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RADIANT
REALITY

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— A MAN —
INSULTED
KHALID IBN WALID
SO HE TURNED TO HIM & SAID
— IT IS YOUR —
SCROLL OF DEEDS
SO FILL IT WITH WHATEVER
YOU WISH

RADIANT REALITY

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This magazine is dedicated to the greatest and the last Prophet Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) on whom the succession of Prophethood ended and was sealed forever. Let us all follow him with utmost spirit.

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Question Answer

Question

My father is not well. He is a Ma'zoor. He has a catheter attached to a urine bag through which urine flows all the time. Can he go to the Masjid with the catheter and urine bag to perform Salaah or on Jumuahs only?

Answer

In normal situations, it is Makrooh-e-Tahreemi (prohibitively disliked) to enter the Masjid with bad odours or impurities especially if there is a fear of messing the Masjid.

However, in the enquired situation and in the case of such a Ma'zoor, the catheter and urine bag is necessary and has to be kept at all times. Therefore, the catheter and urine bag will be regarded as part of one's body and hence, it will be permissible for such a person to attend and perform all his Salaah including Jumuah Salaah in the Masjid. This is on condition that there is no fear of the Masjid being messed or soiled with impurities. (Umdatul Qaari 3/280) Furthermore, the catheter and urine bag should be concealed to avoid any form of aversion from the Musallees of the Masjid.

Note: A Ma'zoor (excused person) will have to observe all the necessary laws of a Ma'zoor even if he has a catheter and urine bag. One may discuss his situation with a reliable of scholar for further guidance in this regard.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

If a small child's clothing has become old, can the parents give it out in charity? Do parents have the authority to do so?

Answer

In principle, any items purchased for or given to a (non-Baaligh /immature) child becomes the sole ownership of the child.

Hence, the decision of giving the items of the child to another child, third person or in charity remains the decision of the child. The parents cannot make a decision on behalf of the child in normal circumstances. (Tabyeenul Haqaiq 5/96)

However, in the case of the child's items that cannot be used by the child and since the child does not possess the understanding to make such a decision, the parents may replace the old items with a similar reasonable value and then give the old items on their own behalf in charity. (Fataawa Darul Uloom Zakariyyah 5/563/564)

Alternatively, parents may consider not giving items to the child as his/her sole ownership. Rather, parents may purchase it as their sole ownership and lend the child the items. In this way, the parents will not have any difficulty in making a decision of giving or gifting to another child, a third person or in charity.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

A person did not pay his Zakaat for three years. Now he is paying it out. Does he pay Zakaat on one amount for each of the three years or each year separately?

Answer

In the inquired case, if a person did not discharge his Zakaat for the past three years, he will calculate each year separately. If for the first year his Zakataable assets amounted to R10,000.00, in

the second year to R15,000.00 and in the third year to R20,000.00, then he will calculate the Zakaat of each year according to its respective value. In addition to this, each year's unpaid Zakaat is considered a liability/debt that is deducted from the Zakaatable assets. We will illustrate this by use of the amounts given above.

In the first year, the Zakaat for R10,000.00 would be R250.00. In calculating the Zakaat for the second year the amount of R250,00 would be deducted from the total Zakaatable amount which is R15,000.00 leaving a balance of R14750.00. This amount of R14750.00 would be the Zakaatable amount for the second year. Thus, the Zakaat for the second year would be 2.5% of R14750.00 which is R368.75.

When calculating Zakaat for the third year, the Zakaat due for the previous years will be deducted as a liability. The Zakaat for the third year will therefore be as follows: The Zakaatable assets of third year amount to R20,000.00. From this amount the Zakaat of the previous years, namely R250.00 of the first year and R368.75 of the second year will be deducted.

R20,000.00
 - R250.00
 - R368.75
 R19,381.25

Therefore in the third year, the Zakaatable amount will be R19,381.25. 2.5% of R19,381.25 is R484.54 which is the Zakaatable amount for the third year.

If Zakaat has not been paid for more than three years, then formula above will simply be expanded to include the additional years. (Ahsanul Fataawa 4/275)

Note: This procedure is ONLY applicable if Zakaat was not paid for previous years.

Mufti Moosa

Question

Does a man need the permission of the first wife to take a second wife? If he does so without her permission, will the marriage be valid?

Answer

The permission of the first wife is not a condition for the validity of the second Nikah. The Nikah will be valid even though she does not have knowledge of it.

Kindly take note of the following:

In principle, it is permissible for a Muslim male to marry up to four wives according to Shariah on condition that equality is maintained amongst all wives and that their rights be duly fulfilled. If one does not have the capability to fulfil those obligations without causing the least infringement of their rights, then he should keep one wife. Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam has emphasized on maintaining full justice and equality between wives and has given warnings to those who do otherwise.

Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam has stated in a Hadith, "Anyone who has two wives and he cannot fulfil their rights equally and justly, shall be raised on the Day of Judgment in a condition that one of his shoulders will be drooping down." (Tirmidhi)

Another important act the husband should do when considering a second wife is to discuss the issue with his first wife. Although it is not his obligation to inform the first wife, one should discuss the matter beforehand and not keep a second marriage secretive from the first wife, as the second marriage is likely to be exposed to her at some point in time. This will most certainly cause the first wife to become upset. It is extremely important for a husband and wife to have full trust in each other.

Therefore, anyone who thinks of having more than one wife should first think about all of those factors and he should also look into himself and figure out realistically whether or not he has the ability to treat them equally and justly.

Mufti Taahir

Question

If Azaan is given before Zawaal on the day of Jumuaah, when does a person perform his Sunnats

of Jumuah, before or after Zawaal? I noticed this in the Haram Shareef of Makkah Mukarramah. I'm a follower of the Hanafi school of thought.

Answer In the enquired case, you should not perform your Sunnah of Jumuah Salaah prior to the time of Zawaal as the actual time to perform the Sunnah of Jumuah Salaah is after Zawaal. If however, you did not find time to perform the Sunnah performed before the Jumuah Salaah, you may perform it after.

This is the view of majority of the Fuqahaa (jurists).

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

If a person looked at his watch on his hand and understood the time in Salaah, is a person's Salaah valid?

Answer

During Salaah, one should insure that he/she maintains complete devotion without being distracted by anything outside of Salaah.

It will be Makrooh (disliked) to look at the clock/watch intentionally during Salaah. If it was done unintentionally, it will not be Makrooh (disliked). In either, case, the Salaah will remain valid. (Shaami 1/634)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

How does a Musalli complete his Maghrib Salaah if he had missed the first two Rakaats and only joined the Imam in the last (third) Rakaat?

Answer

A Masbooq refers to a person who has joined the Imaam in Salaah after missing one or more Rakaats of Salaah. After the Imaam makes his second Salaam, a Masbooq will stand up and complete his missed Rakaats of Salaah.

In terms of Qiraat (recitation), a Masbooq will recite Surah Faatiha and a Surah in the first two Rakaats but only Surah Faatiha in the third/ Fourth Rakaat.

In terms of Qadah (Tashahudd position), a Masbooq will count his Rakaats from the time he joined the Imaam in Salaah. Hence, if he read one Rakaat with the Imaam, then the first Rakaat that he reads on his own is added on and counted as the second Rakaat. Therefore, after the first Rakaat that he reads on his own, he will sit for Tashahhud.

In the above enquired situation, the Masbooq will stand up and complete the two missed Rakaats of Maghrib Salaah in the following manner: In both Rakaats, he will recite Surah Faatiha and a Surah. He will sit for Tashahhud in the first Rakaat (as it is counted as Rakaat no.2) and will complete the Salaah with the final Qadah in the second Rakaat as normal. (Tahtaawi Ala Maraaqil Falaah 1/309)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

My husband arrives late from work sometimes and misses his Asr Salaah with Jamaat in the Musjid. Can I (wife) perform Asr Salaah in Jamaat with my husband at home if he misses his Asr Salaah with Jamaat in the Musjid? Can I stand next to him?

Answer

Shariah has emphasized congregational Salaah for males in the Masjid and individual Salaah for females at home. However, if a man had missed the congregational Salaah in the Masjid, it will be permissible for him to perform Salaah with his wife in congregation at home.

In this case, the wife will not stand next to or in line with her husband. Rather she will stand completely behind him. (Shaami 1/572)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

1. What is the shar'ee ruling in the situation where a foreigner passes away and his family from his home country makes a request for his body to be sent to them. In this case it is a legal requirement for a chemical to be injected into the

veins of the deceased to keep the body from decomposing. Is this allowed in Shariah since it is a legal requirement?

2. If a foreigner passes away and his family from his home country makes a request for his body to be sent to them, then before sending the body overseas, do we have to carry out the ghusal, kaffan and perform the janaazah salaah? Once the family receives the body, will they have to repeat the ghusal and janaazah salaah?

Answer

1. The Shar'ee ruling is that when a person passes away, the Janaazah Salaah and the burial should be done as quick as possible and should not be delayed. Delaying in performing the Janaazah Salaah and burying the deceased is against the Sunnah, hence impermissible. Therefore the Fuqaha have written that it is best to bury the deceased in the place where he had passed away. However, transporting the body to a nearby place in a short span of time is permissible provided there is no fear of the body decomposing. If the body is transported to a far of place and it is feared that the body will begin to decompose, it will not be permissible. Pumping chemicals in the veins to preserve the body in the case where the body is to be transported to a far of place is not correct and not in keeping to the Sunnah. Therefore, if one is able to, then one should bury the deceased in the place where he had passed away.

2. Yes, the ghusal must be given to the deceased and the Janaazah Salaah must be performed. Once the ghusal has been given and the janaazah salaah has been performed, it should not be repeated.

Mufti Zakaria

Question

Will it be permissible for one to make an agreement with the supplier, at the onset before purchasing, that for example, the terms will be 30 days with a discount of 5%? There are a few

supplier with whom we have an agreement such as the one described above and we keep to the arranged terms. However, the time period and discount differs from supplier to supplier. If this is not permissible, then what is the solution to rectify the situation?

Answer

If the credit period is set and the supplier attaches the condition at the beginning that if one pays before the period, then he will receive a discount (e.g. The customer purchases goods worth R100 000 on a three month credit basis and he is told, "If you pay within one month, you will receive a 10% discount"), then in this case, if one has to pay earlier and take the discount, then the discount one receives is riba (interest) and will not be permissible.

