the Path of Allah Ta'ala; InshaAllah to someday become an Aalimeh, (an Islamic scholar) so I can help others for the sake of Allah. My thirst for knowledge of Islam continues to increase, (Alhamdulillah) and one thing I have noticed during the time since I became Muslim - I have never been bored - I can't think of even a single time when I have had nothing to do!

Your sister in Islam

Aisha Eliza Saleem



REVERSION

Find your way through the Mist...

The Journey of Hajj: Personal Reflections

Adopting Ihram

At last we were airborne on our way to Malaysia, the first leg of the pilgrimage to Makkah. Malaysia was the point where we had to adopt ihram (state of consecration) after *salah* (ritual prayer) and a shower. This proved easier said than done. I sat around wearing nothing but two pieces of cotton cloth secured by one large blanket pin and waited for the plane to Jeddah. Sitting on the plane in mixed company seemed even stranger, and I moved carefully and warily to ensure this unaccustomed costume would not slip off. My wife, Hakimah, had no such concerns, being dressed in ordinary clothes.

Jeddah is our waiting room of hope that one day the luggage will be found and a bus will complete our journey to Makkah. The sight of the old crescent moon in the dawn sky was reassuring and beautiful; we had come in time. The bus journey to Makkah passed in a blur made worse by jet lag and fatigue. Then suddenly we passed slowly over a bridge beneath which hundreds of people were streaming. I glanced in the direction to which they were moving and gasped to realize I was looking at the Masjid Al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque); it was time for 'Asr Prayer (Afternoon Prayer). *Labbayka, Allahumma, labbayk* (O my Lord, here I am at Your service). Yes, indeed, we had come to fulfil the will of Allah.

Circling the Ka'bah

We entered the Holy Mosque for the first time at Maghrib (sunset) and I prayed with tears in my eyes. Then very slowly as the place cleared a little, we moved forward to see for the first time the centre to which years of prayer had been directed: the Ka'bah, centre of the Islamic world and jewel of the garden of paradise.

We joined the faithful slowly gyrating around the Ka'bah and made the required seven circuits chanting. We were caught up in a large group of people intent on staying together and following a leader who intoned long phrases in Arabic that were re-

peated by all around him. At one point I became aware of stepping on someone and looked down to discover a prostrate figure kissing the Maqam Ibrahim (a stepping stone used by Prophet Ibrahim during the original construction of the Ka'bah and housed in a glass enclosure in the north side of the Ka'bah); not a required ritual and very risky in such a throng of people.

With the Tawaf (circumambulation of the Ka'bah) and two short *rak'ahs* (complete cycles in prayer) completed, we looked about for the place to perform Sa'i, the run between Safa and Marwah hills. Immediately, two people came forward to show us the way and to comment on the mix of people and languages. They spoke German with Hakimah. We were to find that whenever we needed help, our needs were answered. What a wonderful community to be with!

Praying in Makkah

The days in Makkah passed quickly. The most beautiful sound was the Adhan for the Dawn Prayer, arousing one from sleep an hour earlier than required, then repeated again just before dawn. There was rarely space to pray near the Ka'bah or on the second floor, but the top floor was less crowded. The morning air was cool, and, to my delight, there were many newly hatched hawk moths flying about or shivering on the cold marble. I noticed that the many birds there never alighted on the black cloth covering the Ka'bah. The recital of Qur'an at dawn is witnessed and most inspiring at the centre of the Islamic world. The highlight for me came while sitting with the Ka'bah in clear sight and repeating *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). What a wonderful opening to the day!

The swirling congregation of worshipers in the Masjid is, of course, mixed men and women, together due to necessity, and this gave rise to an amusing incident. We were waiting for the Noon Prayer to begin when a small group of men came in to fill the gap in front of us. They were behind a larger group of women who had already gathered in front of a wall. It took a few moments for the men to realize they would be praying behind the women and there was an immediate outcry for the women to move away. They had no such intention. Voices were raised and the newly arrived soon engaged

with others on the outrageous situation they had brought upon themselves. Others nearby joined in the discussion and one, louder than the rest, said quite simply, "Why don't YOU move?" This idea took a while to comprehend but the men eventually shuffled away, clearly demoralized, though I suspect none the wiser.


Visiting Madinah

After a few days in Makkah, our group was booked to visit Madinah, going by air and returning by bus. We were more relaxed in Madinah, having shed the ihram in favour of traditional Islamic dress. The first move was to find the burial site of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his closest Companions and to pray there. The location is marked by a green dome amid the billowing fabric roof panels, but the approach on foot is difficult on account of the large number of men with the same intention. I found myself in a slowly moving mass and then at the tomb before I could properly prepare. I struggled for words, but was swept away carrying only a vivid memory of the physical details of that sacred place. The women were granted very little time in which to perform this ritual though they were as numerous as men. We were back again to the standard Muslim worldview in Madinah and divorced from true Islam.

Our stay in Madinah gave us the chance to tour a little and visit various historic sites, among them the mosque with two qiblahs, one that originally faced Jerusalem and now the one towards Makkah diametrically opposite. Another site we visited on foot was the enormous graveyard just beyond the Prophet's Mosque, with its countless earth mounds and not a single one identified. Upon reflection this seems most appropriate since we were created from a single soul, a unique blueprint, and will all return to Allah. Yet at the time it seemed very strange indeed.

Standing on Arafat

Our return to Makkah required a change again into the ihram and a long night journey that was uncomfortable and tedious. This time we were housed in Mina, the vast tent city that accommodates nearly two million pilgrims readied for the climax of the Hajj: the standing on the plain of Arafat.



A moving reflection of Hajj

The high point came when we were housed in a tent made entirely of carpets and right at the foot of the Mount of Mercy. At last we were standing on the plain of Arafat. Feelings are hard to describe; the Noon Prayer and the following speeches were most satisfying. I have never been an emotional person and before I had begun my journey to hajj, I cannot remember an occasion where I had come close to shedding a tear. However, after the formal khutbah performed on the day was concluded, I picked a spot just outside my tent and sat and reflected on what I had done (and things I haven't done) in my life. Soon enough, I found myself with my hands raised, asking Allah (swt) for His forgiveness and mercy. The tears rolling down my cheeks reflected a feeling of submissiveness inside of me that I had never previously felt before. I really don't know how long I made dua for that day. Time felt as if it had stayed still. By the end of the day, I actually felt a feeling of being cleansed. The day of Arafat, had gone beyond my expectations.

Spending the Night in Muzdalifah

After spending the day at Arafat, we were on our way from Arafat to Muzdalifah amid thunder, lightning, and a light rain. The bus moved so slowly. I longed to leap out and join the throng making their way on foot. The crowd was so great that eventually the bus stopped in the night and parked in the desert. We would sleep on the gravel.

My next recollection is of being kicked repeatedly on the foot and told to get up for prayer, which is, of course, better than sleep. I found it hard to agree as I took my place in the dark at the end of a long line waiting to use the toilet. With the group collected and looking somewhat the worse for wear, we headed to Makkah past the lines of sheds where the animals were being slaughtered. I reflected on the need for so much slaughter, but Allah knows best.

Stoning the Devil

Next we faced the grim task of stoning the devil: the Jamarat. After the first of these rituals, I could see why this process is fraught with personal danger. It seems to release the worst in people caught up in mass hysteria. The crowd sways as one seething

mass with the single purpose of casting small pebbles at a stone obelisk. I forbade Hakimah to go and completed the ritual for both of us.