However, if at the beginning they mutually agree that the credit period is one month and not three months, and similarly it is mutually agreed that the one month credit price is R90 000, then it will be permissible, provided that they both agree that the credit period is only one month and not three months. In this case, if the purchaser has to default and delay after one month, he will not be charged R100 000 which is the three month credit price. Rather, he will still be charged R90 000.

Mufti Zakaria

Question

What is a Qiraan, Tamattu' and Ifraad Hajj? Can it be done by a South African and a resident of Makkah Mukarramah too? Can everyone do it?

Answer

A Qiraan Hajj refers to a person donning the Ihraam with the intention of performing Umrah and Hajj with one Ihraam during the months and days of Hajj; i.e. even after performing Umrah, the person will remain in Ihraam until Hajj is performed.

A Tamattu' Hajj refers to a person donning

the Ihraam with the intention of performing Umrah and Hajj with two Ihraams during the months and days of Hajj; i.e. after performing Umrah, the person will come out of Ihraam and will don the Ihraam for the second time to perform Hajj.

An Ifraad Hajj refers to a person donning the Ihraam with the intention of performing only Hajj during the months and days of Hajj.

It is permissible for Aafaaqis (everyone who resides outside of the Meeqat), thus including South African Hujjaj to perform the Qiraan, Tamattu' and Ifraad Hajj. It is more virtuous to perform a Qiraan Hajj (provided one is able to abide by the laws of Ihraam), then a Tamattu' Hajj and then an Ifraad Hajj respectively. However, a resident of Makkah Mukarramah may only perform an Ifraad Hajj. (Muallimul Hujjaaj 97)

Note: The donning of one or two Ihraams refers to the intentions of Ihraam and does not refer to one or two sets of Ihraam clothing. The months and days of Hajj are the months of Shawwal, Zul-Qadah and the first ten days of Zul-Hijjah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

Can we use Zakaat money to assist in the burial and funeral expenses of the deceased who did not own anything and did not leave anything for his heirs? The deceased family does not own anything as well?

Answer

One of the primary requisites of discharging ones Zakaat is to discharge it to an eligible recipient of Zakaat by making him the owner of it i.e. Tamleek (giving him full ownership of it) must take place.

A deceased person does not have the capacity to take ownership, hence the requirement of Tamleek is not fulfilled irrespective of whether he was a Zakaat recipient or not. Hence Zakaat cannot be given to the deceased for his/her funeral and burial expenses.

However, if the deceased's family members qualify as recipients of Zakaat, then a person may give Zakaat to them and they may, in turn, use it for the funeral and burial expenses of the deceased if they wish. (Hindiyyah 6/392)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

My husband has taken a loan from me for a building project. He agreed to pay the amount in instalments after the building project is completed and once it is rented out to the tenants. He has asked me to invest as a shareholder in the building project with the same money that he owes me. So, he would take the money that he owes me and invest it for me as a share holder instead of giving the loaned amount to me. Can I do this? Or is this interest?

Answer

In principle, it is not permissible to derive any benefit from a loan as it amounts to Riba (interest). (Al-Ikhtiyaar Li-Ta'leelil Mukhtaar 2/33)

In the enquired situation, you had given the loan to your husband without making a condition of deriving any benefit from the loan by receiving a share in the building project. It was simply a loan given by you to your husband with an agreement of your husband paying back the loaned amount to you without you benefitting from it in any way and thus, the loan was permissible.

Therefore, if your husband has given you an option of purchasing a share in the building project as a shareholder now, you may accept his proposal and pay it with the sum of the loaned amount of money that is owed to you.

As such, this is not tantamount to Riba (interest) as it was not a condition of giving the loan to your husband to benefit as a shareholder in the building project. It was an option made available to you afterwards. More so, it is a separate transaction altogether and will not effect the validity of the agreement of the loan.

Mufti Ismaeel

Patience & the Salaah

O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer. Surely, Allah is with those who are patient. (2:153)

In this verse Allah prescribes a method to overcome one's grief or anxiety, and the method consists in turning to patience and prayers; for Allah assures us here that He is with those who are patient. This promise applies, above all, to those who offer prayers, whether fard (obligatory) or nafl (supererogatory), for prayers are the supreme form of worship.

The context is that the enemies of Islam had been objecting to the change in the orientation of Qiblah, wishing to produce in the minds of the people doubts about the validity of Islam as a religion. The verses preceding to this verse answered these objections, removed all such misgivings. But some of the enemies simply ignored the answers, and still persisted in their hostility. This situation was likely to dishearten the Muslims. So, the present verse nullifies such a reaction on the part of the Muslims by prescribing the method of overcoming grief or anxiety.

Having mentioned the specific situation, the verse, in fact, identifies the elixir for all the ills which are a necessary part of human existence, whether they be wants and needs, or anxiety and suffering. The Holy Qur'an itself has indicated in a very subtle and eloquent way, the general efficacy of this remedy by employing a generalizing expression - "seek help" - without

specifying the situation in which help is to be sought. (Mazhari)

Now, the two ingredients of this remedy are patience and prayers. The Arabic term Sabr (sabr) is much more comprehensive than its usual English equivalent, "patience". Lexically, the word "Sabr" signifies "restraining oneself, or keeping oneself under control." In the terminology of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, Sabr has three modes:-

1. Restraining oneself from what the Shari'ah has declared to be illegal or impermissible (Haram).

2. Forcing oneself to be regular in the observance of the different forms of worship and to be steadfast in obeying the commandments of Allah and the Holy Prophet (SAWS).

3. To endure all kinds of trouble and pain - in other words, to understand clearly and to believe that it is the will of Allah to make one suffer, and to hope that one shall receive a reward for this suffering. With regard to this last point, let us add that, on the authority of the commentator Sa'id Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Kathir says that if one cannot help uttering a word of grief or a sigh of pain, it does not go against Sabr, or nullify it.

People generally identify Sabr with the third mode alone, and ignore the first two which are,

indeed, more basic and essential. We cannot insist too much on the fact that all the three are equally obligatory, and that every Muslim is required to practice all the three forms of Sabr. In the terminology of Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, Al-Sabirun is the title of those who are steadfast in observing all the three forms with equal rigour. According to the Hadith, people will hear a call on the Day of Judgment, "Where are the Sabirun?"; at this, those who had been constant in observing the three forms of Sabr will stand up, and they will be allowed to enter Paradise without having to present the account of their deeds. In citing this hadith, Ibn Kathir points out that it is corroborated by the Holy Qur'an itself: : "The Sabirun shall certainly receive their full reward without reckoning." (39:10)

As for the second ingredient of the prescription, it is Salah (Prayer). Although Sabr, as we have just explained it, covers the different forms of worship, including prayers, all of them being its branches. Salah, however, has been mentioned separately, because that is the most perfect model of Sabr. For, in the state of Salah, one binds oneself to obedience and worship, and restrains oneself not only from all that is sinful or reprehensible but even from what is otherwise permissible - e.g., from eating or drinking or talking. Hence, Salah is a visible demonstration of Sabr which signifies keeping oneself under control in shunning everything sinful and in submitting oneself totally to obedience.

A remedy to all problems

Moreover, Salah does possess a special efficacy in releasing man from all kinds of trouble and pain, and in fulfilling all his needs. We may not be able to explain it rationally, but the efficacy is present as a characteristic quality in the very nature of prayers - as happens in the case of certain medicines too. But the efficacy shows itself only when prayers are offered in the proper way and according to the physical and spiritual etiquette laid down by the Shari'ah. If

our prayers seem to be fruitless, it is because we have been deficient in observing this etiquette, and have not turned to Allah in single-minded devotion and total submission. Let us not forget that, according to the Hadith, whenever the Holy Prophet (SAWS) was faced with a grave problem of any kind, he always hastened to offer nafl prayers, and through the barakah (benediction) of the prayers Allah came to his aid and resolved the problem satisfactorily.

As to how Sabr can save man from all kinds of trouble and pain and resolve all his difficulties, the secret has been revealed in the last phrase of this verse - "Surely, Allah is with those who are patient."

That is to say, as a reward for Sabr man receives the honour of the "company" of Allah. And it goes without saying that when the might of the Lord of the Worlds Himself has come to the aid of a man, what pain or trouble can overcome him, and who can prevent his concerns from prospering?

*Adapted from Ma'ariful Qur'an,
Mufti Muhammad Shafi (ra)*

"The intelligent one is he who suppresses his desires and practises for what is after death, and the foolish one is he who makes his nafs follow its desires, and places (baseless) hope on Allah." (Tirmizi)

Lessons from Sahih Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

Chapter 41 : Is it permissible to say, “The mosque of such-and-such a clan”?

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

In this chapter Imam Bukhari wants to convey the permissibility of attributing a mosque to a particular clan. In the hadith that follows, a mosque is mentioned by ‘Masjid bani Zuraiq’ meaning ‘the mosque of the Zuraiq clan’. Majority of the scholars agree with Imam Bukhari with regard to the permissibility of attributing a particular mosque to a clan.

Hadith No. 410

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar

Allah’s Apostle ordered for a horse race; the trained horses were to run from a place called Al-Hafya’ to Thaniyat Al-Wada’ and the horses which were not trained were to run from Al-Thaniya to the mosque (Masjid of) Bani Zuraiq. The sub narrator added: Ibn Umar was one of those who took part in the race.

Comments

Abdullah bin Umar mentions that one day Rasulullah (SAWS) ordered for a horse race from a place al-Hafya in Madinah to Thaniyat al-Wada, a distance of about 6 kilometres. These horses were specially prepared for Jihaad by a method which Arabs call ‘Tadhmeer’. In this method the horses are fed with nutritious feed till they gain weight, then

they are kept in a small cabin and a thick cloth is placed over them so that they sweat, and their feed is gradually reduced. This methodology helps in making them active and able to run fast.

Thaniyat al-Wada is a place where the people of Madinah received Rasulullah (SAWS) when he first entered the town, after migrating from Makkah al-Mukarramah. It is at this place where the young girls of Madinah sang the famous song:

*Tala’al Badru Alayna Min Thaniyat al-Wada
“The full moon dawned upon us from the
Thaniyat al-Wada”*

The Madinites used to accompany their guests and relatives until this place when seeing them off.

The second group of horses which had not undergone ‘Tadhmeer’ were to run from Thaniyat al-Wada to the mosque Bani Zuraiq—a distance of one kilometer. Bani Zuraiq was one of the Ansaar tribe in Madinah, and this mosque i.e., Bani Zuraiq mosque, was named after the name of the tribe.

It is pertinent to mention here that a mosque belongs to Allah only, and is nobody’s property. For convenience to locate or administrative purposes, it is permissible to give mosque a particular name.

Chapter 42 : The distribution (of goods or wealth), and hanging up bunches of dates, in the Masjid.

Abu Abdullah (Imam Bukhari) said, “Qinwun’ means ‘Izq’ i.e., bunch of grapes. Its Tathniyah (dual)

is 'Qinwaan' and its plural is also 'Qinwaan' just like 'Sinwun' and 'Sinwaan'

And Ibrahim bin Tahman Abdul Aziz bin Suhaib narrated Anas bin Maalik saying, "Some goods came to Allah's Apostle from Bahrain. The Prophet ordered the people to spread them in the mosque --it was the biggest quantity of goods Allah's Apostle had ever received. He left for prayer and did not even look at it. After finishing the prayer, he sat by those goods and gave from those to everybody he saw. Al-Abbas came to him and said, "O Allah's Apostle! give me (something) too, because I gave ransom for myself and 'Aqil" Allah's Apostle told him to take. So he stuffed his garment with it and tried to carry it away but he failed to do so. He said, "O Allah's Apostle! order someone to help me in lifting it." The Prophet refused. He then said to the Prophet: Will you please help me to lift it?" Allah's Apostle refused. Then Al-Abbas threw some of it and tried to lift it (but failed). He again said, "O Allah's Apostle Order someone to help me to lift it." He refused. Al-Abbas then said to the Prophet: "Will you please help me to lift it?" He again refused. Then Al-Abbas threw some of it, and lifted it on his shoulders and went away. Allah's Apostle kept on watching him till he disappeared from his sight and was astonished at his greediness. Allah's Apostle did not get up till the last coin was distributed.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

A mosque is basically a place of worship particularly salaah, zikr, tilawat etc. A hadith says: *"Indeed the mosque are built for zikrullah and salaah"*.

Here in this chapter, Imam Bukhari wants to convey that, at the time of need, it is permissible to utilise a mosque for collective good of the Ummah e.g., distributing booty, giving charity to poor and needy etc., however, as per the learned scholars, it is not advisable to make it a routine practice. They argue with the fact that at the time when Rasulullah (SAWS) received the riches from Bahrain, there was no separate Baitul Maal for Muslims where they could keep the riches, also the Rasulullah's (SAWS)

personal room was too small to accommodate the riches, and that is why the distribution took place in the mosque.

Imam Bukhari has mentioned couple of things in the title of this chapter viz., 1. distribution of riches in the mosque, and 2. hanging the date bunches on the mosque walls; but the hadith that he quotes from Sayyiduna Anas mentions only the first. This issue has been well debated by the scholars of hadith. Some of them like Ibn Butaal hold that Imam Bukhari has forgotten the second (Fathul Baari). Ibn Hajr, however, denies that Imam Bukhari has not forgotten it, and says that he wants to point towards another hadith quoted by Nasa'ee from Auf bin Maalik Ashfa'ee, which says: "Rasulullah entered a mosque with a stick in his hand and struck a bunch of rotten dates which a person had hung on the wall of the mosque, and said, "He should have hung a good bunch of dates than the rotten one". (Fathul Baari, Nasrul Baari).

Some scholars claim that this narration didn't fulfilling the strict hadith selection criteria set by Imam Bukhari, and that is why, leaving it unquoted, he only made its reference in the Tarjamatul Baab.

Comments

Some poor companions of Rasulullah (SAWS) used to stay in Masjid-i-Nabawi at a place 'Suffa', specially earmarked for them. People would hung bunches of dates on the walls of the mosque for these poor and hungry people. One day it so happened that lots of riches reached Madinah from Bahrain which valued around one hundred thousand Dirhams according to some narrations. It was for the first time that so much wealth was presented to Rasulullah (SAWS). He directed the riches to be placed in the mosque, and also distributed some among those who came there.

Voluntary penury of Rasulullh (SAWS)

Rasulullah (SAWS) lived a simple and austere life. He lived in a small room and gave no preference to luxuries. According to Sayyida Aisha, for

days together they would have nothing to cook. All this simplicity, hardship, penury etc., was voluntarily chosen by Rasulullah (SAWS) for himself as well as his family. In this incident also, Rasulullah (SAWS) took nothing from the wealth that reached to him from Bahrain; and made it certain not to enter his home until the last coin was distributed among the poor and needy.

Greed is inherent in a person

To free himself and his nephew Aqil from captivity, Sayyiduna Abbas, the uncle of Rasulullah (SAWS), had to pay a huge ransom (fidya), which turned him financially weak. During this he requested Rasulullah (SAWS) something from the Bahrain wealth. Rasulullah (SAWS) told him to take as much as he could lift. Failing to carry the load of wealth he stuffed in his garment, he requested Rasulullah (SAWS) to direct someone to help him; but the Prophet turned down his request.

The Prophet (SAWS) has cautioned his Ummah in a number of ways to keep check on the various tendencies in human nature, which, if left, unattended can cause considerable and unfathomable harm to one's character building. There is hadith which says:

"If a person has two valleys of gold, he would aspire for the third".

Curb, not eradicate the evil characteristics

What Islam wants in a person is to curb, control and mold the evil instincts like greed, pride, anger, hyper-sexuality etc. It is humanly not possible to eradicate these characteristics, but to keep a check on them is imperative. Islam demands from a person the manifestation of virtuous characteristics i.e., contentment instead of greed, humility instead of pride, patience instead of anger, modesty instead of hyper-sexuality, etc. The characteristics like greed, pride, anger etc. are to be channelized through a proper way and at an appropriate instance. For example, it is good - to be greedy in the execution of virtuous deeds; to be proud being a Muslim; to manifest anger whenever there is violation of Shariah; to have sexual relationship in a legitimate way i.e., with one's wife. So, these characteristics cannot and need not to be eradicated but controlled and channelized through a proper and legal way.

Chapter 43 : One who receives an invitation in the mosque to eat and he accepts it there.

Focus on the Favours

There was once a master who asked his servant to bring him a melon. When the melon was brought and sliced before the master, he picked a slice and gave it to the servant who ate it with relish. The master, on seeing the enjoyment with which the servant was eating the slice, thought to himself, "The melon must be extremely sweet!" However, the moment he placed a slice in his mouth, he was forced to spit it out as it was extremely bitter! The master, wiping his mouth, turned to the servant and asked him, "How could you show so much of enjoyment over something so bitter?" The servant replied, "Master! You fed me the sweetest of dishes on countless occasions! How could I express dissatisfaction on this one, single occasion?"

If every couple can make this their mindset, then even when faced with the bitterest of experiences, the sweet memories of all their spouse's virtues and favours, on all the other occasions, will assist them to overlook and forgive each other.

Ya Rasulullah!

SYED IQBAL ZAHEER

The life of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) has been the subject matter of countless accounts and narratives ranging from the skeptical, by his opponents, to the hagiographical, by his innumerable followers throughout history. In whatever light he is portrayed, there is no denying the fact that his life and contributions towards the cause of man's progress cannot be ignored by any impartial student of history. Presented hereunder is a personal appreciation of the personality who revolutionized the course of human history in a period extending over a little more than two decades.

History is a dark body with a few bright patches here and there. One such bright patch is Muhammad (SAWS). Humanity waits for millenniums for the like of him to appear. It will take a whole page to name the greats of past history; but, who can be named whose deep influence over cultures and civilizations has remained boldly stamped right up and into the 21st century? A history that ignores him in any epoch is not the history of the humanity, but perhaps, history of an isolated people, an isolated culture; a history of the dark.

Those after the Prophet (SAWS) who supplanted burnt out Roman and Persian embers with sparkling beacons that radiated across centuries, were not unaware of who was – after God – the first cause of it all. Early at Makkah, when he presented his call to the tribes around the town, one of the chiefs remarked, “This message will anger the Romans and Persians.” So, they knew what the call was about, and who exactly the caller was. It was natural, therefore, that they should watch his every act, and pick up every word for the eager ears of their sons and grandsons who were destined to live out their lives

amid sand dunes and palm trees shepherding camels and collecting dung – if not for Muhammad (SAWS). Who was it who gave the empires to nomads – worse than dogs as the Romans and Persians would say about them? Who was it who sent Persian carpets and Roman couches into their tents? Who was it that gave them the moral values armed with which they subdued, liberated, and elevated nations after nations?

Talks and gossips in the campfires of the military colonies set up at the end of the first century in Spain, Marrakesh, Tunis, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Persia, Georgia, Kurdistan, Asia Minor, Sindh, Sudan, and dozens of other towns, could not have but centered upon Muhammad, his life and personality – the single man responsible for the lightning pace of military conquests powered by moral, intellectual and spiritual might, that had brought the Bedouins into wonderlands about which they had only heard from stray travelers, but had never dreamt of ever sighting with their eyes in their life.

Wide-eyed and spell-bound they would have listened with attentive ears to the accounts of Muhammad (SAWS), who was “far removed

from them and their recently acquired luxuries” – as they were told. They would hear their military leaders acknowledge their debt to him who lived in a cottage six foot high, as long and as wide, on dates and barley, dictating principles that give life to life, society and culture, from within a hut-like structure called mosque, capacitated to hold eight score men and women, dim during the day and dark at night, where their grandfathers sat, spat on the ground and covered it with sand. Tears rolled down their eyes at the description of his simpler than the simplest life of thirst and hunger, toil and distress, forcing his way across the lands, tearing through the darkneses, subduing tribes, urging them to look deep into the wide eyes of destiny urging them to rise, march into the horizons, challenge the organizers of a despoiled world, and launch a moral and intellectual empire to last a thousand years, on principles and details that he would equip them with as they left.

“O Mua`dh,” he said to a young governor leaving out for the province, “remember that you are heading to a people of Scripture. So, when you meet them, invite them to: there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad (SAWS) is His Messenger. If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah has commanded them five prayers during the day and night. If they obey you in that, let them know that Allah has obligated upon them charity. It will be taken from them and distributed among their poor. If they obey you in that, then beware that you seek from them the best part of their wealth. Beware of the invocation of the oppressed, for, there is no veil between it and Allah.”