The second time I was caught unaware that our party had completed the ritual together while I had visited with a group from England. Thanks to the heroic assistance of one tall, strong brother, I was protected from the worst abuse and survived this ritual unscathed. The crowds were enormous and slow moving, and I wondered why an ambulance there had not driven away to give us more space. On close approach I realised the occupants were dead, trampled underfoot in the crush or pushed over the rampart onto the road 15 meters below. However, it is now comforting to hear that since my trip, Saudi officials have begun the construction of a multi-storey bridge to spread out human traffic around the Jamarat. This will Insha'Allah make this section of the Hajj a lot more safer.

Losing Our Way

Later at Masjid Al-Haram we had to negotiate for a wheelchair for Hakimah to do the Tawaf on the top floor. With Tawaf completed, we returned to Mina to collect our baggage. It was with our attempt to leave Mina and return via a tunnel to Makkah that things began to go awry. Our guide walked ahead and disappeared while we struggled to pick our way through a building site, and then we became separated from each other. We eventually met up at the end of the tunnel and were greeted with pouring rain, but had no idea how to return to the masjid.

A taxi was found and then we were entertained by a tour of the back streets of Makkah and a dialogue between the driver and the police. About 1 kilometre from the masjid, the taxi stalled in a traffic jam and we alighted and tried to make our way alone, mostly by trial and error.

Saying Farewell

The two million on Hajj that year were now all assembled in the masjid at the time of the Night Prayer and attempting the farewell Tawaf. As I looked down from the third floor toward the Ka'bah, I was startled to see the majority of people were

circulating in a clockwise direction. It slowly became clear that those carried on litters high above the crowd were circulating closer to the Ka'bah and much faster than those farther out, giving rise to the illusion of clockwise rotation because of the relative speeds.

Looking down from that third floor, I can vividly remember the sea of people circulating the Ka'bah. It felt as if I could actually hear the thousands of duas being made and the verses of the Quran being recited by the people many metres below me. The attempt at farewell was a very spiritual yet saddening experience. As I began to walk back to my hotel to depart, I remember thinking to myself, whether I would ever be invited to visit the house of Allah again? Would I ever get the chance to pray in front of the Ka'bah? Or to pass by the grave of our beloved Prophet (s)? As I was about to leave the Masjid, I turned around to have one last look at the Ka'bah. I made one last dua and as if I had to physical lift my legs to move, walked back to the hotel.

Looking back over the events of this one and only Hajj, I would strongly recommend that none should delay into old age to complete this pivotal event, for it requires stamina and an alert mind. Also, make the recitations simple at each of the rituals and ignore the well-meaning efforts of many to overload one with phrases that cannot be easily memorized. Two things worried me greatly before the Hajj: one is large crowds and the other is blazing sun and heat. The midday heat in Makkah was never threatening on this occasion and the mornings were chilly and bracing. As for the crowds, they were never a problem since one is entirely alone, caught up in the moment and oblivious to distractions. But in the stoning ritual at Jamarat, look out; this can reveal people at their worst. Otherwise, one of the great delights of Hajj is the excellent *adab* (manners) shown by everyone. This surely is the best community that has been raised on earth, but Allah knows best.

By Ibrahim Abdul Malik



Rabbie Zalaf
IT Director

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Al Quran

There is only one wonder left on earth. It is not the pyramids of Giza so large and magnificent; it is not the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu which seem so perfectly aligned with the sun and the stars. It is not just a wonder, but an eternal miracle, which not only sheds light on our existence, but creates an inner light for all those who read it. The Quran may look like a book, smell like a book, even 'act' like a book, but it is a miracle, by and in itself. It is the last book of Allah (Swt) sent for the guidance of humanity through the last prophet Muhammad (S).

The Quran was revealed piece by piece over a period of 23 years. The Prophet received the first revelation in 610CE, in the cave of Hira in the mountain of light (Jabal Noor) just a stone's throw from the House of Allah in the city of Mecca.

"Read in the name of your Lord, who created, created man from a clot. Read, for your lord is most generous, who teaches by means of the pen, teaches man what he does not know" (96:1-5).

So very beautiful and powerful...

In five short verses, the way man perceived life changed for eternity. These five simple verses provided an insight that philosophers have argued about since written history began, and provided facts that scientists will not discover until well into the future. A miracle and indeed not a minor one...

The Journey of the Quran was not just the revelation of chapters and verses given to the people to learn and worship. It would be the guide throughout time immemorial. The beginning of its journey was through Mecca and Medina and the hijra in between. However, to this day, the Qur'an contin-

ues to have infinite meanings and will continue to dazzle future generations.

As Allah (Swt) says in the Quran;

"If all the trees on earth were pens and more than the oceans were ink, that would not be enough to record the Word of God" [31:27, 18:109].

The Quran has had such a great journey, from being memorised, to being recorded by scribes, then copied again and again and again. Then printed in the modern age using different methods from screen printing, etching and now being passed around on CD's, through communication cables and being uploaded onto ipods around the world. It is not *Chinese whispers*, as it has remained the same. Such is the miracle of the Quran that not a single letter or accent has been moved or changed.

The last verses that were revealed sealed the Quran in the most complete way;

"Today I perfected your religion for you and completed my favour to you and have chosen for you Al-Islam as your religion" (5:3).

The Quran will continue its journey, it will continuously be memorised by many people around the world. Accept Islam as a favour upon you. Keep the verses of this miracle within your heart and even the book by your bedside so it is the last thing you see when you switch off your lights.

Your brother in Islam
Amin El Hassan



JOURNEY OF THE REVELATION OF THE QURAN

The Seasonal Muslim



The ABC's of Iman (faith) tells you that in its nature, Iman fluctuates. This means that at times Iman is high and at other times its low. This fluctuation doesn't depend on the time of the year, month or week but on the actions of the person. Iman fluctuates according to ones deeds: if they are righteous, the Iman increases and if a person sins, it is at the cost of his Iman because sins decrease Iman.

We know this information because the Messenger peace be upon him has given us many Ahaadeeth about Iman especially since it's a very important part of a Muslims life and journey to the hereafter.

The 6 pillars of Iman that are taught to us since our early days as Muslims are the foundations of Iman but what we do with each is the real point of this knowledge. Furthermore, the Messenger in explaining Iman tells us that Iman sits in the heart but must be demonstrated through the limbs.

How is it that you believe in Allah and know that he exists when you still sin in secret as if in practice, he doesn't? To any sane person with the smallest of logic, this is not possible but to us all, we know it happens. This is a serious problem that we should really think about and plan to eliminate in our lives. The successful person is the one whose good public image is the same as it is in private.

We believe in Angels and we love them, we know they are around yet we carry on – while supposedly knowing they record our every

deed – without giving much consequence to what we are doing. So do we believe in them or don't we? If we do then the only other explanation for our behaviour when we do the wrong thing is that we don't show them enough respect or care much for what they do. This is another major inconsistency in our Iman.

The Quran is the light of our life and one of the only good things going for Islam at the moment. We will defend it with our blood and hold it to be the true word of Allah. It is so frustrating for a sane person to have a simple look around to see how far Muslims fall short of its teachings. It's like it was sent to another nation altogether. If only the passion for the Quran was complimented with the motivation and drive to implement every verse of it as the Messenger Muhammad peace be upon himself demonstrated to us in his 23 years as a Messenger.