If they had immense respect for Abu Bakr and `Umar, `Uthman and `Ali, Talha and Zubayr, Abu Dharr and Ibn Mas`ud, Mus`ab and Bilal, Ubayy b. Ka`b and Abu `Ubaydah, Sumayyah and Umm Darda', `A'isha and Umm Salamah (RAA) – his Companions all, and nameless others – the examples in piety, wisdom, sagacity, humbleness and ingenuity – then, they

could place their master Muhammad (SAWS) only below God in admiration, adoration, love and respect for having molded such men and women out of – as if – dry desert winds. Every word reported of him, every syllable delivered by him was to them only next to the Qur`an in value. Every minor detail about him: what he ate, how he drank, how he bled, they placed on their eye-lids, as they slept tired after the tense, attentive, and exhausting sessions detailing his life and character, the knowledge of which belittled, in their eyes. the Empires they had brought down, the riches they had inherited, the palaces Muhammad (SAWS) would have hated to enter. The carpets and the couches don't matter; you inherit, you lose. But values, morals, the passion to do justice to the oppressed now in their care, who was it due to? Yes, they even wished to know how Muhammad's (SAWS) sandals looked like and who repaired them. “That one person,” the men at the campfires, the soldiers of Islam, said with a sigh, “only if we could have seen him once.”

Hearts beating faster, breaths missed, eyes wet, when they visited the city of tranquility, the town of the Prophet (SAWS), they would visit his grave, witness the simplicity of his house, and couldn't help but break into tears and say to themselves, as it were, “Muhammad (SAWS), we haven't been faithful enough to you, your examples, your message. We are too little before you and seek nothing but God's forgiveness, yet, we do not wish to be too far away from you on the Day of Final Decisions.”

After Prayers in his mosque, they could not but join the company, for long or short, of those who sat in circles, men and women, from towns near and distant, addressed by those who spoke of Muhammad (SAWS): Malik and Ibn. `Uyayna, `Ali b. Madini and Zuhri, Yahya b. Qattan and Zayd b. Aslam, Malik b. Anas and Kharijah b. Zayd, Salim and Nafi`, Qasim and Rabi`a, Ibn al-Musayyib and Sulayman b. Yasar, Ibn `Uthman and `Utbah, Yahya b. Sa`id and `Urwah –

and countless others of the Madinan scholars. They would hear them narrate what Muhammad (SAWS) was like, what Muhammad (SAWS) said, what Muhammad (SAWS) enjoyed most, where Muhammad (SAWS) fell from the horse, what happened to his nine wives, how could his camel have just disappeared after him, and so on.

The narrators had Muhammad's (SAWS) life on their lips, and in their lives, insisting on the audience to follow Muhammad to the dot – and the dots they could narrate and explain, while those squatted before them made notes, mental or material. The town reverberated with Muhammad's (SAWS) name: here is where his wives lived, there is the well he drank from, that is the mosque he visited Mondays, that is the graveyard of his frequent visit, this is the orchard in which he took a meal, that is the house he was invited to, this is the bazaar he inspected, that is the slave-girl's house whom he had stood with for a long while, this is the lane whose walls Malik kissed because Muhammad (SAWS) could have placed his hand on while passing through – it was Muhammad (SAWS) all the time, all through.

It pleased the visitors – from the military colonies of east and west, north and south – to hear all this, to witness all that, because that was the reason they had come down from the frontier campfires to this tranquil town. Muhammad's mention filled Madinah, filled the ears, filled the hearts and, as they wrote down narratives, filled their notebooks. They returned from Muhammad's (SAWS) town with heavy hearts, but hopeful that perhaps the Berbers, the Egyptians, the Copts, the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Iraqis, the Persians, the Georgians, the Chechens, the Armenians, the Kabulis, the Turks, the Kurds, and Allah knows how many races they were encountering, wouldn't revolt against them, after they had known – in little degrees – what they were carrying back with them, for them, as gifts from Muhammad

(SAWS). Perhaps! Yes, perhaps; but you never know.

While they were apprehensive, they had faith that just as they felt about the working principles of life and society laid down by Muhammad (SAWS), the subdued people would also see the wisdom in them: rules covering the believers and unbelievers, conquerors and conquered, rulers and citizens, civilians and soldiers, tradesmen and artisans, thieves and priests, taxes and levies, bribes and usuries, slaves and free, farms and mines, husbands and wives, marriage and divorce, crimes and punishments, wine and gambling, gays and lesbians, prayers and pilgrimage, loans and mortgages, pigs and donkeys, wills and inheritance, hearts and souls – was there anything under the sky that Muhammad's (SAWS) directives had not covered?

Would they, sometimes they wondered, be acceptable to the conquered peoples, of so many hues, so many languages, so many cultures, so many idiosyncrasies, and in millions, lying in wait to encounter some injustice, to raise the call to assemble, to revolt?

Would Muhammad's (SAWS) all-embracing life program act as the balm for the conquered people's injured pride, cool their anger, and would they re-organize their lives on principles and precepts that they carried back in their bags, as books and rolls?

Would they see, as they themselves saw, the easiest way to their Lord, Lord of the worlds, who sent Muhammad (SAWS)?

“All considered,” they muttered to themselves, “there is a good chance. We just needed to present it all in Muhammad's (SAWS) own words.”

They spurred their camels and horses in impatience, eager to take charge of the governance, eager to pass on the gift from Muhammad (SAWS), eager to re-narrate the narratives narrated to them.

YMD Oct-2013

Two Words

Maryam Amir

He had never prayed two rak'ah (units of prayer) in his adult life. Born and raised in Egypt, he had continuously heard the athan (call to prayer) and the iqama (second call to prayer) rolling through the streets, calling the believers to prayer, but he had never voluntarily accepted the call. This included refusing to pray at the masjid (mosque) on the first floor of the apartment building in which he lived; He passed by it day and night, on his way to work, on his way to spend hours at the local Hookah Café with his friends, and on his way home to his wife and children, only to start the routine of neglecting his prayers again the following day.

On one Friday, he was suddenly hit by a novel idea. "Why don't I just try Friday prayer today? Just to see what it's like? I'll just try it," the man thought. He came in late to the masjid; The Khatib (speaker) was already speaking. As the man was looking for a place to sit, he heard the words of the Khatib, "The Prophet (SAWS) has told us:

Kalimataani khafeefataani alal-l-lisaan tha-keelataani fil meezaan habeebataani ilar Rahman: Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem.

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'" (Bukhari)

The man, preoccupied with having just entered and finding a place to sit, only heard a few of the Khatib's words. He sat, perplexed, turning

the fragmented words over and over in his mind, "Kalimatan (two words)... habibatan (both beloved)... ila-Rahman (to The Merciful)... Subhan Allahi wa bihamdi (Glory be to Allah and by His praise)... Subhan Allah il-'atheem (Glory be to Allah, the Immense)." He had lost complete focus on the rest of the khutbah (sermon), overtaken by these words he had heard in passing, working hard to make sense of what the words could possibly mean.

After the prayer, he approached the Khatib directly. "Is all what you've said in the khutbah today true?" he questioned. Surprised, the Khatib responded, "I've said quite a bit in the khutbah today. To what specifically are you referring?" The man replied, "You said some words... *Kalimataani... habeebatani... ilar-Rahmaan... Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem.*"

The Khatib smiled in recognition. "Yes, those are in fact from a blessed hadith (narration) from The Truthful himself (SAWS). He told us:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'" (Bukhari)

The man stood, overwhelmed, awestruck, in a daze. The words had penetrated through his heart and embraced his soul. Captivated, he continued to repeat the hadith of the Prophet (SAWS) over and over to himself:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the

balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'"

He walked out of the masjid in a trance and left for his home. Upon entering, he gathered his wife and children. "Have you heard," he began to tell them, "the words of the Prophet (SAWS)? He has told us:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'"

From that moment, the man transformed. From his home, he would leave to work, from his work, he would go straight to the Masjid, and from the Masjid, he would immediately go back home to his wife and children. All the while, two words kept his lips moving and his tongue wet with remembrance, "*Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem*"

Soon, his friends from the Hookah Café noticed his continued absence. They came to his apartment one day. "Where have you been?" they asked. "We haven't seen you smokin' hookah with us for a while."

A beautiful, wistful look came over the man's face. "Haven't you heard?" He replied to his old crew from the café, "The Prophet (SAWS) has told us:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'"

And this is how he spent his days; reminding his family, his friends, those in the masjid and those who passed by in the streets, about the beloved words to Allah, those heavy words on the scale, those words light on the tongue, "*Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem*." The man had gone from a person who never prayed, spent little time with family and frequented the house of hookah instead of the House of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He), to a person who longed for Allah (swt),

whose eyes were filled with tears, whose tongue, heart, and soul burned with the inscription:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'"

Soon, he fell ill. It had only been a few months since he had gone to the masjid, since he had first heard the beloved words of the Prophet (SAWS) by the Khatib in a Jumu'ah (Friday) khutbah. He told his son to go and to ask the Masjid administration to call upon that very Khatib to come visit him in his illness.

When he was informed, the Khatib remembered the man immediately and rushed to his apartment. Upon being let in, he saw the man, sleeping in his bed, the doctor sitting at his side. The Khatib sat at the foot of the bed and waited for the man to awaken. Finally, the man stirred and he noticed, at the foot of his bed, the very Khatib who had related the beloved, noble words of the Prophet (SAWS).

The man looked at the Khatib. He then asked him, "Have you heard? The Prophet (SAWS) has told us:

"Two words are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance, beloved to the Merciful: 'Glory be to Allah and by His praise. Glory be to Allah, the Immense.'"

With that, the man passed away.

The Khatib in this story is the teacher of my Arabic teacher. My Arabic teacher related this incident to me and continued to stress that it wasn't a story from books of the past, it wasn't a story coined to tug hearts, it was the true story of a man who was completely disconnected from Allah (swt), but to whom Allah (swt) gave a passing thought to enter the masjid, and who Allah (swt) blessed with hearing the words of the Prophet (SAWS) at a time and in a way which truly impacted his soul and final actions in life.

My teacher then told me, "The Prophet (SAWS) has said: 'Convey from me, even if it's

just one ayah [verse]...” (Bukhari).

We never know what word or action, done with a sincere intention, will truly be a means of impacting another person’s life to come back to Allah (swt).

Let’s stop judging people; let’s stop driving people out of mosques because “we” deem their dress, their swagger, their accessories, or language as something “unsuitable” to the House of God. Let’s stop assuming they’ll never be guided to “our righteous path” (since we’re so righteous, we guided our own selves, right?) and thus resolve to harsh words or disapproving stares. Perhaps those who “we” think are far from Allah (swt) will pass in a more honorable, beloved state to the One Who guides.

Let us be the first to cling to the beloved words to Allah (swt), “*Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem*,” and let us warmly, sincerely and smile-fully be a means of helping ourselves and others come back to Allah (swt)—with His Power and Mercy—through relating the beautiful words of Allah (swt) and His Prophet (SAWS), through action and speech. We never know what small, miniscule act, may be a means of guidance for ourselves and another, and a means of possibly entering jan-natul firdose al`alaa bi ghayri hisaab—The Highest Paradise, without any reckoning.

May Allah (swt) bless this man’s soul. Subhan Allah—if he had died like any other person who knows about the obligation of prayer and lazily defies praying, we would never know his story—he’d just be another person who passed away in another country, a person we may have never even known existed..

But perhaps because of his repentance and his sincere coming back to Allah (swt), Allah has blessed us with coming to know of him—so that his actions will continue to be rewarded even while he’s in his grave, every single time any one of us, because of his story, even across the world, remember to say, “*Subhaan-al-laahi wa bi hamdihee Subhaan-al-laah-il Azeem*.”

What will you do—so sincerely—that Allah (swt) will bless people with being transformed because of you, even after you’ve passed on?

The Pleasure of Allah

When it comes to food, every individual has a certain preference. Fish may perhaps be the favourite meal for some and a definite distaste for others. It is for this reason at times the host finds out from the guest as to what meal should be prepared. The desire of the host is to please the guest.

In the same way we are all the servants of Allah. Our object and desire is to please our Allah. If we were to use our own intelligence and invent ways to please Allah, then most definitely we would have failed miserably. Our loving Allah, having mercy on us, sent to us the final messenger Nabi Muhammad (SAWS) to teach us how to please our Creator, Allah. As long as we live our lives on the beautiful and perfect way shown to us by Nabi (SAWS) then we will enjoy the pleasure of Allah.

While We Question Charlie, Let's Question Ourselves Too!

By Shaykh Abu Aaliyah

While righteous anger when the Prophet (SAWS) is mocked or insulted is integral to faith, we Muslims need to invest greater efforts into adhering to the actual obligations and duties instated by faith – be it in our acts or worship; our ethics and behaviour; our relationships; or our social contracts and transactions. The Prophet (SAWS) said: ‘All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse.’ On being asked who refuses, he said: ‘Those who obey me will enter Paradise, while those who disobey me have in fact refused.’ [Al-Bukhari, no.7280]

While debating whether one should have the right to gratuitous offence or not, or the limits to freedom of speech (for it does indeed have limits and restrictions), this is as good a time as any to take stock of our own commitment to the life and teachings of the Prophet (SAWS) and how much we exemplify it or not in our daily lives and conduct: So let those who contravene his command beware lest an affliction befall them or a painful punishment smite them. [24:63] In contrast: Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, they are with those whom God has blessed, of the prophet and the truthful [highest] saints, and the martyrs, and the righteous. What fine company they are! [4:69]

While pointing out the inconsistencies, double standards or blatant Islamophobia in and

among the Je suis Charlie voices (both in France as well as elsewhere), we need the voices of our scholars to give us clearer guidance on how and why we cannot take the law into our own hands in the democracies in which we live and consider home, even when Islam’s sacred symbols have become open game: You will surely hear much that is offensive from those who were given scripture before you, and from idolaters. But if you persevere patiently and fear God, such are weighty factors in all affairs. [3:186]

While we call into question the commitment to freedom of speech of many heads of state who marched so sanctimoniously against the disgraceful Paris killings, it is time we questioned how committed we are to the revealed truths of our din – individually and collectively – and how deep our convictions in them really run: Lose not heart, nor grieve. For you shall prevail, if you are truly believers. [3:139] That we prevail not, but are prevailed over, says something very troubling about our collective commitment to religion and revealed truths.

While we still feel the reverberations of the Paris murders and sense more than a little hypocrisy in how the French Republic selectively enacts its freedom of expression, it’s important to also hold ourselves to account and weed out hypocrisy from our actions and persona: ‘The

signs of a hypocrite are three, even if he prays and fasts and claims that he is a Muslim: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he reneges on it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays his trust.' [Al-Bukhari, no.33; Muslim, no.107] A far more serious form of hypocrisy is highlighted in the following verse: And when it is said to them: 'Come to that which God has sent down and to the Messenger,' you see the hypocrites turn away from you in aversion. [4:61]

While mainstream Muslims denounce such crimes, dismissing them as acts of fringe extremist with troubled pasts, political grievances and little religious learning, we also admit that such acts of lawlessness are now a growing concern within and outside the House of Islam. And yet, as angry and enraged young souls trample over traditional Islamic teachings and ignore established leaders and scholarship, we Muslims need to each play our part in quelling this rising tide of religious anarchy that was foretold to us in this next hadith: 'God does not take away knowledge by wresting it from the hearts of men; rather He takes knowledge away by taking away the scholars. So when no scholar remains, people take the ignorant as leaders who, when asked, give fatwas without knowledge: they are misguided and misguiding.' [Bukhari, no.100; Muslim, no.2673]

While freedom of expression currently forbids insulting race and ethnicity, it has no such qualm when it comes to pouring scorn upon beliefs and ideologies – religious or otherwise. Free speech is deemed to be the core value of democracy: a precondition to progress and the guarantor of liberty. The only constraints on it are things like libel, slander, hate speech, obscenity, incitement to violence, and severe and specific threats to public safety. All else is taken to be fair game. And yet Charlie Hebdo didn't occur in a vacuum. The cartoons come at a time when scorn, bigotry, discrimination, physical violence, mosque burnings as well as a growing host of legal handicaps are day-to-day realities

for European Muslims. In what way do such cartoons not serve to further the xenophobic contempt for a community already ill-protected, maligned and under significant social siege?

While much of the West has shown its outrage for the attack on the cherished value of free speech, Muslims will do well to recall that denigrating the Prophet (SAWS) – whom they cherish more than any other, for they believe him to be a prophet of God and the epitome of piety, purity and goodness – is a capital offence under classical Islamic law. In a Muslim land where such law is sovereign and applicable, and after investigation, trial and the due process of law, it is the state's prerogative to carry out the sentence of blasphemy: a crime punishable by death. Just how outraged the Western world may feel about this should be neither here nor there. As for vigilante killing in non-Muslim polities, where neither Islamic law nor its jurisdiction applies, we should recognise it for what it is: criminality and murder. It neither has the validation of classical Islamic law, nor the endorsement of any established, living scholarly authority.

While many see in the Charlie Hebdo tragedy the symbols of the moral superiority of Western values and civilisation, others may ask: How can there be civilisation without civility? And how can there be civility when gratuitous offence is allowed for nothing more than its own sake? Of course, Muslims should understand that those outside of their faith are free, and should be free, to criticise Islam; question its teachings; and challenge its beliefs, laws and ethics; and even reject it out of hand, if they so choose. If some Muslims feel slightly queasy about that, they simply need to get thicker skins: There is no compulsion in religion, is what the Qur'an says. [2:256] What most Muslims, I suspect, are trying to say is this: If for nothing more than community cohesion and peaceful coexistence, let's avoid senseless provocation and gratuitous offence merely for its own sake. Let's learn to be a tad more civil.

Freedom & the “Hidden Life”

Laura El Alam

“Creators should have nothing to do with Islamic fashion,” asserted Pierre Bergé, co-founder of Yves Saint Laurent in an interview with radio station Europe 1. “Designers are there to make women more beautiful, to give them their freedom, not to collaborate with this dictatorship which imposes this abominable thing by which we hide women and make them live a hidden life.”

The “abominable thing” Bergé is referring to — modest Islamic women’s clothing — has recently been appropriated by major designers including DKNY, Dolce & Gabbana, Tommy Hilfiger, and Marks & Spencer. Fashion brands are gradually recognizing that they have a lucrative, untapped market in Muslim consumers and are producing clothes to satisfy that profitable niche. From full-body swimsuits and ankle-length dresses to abayas and headscarves, the fashion world is starting to incorporate loose and modest garments that are a major departure from the typical sexy runway fashions. But not everyone is happy about it.

In her April 14, 2016 article “What Freedom Looks Like” for the *New York Times*, author Vanessa Friedman explores the backlash that is coming from some people in France’s fashion

industry and government. Referring to Pierre Bergé, Friedman writes, “He ... implied that the designers were exploiting a misogynist system that, for financial gain, forces women to hide their bodies.”

Laurence Rossignol, the French minister for women’s rights, jumped into the fashion fray. In an interview with BFTV, she likened modest clothing to a prison: “What’s at stake is social control over women’s bodies,” she said in an interview on the French news network. “When brands invest in this Islamic garment market, they are shirking their responsibilities and are promoting women’s bodies being locked up.”

Rossignol then infamously compared Muslim women to “negroes” who supported slavery, causing a global uproar and accusations of racism. She later recanted that particular part of her statement.

Reading the statements of these two French public figures, I am torn between derision and disgust. On one hand, I wonder how they cannot see the irony of their statements. Bergé laments a “misogynist system that, for financial gain, forces women to hide their bodies,” but apparently fails to see any problem with a high-profit fashion industry that has, for centuries, per-

suaded women to *reveal* their bodies in order to serve as sex objects, sell clothes, and entice the male gaze. When Rossignol decries “social control over women’s bodies,” doesn’t she see how women’s bodies have been controlled in various ways throughout Western history? Isn’t banning the headscarf in French schools an example of “social control?” Isn’t requiring all swimmers in French pools to wear tiny, tight, and extremely revealing swimsuits another example?

On the other hand, I am disgusted with Bergé’s and Rossignol’s depressing and incorrect depiction of Muslim women. The image they are associating with a Muslim woman is of an uneducated, voiceless, oppressed person who has no say in her wardrobe or her life choices. Haven’t they observed the countless Muslim women doctors, professors, engineers, intellectuals, businesswomen, and highly educated and talented women who choose to cover? Don’t they see the millions of empowered Muslim women around the world who have the “freedom” to uncover in their country of residence if they wish, and yet often willingly embrace a modest wardrobe?

Unlike Bergé and Rossignol, I view all women as intelligent beings with free will and intellect. I do not think they are so easily duped or forced into dressing or acting certain ways. Even when the runway models are waif thin and wearing extremely revealing clothing, Western non-Muslim women can still choose to dress however they wish. I would not, as Bergé does, define them as “forced” to do things. And although the fashion industry has been criticized widely for creating and perpetuating unrealistic ideals of beauty, I still would not describe Western women as being “locked up” by the shackles of fashion. They have a choice and a mind, should they choose to use them.