We believe in the Messengers of Allah and what a world they have to offer us! All their stories in the Quran and in the traditions of the Messenger give us so much food for thought, wisdom, examples to live by and experiences full of fruits for us to simply pick from without learning the hard way. Again in this case our Iman fails us because this Iman we have in the Messengers of Allah does not lead us to use the greatest human beings that ever lived as our role models and examples in our lives.

The Messenger Muhammad peace be upon him has made things so easy for us, we need only follow his way and we shall achieve

everything Allah had expected from us. Yet we still think that we are better off on our own and we will respond to his Sunnah when we run out of personal ideas, when it suits us or perhaps when its cool or in season.

We believe in the Day of Judgment but have we really prepared for it? How much sense will it make on the day and how will the angels ever understand us when we try to convince them that we really did believe in the Day of Judgment despite finding ourselves in very serious trouble asking anyone and everyone we can to help us? Since we believed in it, how did we still fail? Wouldn't that have prompted us to work for it??

We believe in the decree of Allah, that he runs the world with all its details and we know that nothing happens in this world without Allah's will and permission – so why do we still complain and bog ourselves down with blame games, "if only's" and other reactions that suggest otherwise?

Brothers and sisters, there are very serious inconsistencies in our Iman. We have the framework but we don't have the content. We have the fields but we don't have the fruit. This is the difference between having the information and having the knowledge – information changes to knowledge when it *means* something. We have to be very careful that our Iman is relegated to information we have about the 6 pillars of Iman and nothing less.

The Iman in our hearts weakens or becomes stronger according to the simple criteria mentioned above. When we do the right thing, our Iman increases and when we do the wrong thing, our Iman decreases.

Iman is what drives us to fear Allah in public and private because we know Allah is watching us – the Iman in Allah is purely the reason for doing the right thing: not the internet cookies tracking our moves on the internet, or the CCTV recording our every move, or the foxtel bills that log what we had watched, or the credit card statement that states what we had purchased.

Our Iman in the Angels tell us that they are around and that they will report to Allah (who knows all things). Should this Iman not make us be embarrassed from them at least, to see us upon sin and have to report that to Allah about us? This is the feeling that Iman should bring towards the angels. We should welcome them and pursue any action that brings them and avoid any actions or things that deter them.

The Quran is there for us for the taking. Our criteria is the Quran, there is no truth beyond what its verses contain, we are not interested in any other culture, lifestyle or principle that contradicts it and the Quran is our lifestyle guide. Why else do we believe in it? We should read it, understand it and live by it.

The Messenger Muhammad was sent for us, what a waste of his blood sweat and tears if we decide to follow someone else who sprung up yesterday. What a waste of life for us when we are awakened on the Day of Judgement or on our death beds to realise how much time we were wasting following the wrong path with the wrong guide? Where is his legacy in our lives? Where are his teachings? It's time to take them all out and share them amongst our Muslim brothers and sisters and our non Muslims friends.

The Day of Judgement is coming from around the corner and our Day of Judgement, our death, maybe nearer than we think – are we ready to die? You may not make it until your next pay, you may not live until your child is born and you may die before the day of your wedding – do you think the Angel of Death waits for any of these things? Do you really think any of these really matter? It's never too

late, now is the best time to pull our socks up and work for it and Allah will be our support and he will hold nothing against us when we repent.

We have to understand that Allah wills but he also provides the means for his slaves to achieve their ends. Things don't fall out of the sky and money doesn't grow on trees. We have to put in the effort and try hard to earn the things we wish for on the Day of Judgement and there is not a moment to lose.

It is natural for our Iman to drop, when we don't find the energy or enthusiasm for the religion. This is something that is not exclusive to religion. Sometimes we feel like that towards hobbies or friends – we feel down or that we just don't feel like it. This is normal but it's what we do about that feeling that makes the difference.

At other times we feel on a high. We feel enthusiastic and full of energy to do the right thing and practise the religion. This is also normal and we also need to be wise about how we handle this. Obviously troughs in our Iman are not the best thing because as you would predict, it certainly doesn't help it back up and may cause it to stagnate at that low level or get worse. What's the solution? The only way to get out of a slum or low of Iman is to dig deep and pull yourself out of it – by doing the right thing again. It may be inconvenient, the last thing you want to do, and an action you feel no motivation for at all – but it has to be done. There is no other way and if you sit there waiting, thinking it'll just come back and that Shaitan is just going to let you build up your Iman by sitting there on your backside, you have another thing coming.

You have to persevere, you have to grind yourself back into worship, you have to remove your own shackles and get back into the swing of things by oiling your own rust. When you do that insha Allah you'll notice yourself feeling better and picking up momentum. You will then find yourself at the point you have wished you were when you were down in the slums.

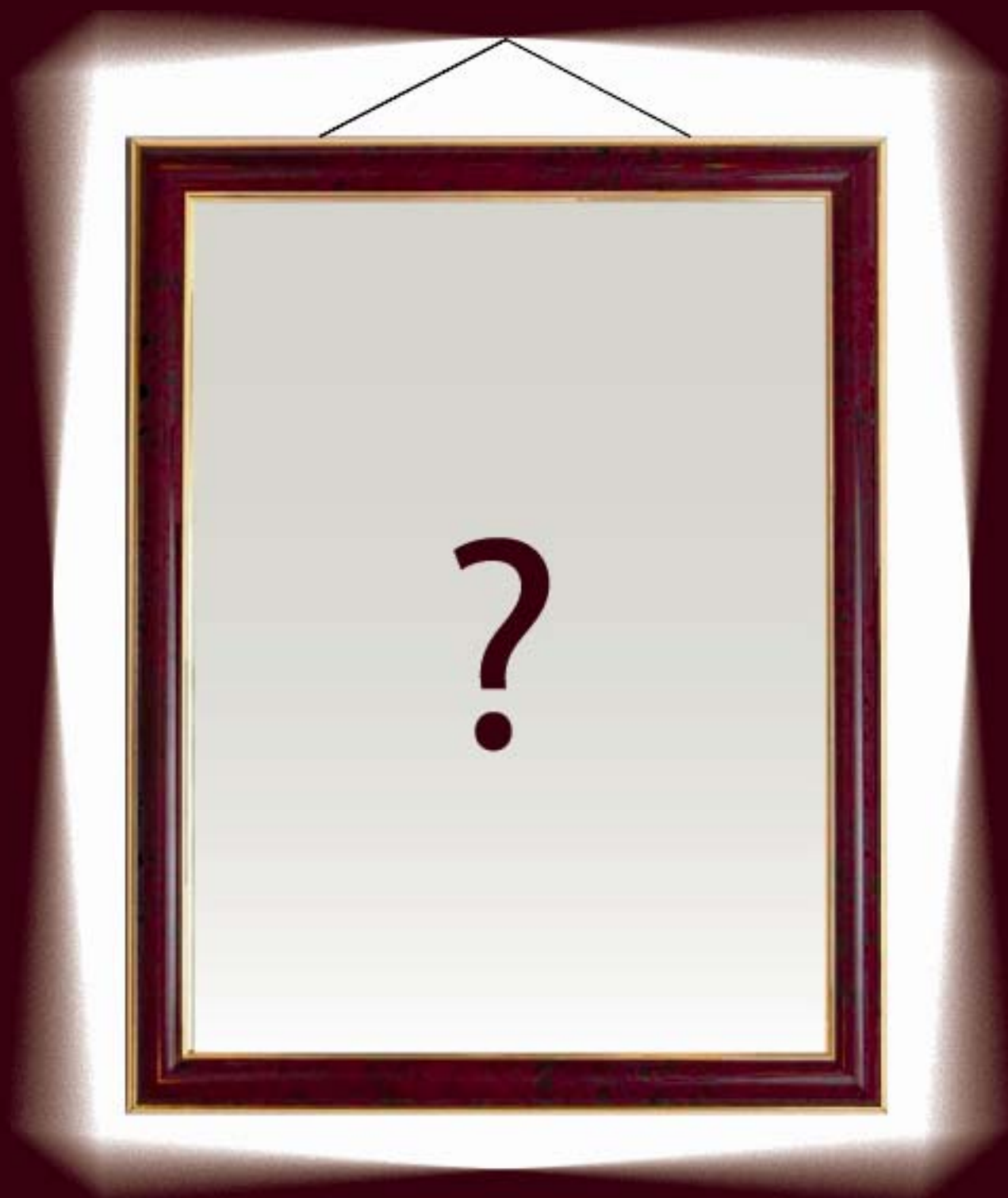
There are some things that can help though. Being in the right environment as opposed to the wrong one, being with the right friends and companions and certainly times of the year can also help - Ramadan for example. All these things while not necessarily connected to the heart can and will affect your Iman.

While trying to rebuild your Iman, it wouldn't be a good idea to be at the shops on Thursday nights for prolonged hours, spending time on the beach or walking around at university during the summer.

Nor is it a good idea for a brother who wants to get close to Allah and increase his Iman to be around his female friends having a laugh? We have to be honest with ourselves and think straight. The heart was not called a 'Qalb' in Arabic for nothing. The word means that which constantly changes, so to have the Iman inside is a juggling act. We have to be cautious and always on our toes to ensure that the Iman in our hearts does not slip away while we are distracted through something petty. Even the television in our lounge rooms has the potential to steal from our Iman if it shows the wrong material.

Above all, let us pray to Allah to forgive our shortcoming during this journey, let us return to him regularly and let us ask for his assistance with this earnestly so that when our time comes we will find that we had done a good job. And Allah knows best.

By Mohammed Khodr



I just went through my bag; do you know what I found?

A HP phone, Cellini wallet, Bloom lipgloss, Morning Glory notepad, Ipod, Sony camera, M store 15+ sunscreen, Oroton diary, sus-sans sunglasses, my makeup bag (includes Yves Saint Laurent, Napoleon, Maybelline, Maxfactor), Energiser batteries, Sony USB, even my fortress of a Muslim book is Darus-salam, some bits of paper and a couple of tissues. Oh yeah, and my bag is Roxy. So

many brands, I must be very materialistic.

Although right now I'm wearing a Roxy skirt, MNG jacket and Supersoft shoes, I feel so much better than I used to be. I remember when I was in high school; I would only shop at General pants and the Urban Store and wouldn't be caught dead in anything that wasn't a label. I have calmed down a *little*.

After I moved out and started doing my own grocery shopping, I fell in love with home

brand. I guess because my money did not stretch so far anymore but I hope that some part of it is that I have grown up a little enough to know that it is not what you wear but how you wear it.

Our generation is so preoccupied with image and to a certain extent this is rightly so. Since the height of the feminist movement in the late 70's there has been a magnifying glass placed over the image of Muslim women. Unfortunately, the magnifying glass that has been used is an unusual one. Unusual in the sense that it is very selective about which items it will magnify; other items it will distort to such a degree that they will no longer look familiar.

Hence, our image must be spotless.

That is not to say that we should be label obsessed, but just acknowledge that as Muslims, the way we present ourselves and the way people view us is essential to the dawah of Islam. Wearing hijab and growing a beard is like wearing a red light at Kmart;

everyone is looking.

The Muslim image has definitely changed over the years; global or national events raise the Muslim community's profile significantly. For a long time, Islam fell under Orientalism, the English painted us, the French used our fabrics for fashion, and Europe put us in their fairytales. Throughout that period in history, not much was known about Islam. It was a shimmering haze of belly dancers and argileh; so obviously culture and not religion.

It was not until the Gulf War and other civil wars that Muslims began to migrate away from their home countries and onto their new dreams. It is with this that the Muslim image has taken a turn for the worse. It is easy to blame society for their misunderstanding of Islam, and their ignorance. How much of this is true?

In Sydney today, I will walk down the street in Newtown or Paddington and not get a second look. Every now and then in the city I might get a comment or the like, but it is not until I tread into Bankstown, Lakemba and Auburn that the community around me seems so unhappy with Muslims. I have a feeling it is because of the everyday interactions that these people are having with Muslims that is giving our image a real beating. What could we be doing wrong?

As Allah (SwT) says in the Quran:

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah (3:110)

We are the best of nations only IF we enjoin good and forbid evil just as Allah (SwT) said about the Bani Israel;

"O Children of Israel! Call to mind the special favour which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all others (for My Message)" (2:122).

But since they did not fulfil the rights on that which was revealed to them, they were punished. Hence, if we Muslims fulfil the rights the Quran owes upon us, we will be successful in this life and the akhirah insha'allah.

As Allah (SwT) says;

"By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy." (103)

Our image should reflect that of being 'the best of nations raised'.

Our image should be full of smiles, the givings of salams and blessings to people, helping people throughout our day, being clean and well kept, not scruffy with dirty fingernails, being kind, giving up your seat on the bus, be a nice driver, not a speeder with road rage and most of all practising what we preach.

We put so much effort into what we wear and use, our phones, gadgets, clothes. Let's put some effort into the other side of our image; manners, etiquette and behaviour. Let's make the journey of the Muslim image move into a positive light, so whenever the magnifying glass comes around, we still come out shining bright.

Your sister in Islam

Rayyan Hawa

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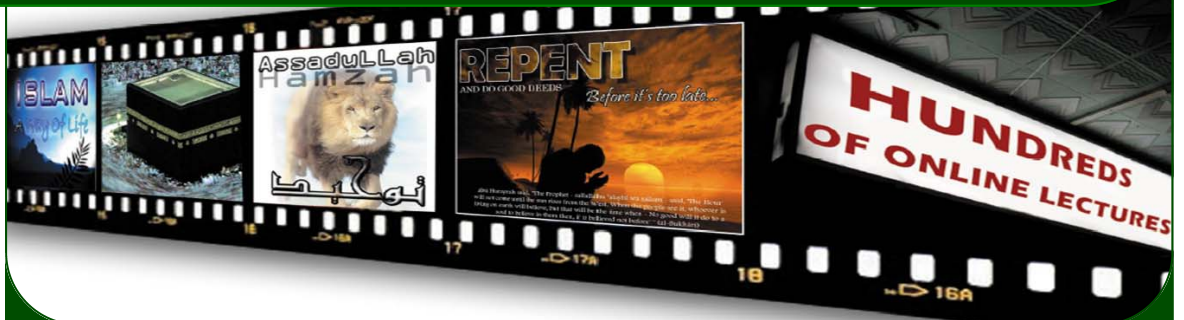


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Feelings of remorse and guilt are natural reflections of sinning if the person who has sinned has a conscious which is alive.