What about Muslim women? Do we have any choice in our clothing? Are we, as Rossignol said, “consenting slaves”? Are our long dresses, tunics, and abayas truly a prison for us? Do we

need to be liberated by the likes of Bergé and Rossignol?

First, if the opponents of Islamic clothing bothered to ask Muslim women their opinion, they would learn something that might surprise them: the vast majority of Muslim women who dress modestly do it willingly and for one reason: to please their Creator.

“Yes, but what if their husband or father or government is forcing them to cover?” someone is bound to argue. To that question I would reply, “A Muslim woman’s duty to cover is mandated by her Creator. Regardless of what others in her life might do or say, dressing modestly is an act of obedience to Allah. Some women might indeed be exploited or mistreated by individuals or governments, but *any* oppression of women is un-Islamic.”

Besides, do people seriously think that non-Muslim women are free from oppression, coercion, and control? What about uniforms that require women to show their legs, arms, and chests to look appealing for customers? What about egotistical husbands who want their wives to look like “arm candy” at all times? What about mothers who constantly pressure their daughters to lose weight, wear makeup, and squeeze into the latest styles so that they can find a husband, thrive socially, or be a “credit” to their parents? Aren’t these females victims, too?”

So let’s look at a realistic view of Muslim women. Of course, there are some Muslimahs who choose not to cover at all, and their freedom of choice is obvious. The majority of Muslim women who *do* dress modestly do so with their eyes wide open. Their goals are the noblest ones possible: To please their Creator and to earn Paradise. By covering their bodies, they are eschewing public opinion, pop culture, and a superficial understanding of beauty. They are refusing to exhibit their attractiveness or to sell their bodies. Their faith tells them that their worth is not based on their outward appearance,

but on their character and morals. Their inner beauty (the most important one) is apparent in their actions and manners, and their outward beauty is revealed *on their own terms*, only to those who can be entrusted with it. That is empowerment, not prison.

Bergé and Rossignol would like to cast themselves as super heroes whose noble task is to liberate the poor Muslim women who are living what Bergé calls “a hidden life.” What, I would ask them, is wrong with a hidden life? Should *everything* be made public? Aren’t there certain things that even French people would like to keep private? Why should women’s bodies and beauty be expected to be on display for other’s enjoyment? Are men entitled to that? If, theoretically, all women started dressing modestly, who, exactly, would find that disappointing? Is this whole issue *really* about women’s feelings and empowerment, or about men’s insistence on keeping them half undressed?

If a woman chooses to cover her own body in compliance with her faith, isn’t that her right, her freedom?

It comes down to a matter of semantics, in a way. What some people call an “abominable thing,” others call “modesty.” What some call “locked up” others call “liberated.” Even the very first word of Bergé’s quote proves that he has a completely different mindset from a Muslim. He uses the term “creators” to describe designers like himself. It is their duty, asserts Bergé, to “make women more beautiful and to give them their freedom.” What a lofty goal for mere mortals with a flair for design!

Muslims, of course, have a completely different definition of “Creator.” We live our life to please the One Creator, Allah, and our beauty and freedom are gifts from Him and contingent upon Him. No mini-skirt or makeup can make us beautiful if we are rotten on the inside. No politicians or *fashionistas* can free us if our hearts are slaves to a false god. Therein lies the crux of the matter and why Bergé and Rossegnol will never see why our freedom and our power are in the very garments they abhor.

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Source: al-Jumuah

Reaching Allah, Quickly

The reward that a woman receives for exercising patience over her difficulties in managing the home and fulfilling the rights of her husband and children is sometimes so great that it makes her ‘reach’ Allah very quickly. This, however, is conditional to her obedience to Allah; fulfilling His rights, the rights of His Rasul (SAWS), and the rights of His creation.

Women who have a number of children and sometimes even a temperamental husband, together with many household chores and other responsibilities, often think that they cannot achieve the ranks of the special friends of Allah because they do not have time for ‘wazeefahs’ and nawaafil (optional prayers).

I tell them that they need not worry about too many wazeefahs. The most important ‘wazeefah’ is abstinence from all sins. Added to this, they should just correct their niyyah (intention) in all that they are doing as routine housework. When they make the intention of pleasing Allah, then that very same housework becomes ‘ibaadah. In this simple way, they will easily secure great rewards and the same spiritual stages, if not higher.

Moulana Yunus Patel (ra)

The Future of Staying Connected

Mubina Mufti

The Web turned 20 in 2011 (the first web page was launched on August 6, 1991). Today, there are 644, 275,754 web pages, according to Netcraft.com, and even that is not the most accurate number, considering the dynamics of the web. No one could have predicted back in August 1991, at the beginnings of the Web, the incredible development and crucial impact the World Wide Web would have on late 20th- and 21st-century society, economy, and culture.

However, in just 20 years, the “soul” of the Web has changed: what began as the ultimate democratic tool, the Web is increasingly turning into a “global village” and a limitless market where the consumer is the commodity.

In this essay we will examine how these changes affect our online and real lives, and whether we can glimpse at the future of staying connected.

The Web: 20 years ago and now

In a BBC documentary series, “The Virtual Revolution,” Dr. Aleks Krotoski analyzes the development of the Web and its all-encompassing impact on our lives. She speaks with the prominent and important online social strata: the founders of Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft, and the inventor of the Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, who acknowledges the discrepancy between the intended purpose of the

Web and what it represents today.

At its beginnings, the Web was the epitome of democratization: its defiance against authority and tendency to uphold horizontal allegiances, and the fact that it gave voice to everyone and censored no one. Even now these characteristics are closely tied to the definition of the Web; however, we are also witnesses that these democratic hopes are being challenged by the growing influences of giant web companies, such as Google and Amazon, and some governments’ interests at controlling the content their citizens have access to.

It is difficult to state that Google has a monopoly over the Web, because essentially, no one has and no one can have a monopoly over the Web. However, Google’s way of making money, through the so-called Google AdWords, shows what happens when the Web meets the profit-making sector. One of the factors in the efficiency of these AdWords is the consumer profile. Google collects data about us based on the words we look up and it uses it to offer us a “more personalized experience,” i.e. showing us user-profiled ads. It seems that the consumer is becoming the consumed, as Dr. Krotoski observes. Despite this, in the words of Seth Goldstein, we are “perfectly dumb and happy” about the amount of data or “digital fingerprints” we leave behind.

Governments are also very actively involved in using the internet as the “fifth dimension of warfare.” One of Dr. Krotoski’s interviewees said that wherever there was a conflict in the real world, there was a conflict on the Web. In recent years a cyberwar has been going on between China and the U.S. and both countries have been accusing each other of running an “army of hackers.” And increasingly, there are allegations that the Russian government used the Web in its efforts to influence the recent U.S. Presidential election.

Certain conservative governments, such as the Iranian and the Chinese, employ censorship of web content on a daily basis. However, the latest attempts to pass the SOPA and PIPA acts, which have ignited massive protests in the U.S. and Europe, prove that even supposedly “democratic” governments try to cripple the “free-for-all” spirit of the Web.

What has the Web done to us?

The Web has distorted and transformed our notions of privacy. Our online habits are a gold mine for advertisers. They use recommendation engines to learn patterns of our behavior as consumers and shower us with ads for things we did not even know we needed; this process is called behavioral targeting. We are still significantly unaware to what extent and in what way this huge amount of “digital-fingerprint” data could be utilized.

However, we also willingly share some very important information about ourselves with the rest of the world through social networks and blogs, such as Facebook. Many of us give away our real names, dates of birth, locations, personal relationship status, etc., without even realizing the consequences of such openness.

The Web has also changed the way we think. We now tend to think more associatively than linearly, because of the enormous amount of data we are exposed to, which also makes us less attentive and less able to concentrate on one

topic for long.

It has also become impossible to lead a political campaign without focusing on online communication between the candidate and their voters. The Arab Spring and the Occupy protests were fueled by group activity and information sharing on the Web.

The fact that 1/4 of the planet today is connected shows that the Web is increasingly penetrating every sphere of our modern lives. We are turning into Homo Interneticus, a name Dr. Krotoski used to describe the new wired human, and our prototype can be found in South Korea, the most connected nation in the world. Internet addiction has long been recognized as a problem by the South Korean government; there were even some cases of addicts who neglected themselves – or their children – to the point of death. However, finding the most efficient way of treating internet addiction is still disputed.

To end with the words of Emily Bell, the Guardian News & Media director of digital content, “Forecasting the future of the internet is a horrible business, even in the short term. Those who can do it most successfully are among the richest people on the planet. Being asked what the internet will look like in four years’ time is a stretch. Being asked what it will look like in 40 years is bewildering.”

‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr (RA) narrates that Rasulullah (SAWS) said, “The one who truly joins family ties is not the one who deals with people in the same manner that they deal with him. Rather, the one who truly joins family ties is the one who joins ties when they have been severed.”

A Mother Motivates

Akbar was the Moghul king of India from the year 963 A.H. until his demise in 1014 A.H. Although in the year 991 A.H. he was responsible for inventing and enforcing a new religion, prior to that he was religiously inclined.

On one occasion, all the dignitaries, eminent personalities and noble people had come to Akbar to pay their respects to him. Among these people was an 'Aalim named Moulana 'Abdun Nabi. When he noticed that Akbar was wearing clothing of a saffron colour, he immediately reprimanded Akbar and instructed him to change his clothing, as saffron coloured clothing is impermissible for males to wear. However, when reprimanding Akbar, he became so spirited that he even struck the clothing of Akbar with the tip of his staff.

Akbar was extremely upset at the manner in which he had been publicly reprimanded. Yet, he remained silent. Later, when he entered the harem, he went to his mother and mentioned to her what had happened. His mother, who was from a saintly family, consoled him in the following words, "History will record among your virtues the tolerance which you displayed. History will record that an 'aalim, who was one of the public, struck the king with his staff in reprimand, yet the king remained silent out of honour and respect for Deen." (Taareekh-e-Da'wat wa 'Azeemat vol. 4 pg. 90)

Lessons:

1. When Akbar complained to his mother, she could have influenced him in any way she wished. Had she wished, she could have incited him against the 'aalim. Instead, on account of her piety, she consoled him and advised him to disregard his own honour so that Islam and Deen may be honoured.
2. In a similar vein, if the teacher or ustaaz of our child has to reprimand our child, instead of regarding the teacher to be our enemy and siding with our child, we should realize that these people are concerned about the improvement of our child. Their reprimand is not one of hatred and enmity, but is rather one of well-wishing and love, as they wish the child to attend to his weaknesses and progress in life.