After committing a sin, a person who fears Allah and gives high respect to Him would feel a sense of despondency and despair thinking, "How will God forgive me for this sin?" However, it is noteworthy that despairing of God's mercy is in itself one of the major sins in Islam, for God is ever merciful, ever forgiving.

As He says in the Qur'an:

"Do not despair of God's mercy; He will forgive you of all your sins" Qur'an (39:53).

In another verse, Allah says:

"And He wishes to forgive you" Qur'an (4:146).

Islam fully understands the temptations that come in the way of everyone of us, and that which some of us might go for. Only through repentance one can wipe out those sins and past misdeeds and gradually get free from the clutches of the ego.

Repentance is the most noble and beloved form of obedience in the eyes of Allah the All Mighty. He loves those who repent. Repentance has a status that no other form of worship has. This is why Allah is extremely happy when a servant repents just as a traveller is happy when he finds his lost mount in the desert.

Feeling Allah's satisfaction has its great impact on the heart of the one repenting. Hence, the repenting person reaches the status of being amongst the beloved through his repentance.

Moreover, repentance brings about humbleness and a sense of helplessness to the only Creator; Allah, and that is not easily acquired through other forms of worship.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Except those who repent, have faith and good deeds, those Allah will charge their sins for good deeds. Certainly Allah is most forgiving and merciful." (Qur'an 25:70)

This is a greatest glad tiding for those who repent and combine their repentance with deep faith and good deeds.

Repentance breeds good deeds, whilst sinning (without repentance) can cause deprivation of obedience altogether. It has been said that committing sins regularly will darken and harden the heart and make purifying it once again a difficult mission. It may even lead a person to reject Allah completely (Allah forbid) or lead him to commit a bigger sin. There is no recourse for a sinner except to ask Allah for forgiveness and to feel great regret for his actions.

Repentance is to repent from the heart, to train the heart into obedience and to make a firm resolution never to commit the sin again.

So how does one repent to Allah?

For repentance to be accepted by Allah, one should go through these four stages:

- 1- Stop the sin.
- 2- Regretting deeply and truly for the sin you committed.
- 3- Return to Allah for forgiveness.
- 4- Strong intention never to return to that same sin again.

Abu Bakr Al siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him), narrated:

"I heard Prophet Mohammad (S) saying: 'There isn't a man who, when he commits a sin, rises, makes ablution, and offers two rak'as of prayers,

but Allah forgives his sins.'

Allah (Swt) reaffirms this belief by saying in the Qur'an:

"Those (are the true believers) who, when they commit an evil deed, or wrong their souls, remember Allah, and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who but Allah forgives sins? They do not insist upon the sins they have committed, and they know (that Allah is forgiving)." (Qur'an 3:135)

The above verse should be a reminder to all my fellow brothers and sisters who have at some stage in their life transgressed beyond Allah's commandments and wonder and doubt if Allah (Swt) will forgive their past mistakes and sins. If you are one of these people, there is always hope with Allah. It is important that we never despair of Allah's Mercy - no sin is too great to repent for... or too little for that matter.

All it takes is for you to raise your hands to your creator and humbly ask Allah (Swt) for his abundant mercy. Repentance is such a great act of worship and a tool that the Prophet (S) used to utilise over seventy times a day. It is time all of us too to constantly repent and seek Allah's forgiveness and bounty. Don't leave your repentance too late. Don't delay it – not even for a moment. Because one day, you may have found that you have left it far too late.

Repentance

I ask Allah (Swt) to forgive our sins and to overlook our shortcomings during this blessed month of Ramadan.

Your brother in Islam

Malek Annous

A Flight beyond the Threshold

The "Journeys" theme that The Message Magazine has chosen for this Ramadan edition is actually quite limitless. Everything must undergo some kind of a journey as time passes, whether it is a seed that flourishes into a plant, or an embryo that grows into a human being, or the journey a caterpillar makes to become a butterfly, or even the journey a space aircraft makes into the universe. The latter triggered a thought: what would be the greatest journey of all, physically and metaphorically? The Prophet's journey called Al-Isra wa'l Mi'raj comes to mind. This proved to be a miraculous journey literally through time and space and beyond any threshold humanly possible. So as a result, I thought it would be befitting to share this amazing encounter with you in the chronicle that follows...

Muhammad (S) loved to visit the Ka'bah during the night hours. One night, Muhammad (S) slept at the Mosque, only to be awakened by the angel Gabriel who took him and led him to a white beast (named Buraq) with wings on its sides, and with every stride it took it travelled as far as the eye could see.

HADITH...

rises and sets; and if a woman of the people of Paradise appeared unto the people of earth, she would fill the space between Heaven and below with light and fragrance."

As they proceeded, Muhammad and Gabriel reached Sidrat Al-Muntaha (the Lote tree of the utmost boundary which none can pass), where Muhammad (S) had to progress alone. This was when Muhammad (S) received divine instructions from Allah (SwT) for his people to offer fifty prayers a day. As he made his descent through the seven Heavens, Muhammad passed by Musa (AS) who asked how many prayers was laid upon the Muslims. Upon Muhammad's reply, Musa informed him that the amount prescribed would be difficult for his people and to ask Allah to make it lighter. The prophet Muhammad (S) returned and asked his Lord to make it lighter, and as a result, Allah reduced it by ten-fold. Each time the prophet Muhammad (S) returned, Musa asked him to make it lighter until it was reduced to five prayers daily. Even then, Musa (AS) asked Muhammad (S) to reduce it further, however Muhammad (S) replied: "I have returned to my

The Prophet (S) then mounted Buraq along with Gabriel and paced towards Al Aqsa (Dome of the Rock) Mosque in Jerusalem. There he met the other Prophets – Ibrahim, Musa, Isa (AS) and others and prayed a congregational prayer which Muhammad (S) led. Then two vessels were brought to him: one containing milk and the other containing wine. He took the cup of milk and drank from it, but left the vessel of wine. Gabriel said: "Praise be to Allah Who guided you to Al-Fitra (the right path); if you had taken (the cup of) wine, your nation would have gone astray." (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 69, Hadith 482).

Then Muhammad (S) mounted Buraq once more and ascended upward in flight with Gabriel, who now revealed himself in his heavenly form, and ascended beyond the threshold of earthly space and time, and as they passed through the veils of the seven heavens, Muhammad (S) met again those Prophets with whom he had prayed with in Jerusalem. However, now he saw them in their celestial reality and marvelled at their transfiguration. Muhammad described Yusuf (AS) as being endowed with no less than half of all existing beauty. Of the Gardens that he visited in the different Heavens, he said afterwards: "A piece of Paradise the size of a bow is better than all beneath the sun and where it

Lord and asked Him until I am ashamed. I will not go again." And as a result, due to the Mercy and bounty from Allah, for the five daily prayers we perform each day Allah grants us rewards for the amount of fifty prayers daily. Muhammad (S) then returned to Mecca and informed those whom he met there of his trip to Jerusalem in one night. His enemies found this as an irrefutable cause to mock and ridicule him, for it takes one month to travel from Mecca to Syria! As soon as Abu Bakr heard the story from a group of men, he said, "If that is what he said, then it is true." This earned him his title as As-Siddiq, which means "the great confirmer of the truth".

Subhanallah, the unwavering conviction Abu Bakr had in Rasulullah (S) and his journey is quite astounding. Whilst others found it difficult to believe this encounter, Abu Bakr had no hesitation in believing Muhammad (S) immediately. May Allah (SwT) instil this conviction in us all as we aim to draw closer Him in this holy month. And may He allow our journeys in this life lead to the ultimate journey of the Hereafter – Paradise insha Allah!

Your brother in Islam,
Hesham Mourad

Reference: Muhammad, his life based on the earliest sources; by Martin Lings pp 101-103





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A Journey called Life: the Adolescence Myth

Prepare yourselves, people, for a revelation sure to shock you and possibly turn your life upside down. Particularly if you're a teenager.

There is no such thing as a teenager in Islam. NO. SUCH. THING.

All right, so let's first define what exactly a teenager is. According to the dictionary, a teenager is: a juvenile between the onset of puberty and maturity. In this Western culture, a teenager is anyone between the ages of 13 and 19. It's also a period of time where we're pretty much expected to be irresponsible, immature, and do really stupid things. We can do the most idiotic things on the face of the earth, and we have a ready excuse: "Aw, man, I'm just a teenager! But guess what? That doesn't cut it. Not in Islam, anyway. In Islam, there are exactly two stages in life for us: child, and adult. No in-between phase where you're given a free license to be as much of an idiot as you like.

Let's look at what the Islamic definition of 'child' and 'adult' is, before I launch into a full rant against the incorrectness of the concept of teenager-hood. The Islamic definition of a child is someone who has not yet reached maturity (physical puberty). According to Shari'ah, the faraa'idh of Islam (obligatory acts, e.g. salaah, zakaah, sawm, etc.) are not incumbent upon the child.

In a hadith related by Ali Bin Abi Talib (R), the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The Pen that records the deeds has been lifted from three people; the insane person, until he recovers; the sleeping person, until he wakes up; and the minor, until he dreams (i.e., has wet dreams.)" (Ahmad)

However, even here we need to stop and realize something – just because your child hasn't reached puberty yet, it doesn't mean that they're totally free.

'Amr ibn Shu'aib related from his father on the authority of his grandfather that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Order your children to pray when they reach the age of seven. Beat them (lightly) if they do not do so when they reach the age of ten. And have them sleep separately."
(The hadith is related by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and al-Hakim.)

So you see, even kids aren't let off the hook – it just goes to show how important it is for parents to be raising their children to be familiar with those acts of Islam that

will become obligatory upon them when they grow older, so that when they do reach puberty, it won't come to them as a shock, having to suddenly pray and fast and wear hijab and what not.

Now let's look at what the Islamic definition of an adult is. That is, someone who has reached physical maturity – for girls, when they get their menses; and for guys, any of these three things: experiencing wet dreams, the appearance of pubic hair on the body, and finally (if neither of these two things occur) turning 15. From this point on, both girls and boys are considered to be fully adult in the eyes of Allah (SwT), and they are held accountable for their deeds. The compulsory acts of Islam are obligatory for them to fulfill – from the five daily prayers, to fasting in Ramadan, to giving zakaah, to wearing the hijab, and everything else that is expected of us.

There is absolutely NO EXCUSE WHATSOEVER for anyone who has reached this point and who is not obeying Allah (SwT) in what is expected of each and every (sane) adult Muslim on the face of the earth.

Right, so now we've got that covered. Let's move on.

In Western culture and society, the period of adolescence is one in which kids are expected to undergo the "transition" from child to adult. However, this transition is rarely ever smooth, and in fact teens often end up acting more childishly than they ever did before. Irresponsibility and immaturity are practically a given when it comes to teens – which is futile.

How the heck are we expected to become adults if everyone is so willing to give excuses for our silliness?! Furthermore, this whole attitude of, "Ah, they're just teens!" is really quite an oxymoron – what's the point of giving teens responsibilities if they're not held accountable for their irresponsibility, of expecting them to be mature when they're always excused for their immaturity?

As a teenager myself, I have to say that it's also frustrating for us: It's like we're being given mixed messages. On one hand, we have some people expecting us to be responsible, mature, grown-up; on the other hand the mass media and the culture around us tells us that at this point, we're free to do whatever, to go out and have fun and that's it.

Another point of frustration and bewilderment for us is that we have now reached an age when we're definitely not children anymore and are

ADOLESCENCE

JOURNEY OF

ready to take on more – in Islam this is recognized and we're given things to do, commandments to carry out – but in this society it's really weird because we're given the freedom to do a lot of things, but we're not given the trust of our elders, that they believe we're capable of handling serious responsibilities. News flash for all the parents out there: This is what is the source of so much teen angst.

"My parents treat me like a child! They don't trust me! I'm bored!" And so on... you know how it is.

In the words of a wise friend of mine: You'll only find "teenagers" in economically developed societies. Here the adults refuse to recognize that these young people are quite capable of contributing to the community, whereas in poor and developing communities, much like the times of old, every sentient individual is expected to pitch in. This is especially true where the age of life expectancy is low. Where people have to work hard to survive, you won't find rebellious teens - or at least it won't be the norm. You'll only find children, young adults, middle-aged adults and old adults.

I think she really hit the nail on the head. Honestly, these days the only thing that seems to be expected of teens is that we do well in school – but WHY is this the only thing expected of us? Why is that parents seem to place a good education over a good Islamic education, which is far more important for both our dunya and akhirah?

On the Day of Judgement, Allah will not be asking us if we completed high school on the honour roll (not that this is not important). He will be asking us about whether we prayed our salaah, five times a day, every day, at their appointed times. He will be asking us whether we obeyed His Commands, as set down in the Qur'an and Sunnah. He will be asking us what we did to secure our place in Jannah, not at Harvard. He will be asking us whether we ever bothered to use our brains to stop and think about whether He would be pleased with our actions. We will have to account to Allah for EVERY SINGLE DEED we have ever committed since we became baaligh (mature) in His Sight and according to His Law.

Parents, I beg of you: don't fall into this trap when it comes to your kids. Don't think that they should be given free reign to have fun. Raise us from our childhood to be aware of Allah's expectations and rights over us, for we are Muslims, the ones who's every word and action should be in submission to Him. Raise us to become responsible, mature, capable young adults who can fulfill our personal duties to Allah and who can take our place within the community, under your guid-

ance, to strengthen the Muslim Ummah as a whole. Don't let us be overgrown children; raise us to be adults.

Fellow teens, I beg of you: Stop and realize that we're NOT kids anymore. Those excuses we use for ourselves and that other people give us when we do stupid things – we've got to stop using them, because they're not valid. We are Muslims, and we have a goal in life that goes beyond becoming a doctor or an engineer, that goes beyond school hours and goofing off on our free time: it's a goal for the next life, the eternal life.

Sure, it may seem far off – but none of us will live forever. Heck, none of us knows if we're going to be alive 'till tomorrow! And we have got to remember that while other people might not hold us accountable for some things we do, know that we have an angel sitting on each of our shoulders recording every single word we say and every single action we do... and these records are going to be waved in front of our faces on the Day of Judgement and we're going to have to admit to our sins in front of every single human being who has ever existed. Assuming you'd gotten expelled or suffered some equally mortifying incident, would you want everyone knowing about it and laughing at you because of it? Obviously not.

On the Day of Judgement, it'll be a kazillion times worse... forget about every single human being who ever existed; think about standing in front of ALLAH, our God, Lord and Creator of everything – think about standing in front of HIM and having to admit for all the horrible stupid wrong things we've ever done!!