Spending on the Poor

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (ra)

Woe to you, O rich one! You must not think that offering thanks for your wealth is to merely say: "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." The real giving of thanks is comforting the poor by giving them some of what you have. You must pay to them the obligatory alms, then you must console them by giving them further as much as you can. You must give them without reminding them that you are doing a favor to them, for this harms the hearts and makes the donation impure. Many of the poor would rather endure the fire of poverty than bear the fire of being reminded of the favor. Give the gift without deliberately reminding the receiver of your present, otherwise do not give at all. Have you not heard the following words of Allah (mighty and glorified is He): "O believers, do not make your alms void by reminding the recipient of your favor and causing harm" (from 2.264)? The nullification of alms means that they merit no reward, so the donor who reminds the recipient of his favor loses his money and reward and his heart becomes tarnished, because the donor's reminder to the recipient of his favor is an act of associating partners with Allah. The believer gives and does not give a reminder of his favor but he rather offers thanks to Allah (mighty and glorified is He) for enabling him to give alms. He believes that Allah (mighty and glorified is He) is the giv-

er not himself. He believes that He is one with no partner, who takes from him and gives to others. He believes that it is He who gave him what he has and it is He who takes from him and gives to others.

O rich people, O You who have been granted affluence! Do not be misled by your wealth, do not boast of it, and do not use it to show arrogance to the poor, for this will cause your fall into poverty! And you, O young people, do not be misled by your youth and might over the poor, using your youth and might in acts of disobedience to Allah (mighty and glorified is He)! The works of disobedience are poison for the bodies of your religions. They are a beast that devours the flesh of your religions, good health, and wealth. How good this piece of poetry by one of them is:

If you were in a state of favor, take care to maintain it,

for the acts of disobedience remove the favors!

Come to me while thinking well of me and having no doubts about me. When you go back to your homes, remember this talk and do not forget it. Remember death and what is after it. You must keep up praying during the night and ensure that your mind is focused while you are in His presence. Keep the fast for it enlightens the heart, particularly when you break your fast with

lawful food. You will not earn anything without giving something. The men of knowledge and the men of wisdom are agreed that the state of bliss has to come to an end and that the real bliss can be attained only by renouncing bliss. One righteous man is reported to have spent forty years without sleep except when in prostration while praying. His prostration was his mattress, cover, and pillow. This is the state of affairs of someone who has renounced this world, wished for the hereafter, feared death and afflictions, renounced the creatures and what they have, wished for the Creator, knew what He has, and came to know Him, so he worshipped Him and fought against his lower self for His sake. The person who comes to know Allah (mighty and glorified is He) loves Him, and the person who loves Him obeys Him.

The believer exerts strenuous effort to give charitable donations from his possessions and prefer others to have them, for he knows that these charitable donations will be kept hidden for him should he need them. He exercises pious restraint and does not assume that everything he gets is pure and hence lawful. He, therefore, avoids many things in order to get one thing the root and branch of which he knows well. He tries hard to find reasons for donating anything in his possession to give to charity. He does not touch what he inherits from his father and mother saying to himself that they may have earned them while not exercising pious restraint, so he donates them to the poor and the needy.

O son of Adam, how stingy you are to yourself! Has He not asked you for a loan yet you refuse to lend Him? Have you not heard His (mighty and glorified is He) following words: "Who is he that will lend to Allah a good loan" (from 2.245)? If you give Him a loan through the hands of the poor, Allah will multiply it for you manifold and will give you, today and on the Day of Resurrection, much more than what you gave. Do business with Him and then you will make profit. Go ahead and do business with Him with-

out putting Him to test first. When Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (peace be on him) would find himself in need of five hundred gold coins while he had only fifty, he would donate the fifty gold coins so that a few days later five hundred gold coins would come his way. If the money would not come, however, he would not have doubts about his Lord (mighty and glorified is He), protest against Him, or accuse Him of niggardliness.

The people of Allah are accustomed to dealing with their Lord (mighty and glorified is He) according to His Book and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allah's prayer and peace be on him), with certitude in their hearts. It is reported that one day a righteous man had only three eggs when a beggar came to him asking for help. He said to his maidservant: "Give him those eggs." However, she gave the beggar only two and hid the third away. An hour later, a friend of the righteous man presented him with twenty eggs, so he turned to his maidservant asking: "How many eggs did you give to the beggar?" She replied: "I gave him two and left one for you to break your fast with." He said to her "O you of little certitude, you have made us lose ten eggs!" The Prophet (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) is reported to have said "The person who relies on a created thing like himself is under a curse."

O miserable one, when a poor person comes asking for a loan, go ahead and lend him and never say: "Who is going to give me?" You must disagree with your lower self and give him a loan, and after a while make it a donation to him. Among the poor is one who disapproves of begging for alms, preferring to ask for a loan, with every intention of paying it back. He has confidence in Allah (mighty and glorified is He), and on the basis on this confidence he borrows. So, if he approaches you for a loan, O wealthy one, lend him and never face him with a request to pay back, for this would further humiliate him. If a long time past without you receiving any repayment, go to see him, ask him to accept

that loan as a gift, and absolve him of his obligation. Thus, you will be rewarded for his first joy (when you gave him the loan] and for his second one (when you turned the loan into a gift.) The Prophet (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) has said "A beggar at the door is a gift from Allah (mighty and glorified is He) to his servant."

Woe to you! How can the beggar not be a gift from Allah (mighty and glorified is He) when he takes from your share in this world to add to your share in the hereafter? He saves for you something that you will find when you need it. The amount that you give him will vanish and disappear anyway, yet on account of giving it to him you will be promoted by several degrees in the eyes of Allah (mighty and glorified is He). Woe to you, O servants! Do not you feel ashamed that you worship your Lord so that He gives you Paradise, houris, and young servants? Paradise is the abode, but where is the Neighbor? One who seeks the face of Allah (mighty and glorified is He) is different from one who seeks Paradise, different from one who seeks this world, and different from one who seeks the creatures.

O people, you have to comfort the poor and give them preference over yourselves! When faith is still weak, you have to prefer them over yourselves. When faith is strong, you have to comfort them and prefer them over yourselves while smiling. Receive the poor with generosity or send them away in the kindest way when you have nothing to give. The Prophet (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) is reported to have said "A beggar at the door is a gift from Allah (mighty and glorified is He) to his servant." Woe to you! You hate Allah's gift, reject it, and do not accept it? You will soon find out. Poverty will come to you, drive out your affluence, and replace it. Disease will come to you, drive out your good health, and replace it. Do not jeopardize the capital of favors that your Lord (mighty and glorified is He) has given you. The believer knows that the True One (mighty and glorified is He) sent the beggar to him so that He will give him

from the favors that He has kept for him. He will find out that when he gives him, treats him with respect, and accepts to loan Allah through him. He will reward him with something that is more and better than his gift, both in this world and in the hereafter.

O backslider, you build relations with the sultans, the princes, and the rich seeking power and further worldly things, yet you do not do business with the King of kings, the Wealthiest of the wealthy, the One who never dies, the One who never becomes poor, the One who repays your loan to Him multiplied manifold! He gives you ten silver coins in return for everyone in this world, apart from your reward in the hereafter. He gives you blessings in this world and rewards you in the hereafter. Have you not heard that He (high is He) has said: "And what you spend He replaces it" (from 34.39)? O Allah, grant us (the favor of] working for You! Make it pleasant for us to serve You and stand at Your door among Your servants and "give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the torment of the Fire."

Woe to you! If you shut your doors in the faces of the poor, Allah (mighty and glorified is He) will shut things up in your faces, and if you open your doors to them, Allah (mighty and glorified is He) will open up things for you. If you spend your wealth for the sake of the face of Allah (mighty and glorified is He), He will replace them for you, and if you spend them for the sake of the creatures. He will impoverish you. Spend and do not be stingy, for generosity is from Allah (mighty and glorified is He) and niggardliness is from Satan. Allah (high is He) has said: "Satan promises you poverty and orders you to commit indecency" (from 2.268). Allah (high is He) has promised you reimbursement of any expenditure as He (high is He) has said: "And what you spend He replaces it" (from 34.39).

Woe to you! You lay claim to Islam, yet you disagree with the Messenger (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) and introduce into his religion

what your passion desires! You have lied about your embracement of Islam. You are not a follower but an innovator. You are not compliant but discordant. Have you not heard that the Prophet (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) has said: "Follow and do not introduce heretical innovations for you have been provided with all that you need" and: "I have left you on a clear, unambiguous way"? You reject his sayings and contradict his words yet claim that you follow him?

Worshipping is the relinquishment of habitual practice. Worshipping abrogates habitual practice. The Law abrogates habitual practices and removes them. Adhere to the Law of your Lord (mighty and glorified is He) and give up your habitual practices. The learned person stands on the side of worshipping, whereas the ignorant one stands on the side of habitual practices. Accustom yourselves, your children, and your family members to doing what is good and to continue doing so. Accustom your hands to charitable spending of material things of this world and accustom your hearts to renouncing them. Do not behave with niggardliness, withholding them from those who need them. Do not turn down the request for help, otherwise Allah (mighty and glorified is He) will reject your plea for help. How would not He turn down your request when you have turned down His gift? The Messenger of Allah (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) has said: "A beggar at the door is a gift from Allah (mighty and glorified is He) to his servant."

Woe to you! Do not you feel ashamed that you are sure of the poverty and hunger of your neighbor yet you deprive him of your help because of a false assumption? You say: "He has hidden gold but pretends to be poor!" You lay claim to faith, yet you go to sleep while your neighbor is starving, and you have a lot to spare but you do not give him anything! Your wealth will soon be snatched from your hand. Your feast will be taken from your hand. You will be humil-

iated and impoverished, and this world, which is your beloved darling, will abandon you. Give up this world by your own will not out of coercion.