So please, let's try to make it easier for ourselves in the Hereafter... it'll be twice as hard working towards that than it'd be studying hard enough to get to Harvard or wherever, but it'll also be twice as worth it – more than twice.

We are not children. We are not teenagers. We are ADULTS, and beyond that, we are MUSLIMS. So let's get out of this frame of thinking, out of this ridiculous mindset, and straighten ourselves out.

May Allah increase us in emaan, strengthen us in our Islaam, and help us in this long and difficult journey called life. Ameen!

Reference: <http://muslimmatters.org/2007/06/13/the-adolescent-myth/>

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After thirteen years of preaching the message of Islam in Makkah, and with only a handful of followers who were subject to continuous persecution and torture, a history defining moment would change the world forever. So significant and important was this event that it marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Two billion Muslims around the world today can trace their origin back to the hijrah of Prophet (S). But the journey of the Prophet's hijrah was unlike any other. It involved skillful planning, tiring travel and miracles from Allah (Swt).

Most of the companions had already migrated to Madinah, then called Yathrib, but Abu Bakr and Ali Ibn Abu Talib were still in Mecca with the Prophet (S). Quraysh had decided that they should stop the Prophet from migrating. They gathered to discuss the situation and at first proposed to confine him to a house, then for one of them to assassinate him but finally it was decided that he should be killed at the same time by a group of young men, each representing a different tribe. But then Allah (Swt) informed the Prophet (S) of their plot and now it was time for the Messenger (S) to leave.

He asked his cousin Ali to sleep in his place that night and gave him his cloak instructing him to wrap himself with it. Then, miraculously, the Prophet walked straight passed his assassins and they didn't see him as Allah (Swt) took away their sight. And so the Prophet (S) was able to proceed to the house of Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr had been longing to migrate to Madinah and now he would be migrating with the Prophet (S). He was overwhelmed with joy to the point where he shed tears. The two mounted the camels that Abu Bakr had already prepared for the trip and headed south, in the opposite direction to Madinah, along with their guide Abdullah ibn Urayqat. The Prophet (S) commented about Mecca as they left:

"By Allah, you are the most sacred place in the sight of Allah and I would have never left you if I was not forced to leave."

In the meantime, the assassins waiting outside the Prophet's house had finally realized that it was Ali and not the Prophet that has been wrapped in the cloak and inside the house. They felt bewildered and failed in their attempt to kill Allah's messenger.

Muhammad (S) and Abu Bakr took shelter in a cave in Mount Thawr. They stayed there for three nights and were visited there by Amir ibn Fuhayra (servant of Abu Bakr) and Abdullah ibn Abu Bakr who would bring them provisions at night.

By now Quraysh had sent men in every direction to find the Prophet (S) and his companion. They were looking desperately and some of them had reached the mouth of this cave. Abu Bakr was frightened but the Prophet (S) calmed him:

"Oh Abu Bakr, what do you think of those two with whom Allah is the third."

Another miracle from Allah occurred, a spider had woven its large web at the mouth of the cave and another account states a dove had also made a nest at the entrance. The men approached and upon seeing this thought, it was impossible that the Prophet (S) should be in there and they left and Allah (Swt) had protected his Messenger and slave once more. The Quran describes this incident in Surah 9 Verse 40.

Now it was time for the Prophet to complete his journey. He, Abu Bakr, Ibn Fuhayr and Abdullah ibn Urayqah proceeded to Madinah taking a long route via the seashore. Muhammad (S) insisted on buying the camel he was traveling on from Abu Bakr. They agreed on a price and the Prophet (S) named the camel, Qaswa, and she became his favourite camel.

Quraysh offered 100 camels to anyone who could capture the Prophet (S). A man by the name of Suraqa ibn Jushum attempted to capture the Prophet (S) but whenever he would get close his horse would stumble and this occurred 3 times. He then realized the error of his ways and repented to the Prophet. He then returned to Mecca and proceeded to throw off the plans of others who wanted to capture Muhammad (S).

Yet another miracle occurred on the way to Madinah when the group decided to rest at the house of the generous Umm Ma'bad al-Khuzayya. She informed them that there were flocks in the field nearby but that her goat which was there with them had no milk. The Prophet recited the name of Allah, touched the goat's udders and she began producing milk. Later, Umm Ma'bad gave a beautiful description of the Prophet's appearance and character which caused some to accept Islam.

In Madinah, people were eagerly awaiting the prophet's arrival but first the party stopped at Quba where the Prophet was joined by Ali and where he (S) established the first mosque of Islam.

Finally, after a long journey, the Prophet reached Madinah. Men, women and children, young and old were there to greet him. They began singing "tala a badru alaina". They were joyful, ecstatic that their beloved Prophet had arrived. They welcomed him with open arms and open hearts which he had never received in Mecca and many were hoping he would stay with them. Eventually, Qaswa knelt down next to the house of Abu Ayyub and Muhammad (S) stayed there for seven months.

And thus the journey was complete. It took several weeks but along the way so much was achieved and some even embraced Islam as a result of this journey. And we learn from this, that with pure intentions and the help of Allah (Swt) we can achieve more than what we ourselves are capable of.

Abu Ghassan



JOURNEY OF HIJRA



An Internal Expedition of Life

You have been through ups and downs for months! Your mealtimes have tripled! You're in love one day and want out the next! But soon it'll all be over.

You keep telling yourself: "Just a couple more pushes and I'll finally be free!" Free to put on my own shoes! Free to move about the day without seventeen toilet breaks! Free to drive a car without having to adjust the steering wheel! FREE!

You are convinced that you are the only one to ever experience this level of pain. "Oh, why won't this end"? Ya Allah! Ya Allah!

Literally seconds later you are holding your child, gazing hopelessly at their face. Stroking their fingers and kissing their forehead. Instantly you know- you're in love.

That night you lie in the maternity ward unable to sleep. The tears stream down your face as you re-live the events of the day and think..."Did I really just go through that? It just seems surreal".

You briefly look over at the miracle that Allah (SwT) has created and wonder how the once positive sign (or two

stripes) in the doctor's surgery is now a child. It began so long ago but you remember every detail of your baby's journey as though it happened yesterday.

Watching the birth of a child is one of the most remarkable events we could ever witness. What is even more amazing is the journey a mother has gone through to reach this stage. The initial stages of pregnancy are filled with excitement, morning sickness, due dates and sleeping. But while mothers attend to all these matters, a fascinating process is taking place. What initially started off as two cells merging has (by the will of Allah (SwT) instigated the beginning of a complex process to bring about the formation of a human being, and for the next 266 days the extraordinary work of Allah will take place to aid in the development of a baby.

Each second a foetus is growing inside its mother's womb, it is using up incredible amounts of energy to ensure every vein... every blood cell... every eye lash... every aspect of its creation is formed as Allah has pre-determined.

It is beyond my capacity to explain exactly how or why things happen during this phase of a human's life but something I am definite about is the exceptional might of Allah (SwT).

One aspect of pregnancy only a mother can understand is the wonder behind feeling a child move inside you. As

JOURNEY OF PREGNANCY



soon as a child is conceived, a woman's body is no longer her own. For the next nine months she will lend herself to bearing a child and will be at the mercy of Allah. She will become the vessel in which the most intimate process in life takes place.

Throughout the journey of pregnancy, a woman's respect for her own mother multiplies enormously. The final 14 weeks of pregnancy is when mothers experience the greatest hardship since the size and weight of their child takes its toll on their body. Backaches, breathlessness and cramps are only a handful of changes women have to get accustomed to in a pool of endless struggles.

As a mother you gain a sense of clarity as to why Islam has recognised the struggles of mothers and why it bestows upon them one of the highest levels of respect and appreciation. This can be understood further if we allow ourselves to reflect upon the hardships and suffering that mothers experience in their lives. In this regard, there is a Hadeeth of the Prophet (S):

It was narrated by Abu Hurayrah (R) that a man came to the Prophet (S) and asked him: "Who is most deserving of my close companionship?" He (S) replied: "Your mother; your mother; your mother; then your father; then the next closest to you in kinship; then the one next closest.""

Allah has emphasised multiple times in the Glorious Quran that we should treat our parents with a great deal of respect and utter nothing but words of kindness and appreciation to them.

"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is two years. Be grateful to Me and your parents; to Me is the [final] destination..." [Quran 31:14-15]

You may ask: "Why have so many women elected to repeat pregnancy when they have already experienced the hardship during their first pregnancy?"

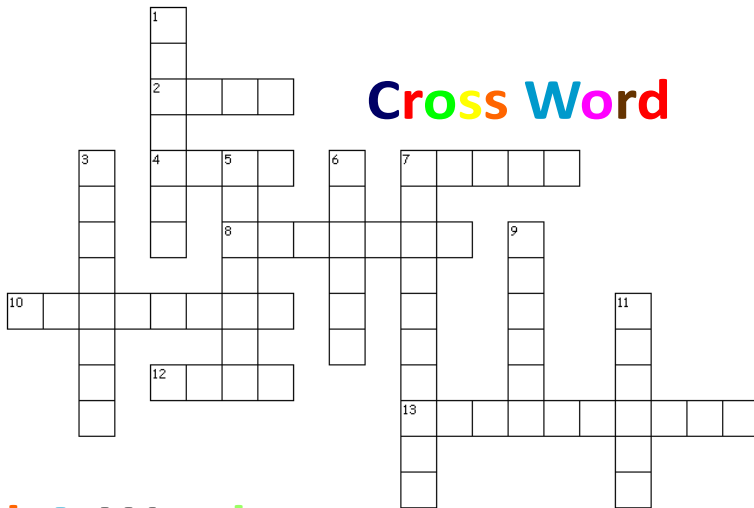
The answer is easy: "The final result is simply breathtaking"

TIP: To some people, naming the child may be a trivial event, however for many others it may be a trying one. Be sure to choose a name that both mother and father are comfortable with since you will be yelling it for the next sixty-odd years (insha' Allah). Whatever name you decide on, remember it would have to be worth hearing over and over again InshaAllah.

By Manal Mikati

Cited from: www.islamweb.net 29-08-08.

Games for any Journey



Cross Word

Across

- To Allah (swt), the fasting person's mouth smells better than _____?
- How many times is the word Ramadan mentioned in the Quran?
- Fasting was prescribed to obtain _____?
- A gate in Paradise for those who fast?
- In Suhur there is a _____?
- Battle of _____?
- What do you say to someone who swears at you in Ramadan?

Down

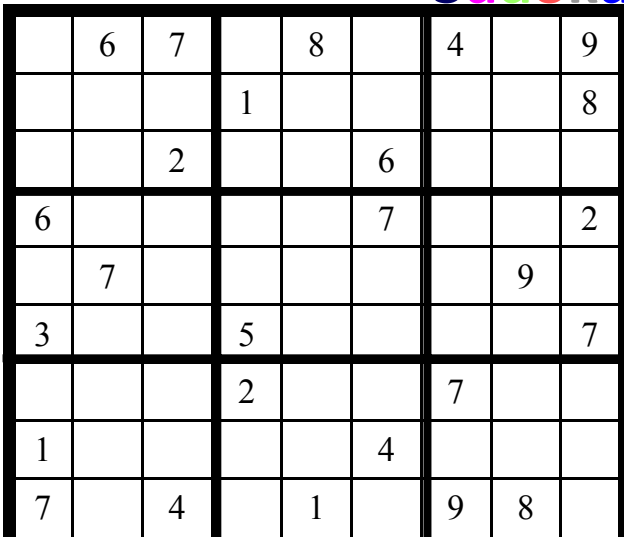
- Taraweeh= Spirit _____?
- Reward of _____ is paradise.
- Devils are _____?
- Shaban, Ramadan, _____?
- Exempt when _____?
- Seclusion in the Mosque
- Fasting is a _____?

Find-A-Word

B R G T H T R J R D H L S X A
 H W U O R A X E M E A P K R O
 Y J U O M U L T A S J B L O A
 E V O A V L T W D T J A A C N
 U C D U E A B H I I U E Z R O
 U A N V R M F L N N T E C S I
 N K A A I N J U A A P B A L T
 F R W J T F E L H T R P T P A
 T F L E R N L Y A I H S T Y L
 P C R E S C E N T O T O P Q E
 E G N A H C C P E N I I D A V
 N O I T C E L F E R A S R F E
 Q D C Z O Y D S E R F J Y A R
 T H E W V N K U Q N I E H T M
 I M A G E M X P A H F E T X H

- | | | |
|-------------|---------|------------|
| Acceptance | Hajj | Reflection |
| Change | Hijra | Repentance |
| Crescent | Image | Revelation |
| Destination | Journey | Traveller |
| Faith | Madinah | Truth |
| Favour | Ramadan | |

Sudoku



SUDOKU

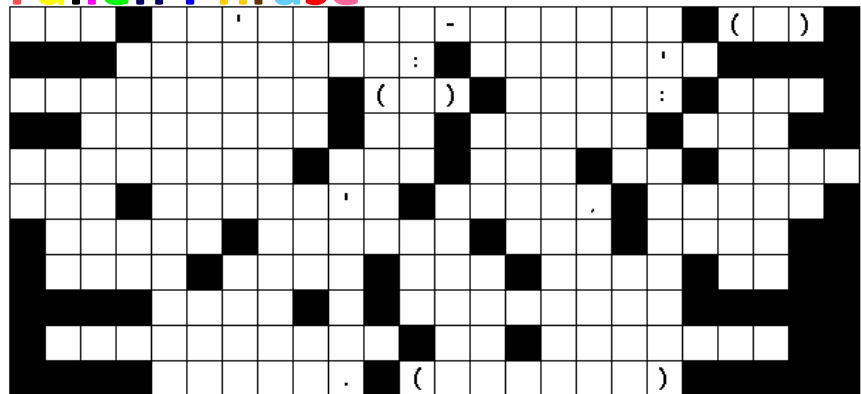
Fill in all the squares of the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 section contains all the numbers 1-9 inclusive.

Spot the Difference



1: Main Igloo has changed 2: No hook on end of fishing line 3: Extra fish 4: Birds have moved 5: Name of dog has vanished

Fallen Phrase



Y L Y
 Y E N L
 R N G I E A L A I R
 S E D L E D A T L A C F
 O W E R V A R S O F U S S I M E H Y
 W Q S L P O L T M O L M A H I N H E A R
 B S E I V F S H N D V T D K E S D F A T O
 F E U U A A L R T O N S S S S U A H I W L E
 M A R U S V A A R E T D I K L A I R E S O A Y
 O B O A H L A R O M A T E O H F E O A L F A H
 A E S R E E E R E A S E H E A L D V F N C N S T

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