Look at your allotted worldly shares, not at the shares of others. Be content with as little food as you need for survival and as little clothing as you need to cover your private parts. If anything else was destined for you, it will certainly come your way at the appointed time. This is how the intelligent and experienced people conduct themselves. They have relieved themselves of the burden of greed and humiliation. The ascetics have come to know this world. They have given it up on account of knowingness and experience. They have known that it comes forward then turns its back, gives then takes, enthrones then dethrones, loves then hates, fattens then devours, and raises to the top of the heads then lowers to the ground. Give it up with your hearts and your essences. Never drink from its breast. Never sleep in its lap. Never wish for it because of its ornament, the softness of its skin, its clothes, its nice speech, and the sweetness of its food, for its food is poisonous. It is deadly, charming, cunning, and perfidious. It is not the abode of permanent residence and honor. Look at what happened to those before you who went along with this world and how it treated them. Do not kill yourselves in your attempts to seek more things from this world, for it cannot give you more than your due. Give up seeking more. Hold up your tongue, behave politely, be content, and say: "Allah has spoken the truth concerning His promise, and the Messenger (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) has spoken the truth when he said: 'Your Lord has completed the creation, the assignment of subsistence, and the appointment of the times of things. The Pen with which He wrote everything that is to happen until the Day of Resurrection has already run dry,' and in saying: 'When Allah created the Pen He said to it: 'Write!' It said: 'What shall I write?' He (high is He) said: 'Write down My decree about My creatures until the Day of Resurrection'".

Modern Reformed Islam

Secularize, Liberalize, Erase

Muhammad Ghilan

The topic of Islamic reform is of great importance to those who wish to see Islam have as little conflict as possible with secular liberal ideals. In this view, secular liberalism is the transcendent arbiter of Truth, and it represents an assumed moral progress towards an imagined utopia of human flourishing. This notion is founded upon the false sense that one can only be objective about religion and its role in life by evaluating it as an outsider who either implicitly or explicitly excludes the Giver of Life and Revelation from their calculus.

For Muslims invested in proving to the Western irreligious world that Islam is a “rational” religion that calls for science and all causes of social justice movements indiscriminately, Islamic reform must be done within a framework of secular liberalism. While much concern is given to the question of making Islam compatible with this ideological context, little thought is given to the more important question from an Islamic standpoint – is secular liberalism compatible with Islam? Properly understood, it appears that the two worldviews are not only incompatible as they stand, but also existentially dangerous to one another.

In his 2012 book ‘The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided By Politics and Religion,’ the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt synthesized and presented findings from a number of field and laboratory investigations into the psychology of morality. He explored the question of the origin of morality and offered an attempt at developing a foundational structure for moral matrices utilized by people of right and left political leanings.

Despite the criticisms levelled against the merit of this work such as the one by John Gray, or the one against the field of moral psychology in general by Tamsin Shaw, *The Righteous Mind* does offer some interesting insights not to be discarded. One such example appears in the chapter on religion where Haidt drew from anthropological findings that showed the role religion plays in helping groups cohere and cooperate without kinship. He writes:

The clearest evidence comes from the anthropologist Richard Sosis, who examined the history of two hundred communes founded in the United States in the nineteenth century. Communes are natural experiments in cooperation without kinship. Communes can survive

only to the extent that they bind a group together, suppress self-interest, and solve the free rider problem. Communes are usually founded by a group of committed believers who reject the moral matrix of the broader society and want to organize themselves along different principles.

The modern world elevates the individual above all, and the liberal ethic sides with individual freedom when it conflicts with community customs and expectations, as it sometimes does. On the other hand, the Beloved (SAWS) compared the community to a single body where individuals are intimately connected to the extent that when one feels something, let alone behaves in a certain way, the rest of the community hastily responds to them. Much of Islamic legislation is based on this and actively promotes a collective ethos both inside and outside the mosque.

The first thing the Beloved (SAWS) did when he arrived in Medina was build a mosque where the separate individuals of the early Muslim community would come to gather. The most sacred day of the week is Friday, the Arabic name of which literally means The Day of Gathering. On the other hand, when a man knocked on the Beloved (SAWS)'s door and identified himself by saying, "It's me!" the Beloved (SAWS) detested it. Furthermore, when a young man told the Beloved (SAWS) that he would like to have extramarital sexual relations with women and wanted it to be permissible for him, the Beloved (SAWS)'s response was to turn the young man's attention to his sister, mother, and whether he would accept other men to do the same with women in his family.

That is not to say that Islam promotes group-think or that individuals are not called upon to speak up against the community if it is engaged in oppression and wrongdoing. Muslims are encouraged to do so in both the Quran and Hadith even if they happen to be single individuals. Ultimately, a Muslim's commitment should be to the Truth, even if it harms them.

It can be said based on a holistic reading of the Quran and Hadith that one of the higher objectives of the Sharia is to make one transcend their selfish sense of individuality and recognize their intimate connectedness with others. On the other hand, the liberal ethic of the modern world emphasizes a belief in an illusion of individuality and disconnectedness from others.

Aside from its spiritual impact the emphasis on community in Islam may also be a contributing factor to the persistence and potential growth of Muslim numbers despite the numerous historical attempts to erase them. About the anthropological findings Haidt relates, he states that:

For many nineteenth-century communes, the principles were religious; for others they were secular, mostly socialist. Which kind of commune survived longer? Sosis found that the difference was stark: just 6 percent of the secular communes were still functioning twenty years after their founding, compared to 39 percent of religious communes.

The significance of these figures cannot be overstated. Secular communes have essentially disappeared within a span of two decades while religious communities persisted. The reason for this finding will be counterintuitive to modern liberal sensibilities that elevate the individual and personal freedom to live as one pleases to at all costs, and it has to do with sacrifice:

[Sosis] found one master variable: the number of costly sacrifices that each commune demanded from its members. It was things like giving up alcohol and tobacco, fasting for days at a time, conforming to a communal dress code or hairstyle, or cutting ties with outsiders. For religious communes, the effect was perfectly linear; the more sacrifice a commune demanded, the longer it lasted. But Sosis was surprised to discover that demands for sacrifice did not help secular communes. Most of them failed within eight years, and there was no correlation between sacrifice and longevity.

Why doesn't sacrifice strengthen secular communes? Sosis argues that rituals, laws, and other constraints work best when they are sacralized. He quotes the anthropologist Roy Rappaport: "To invest social conventions with sanctity is to hide their arbitrariness in a cloak of seeming necessity." But when secular organizations demand sacrifice, every member has a right to ask for a cost-benefit analysis, and many refuse to do things that don't make logical sense.

The dismissal of Haidt and other anthropologists he cites of the sanctification of actions as a cover for arbitrariness is due to their materialist commitments that reject the Sacred. Their classification of religious practices as arbitrary is an irrelevant and unsupported opinion presented as fact. However, what is relevant is the belief on the part of religious communes that their sacrifices and commitments are to the Sacred. The belief in something greater than the individual appears to be essential for a community to remain as such. Secular communes on the other hand engaged in futile attempts to logically justify their sacrifices, and they eventually perished.

Modern Muslims seem to be walking a dangerous fine line where they identify as a religious community, yet when it comes to religious practices many feel the need to offer logical explanations for everything. Examples of this include fasting Ramadan to feel the hunger of the less fortunate, not eating pork because of any number of health and sanitary reasons pertaining to pigs, and wearing the hijab to privatize female sexuality. Although Muslim scholars have offered materially tangible explanations for such practices, these explanations have been graduated for too many from being byproducts of a sacred commitment to these rituals into justifications for performing them. In this vain, all one has to do is offer a counterargument to shake a Muslim's commitment to upholding these practices.

That there is a crisis in Islamic education and

understanding requiring serious consideration by Muslim scholars is not in question. However, much of modernist Islamic "reformation" plays on the fine line of identity and justification, and invokes a *maqasidī*, i.e., an objective-based approach. In contrast to past communities who sought to understand the wisdom of the law, modernist "reformation" elevates the individual to a degree that rivals the Legislator, where the law must make logical sense for it to be accepted. Moreover, in the name of "moral progress" it calls for the discarding of laws that violate liberal sensibilities. To make it palatable, scripture is desacralized through historicization of the law. None of this should be surprising. It is, after all, called a reformation.

I'm Tired!

It often happens that when we commence doing some good action or work, there is some longing, desire, interest and eagerness within us to embark on that task. Thereafter there is a drop in that initial degree of longing, desire, interest and eagerness, and we feel tired and exhausted. When this condition comes upon us, we should never stop doing the good action or work, since this condition is temporary and for a short while. Insha-Allah if we remain steadfast, after a while that initial longing, desire, interest and eagerness will return.

On the other hand if we lose hope and stop altogether, then to attain that longing, desire, interest and eagerness will be difficult. Let us keep this in mind, when it comes to our salaah, Quraan Majeed recitation, zikr and du'aa – that steadfastness is the key to progress

Fallacies of the American anti-Islam fringe

Jacob G. Hornberger

Ever since the 9/11 attacks, there has been a fringe element in American society that has claimed that the attacks were part of a centuries-old religious war between Islam and Christianity. They've claimed that Muslims constitute a grave threat against everyone in the United States and the Western world because Muslims are supposedly determined to establish a worldwide caliphate, which would necessarily entail conquering the United States, taking over the federal government, and running the IRS, DEA, Federal Reserve, Social Security administration, CIA, NSA, Pentagon, and all the other parts of the federal government.

This fringe element has now surged to national notoriety owing to the fact that there are now people within the Trump administration who appear to subscribe to that philosophy.

However, there have always been big problems with the anti-Islam mindset. Let's review three of them.

During the entire Cold War, the people who subscribe to the anti-Islam paradigm never — repeat never — brought up anything about this so-called religious war between Islam and Christianity or anything about the purported quest by Muslims to establish a worldwide caliphate, one that would include the United States.

Doesn't that seem rather odd? Here the Muslims have supposedly been coming to get us for centuries and not one single person in the anti-Islam crowd expressed even a tiny iota of concern during the entire 44-year history of the Cold War.

That's because during the Cold War, the official bugaboo for the American people, as set forth by the Cold War-era national security establishment, was not Islam or terrorism but rather communism (or as conservatives used to say, "godless communism"). Throughout those four decades, it wasn't the Muslims who were coming to get us, it was the communists. Or it was the Soviet Union, which was led by Russia (which has now been restored to semi-official bugaboo status, in conjunction with the Muslims) that was hell-bent on conquering the United States. It was in Moscow, Americans were told, that the international communist conspiracy to take over the world was based.

From the first grade in the public (i.e., government) schools to which state law forced their parents to send them, American schoolchildren had their minds indoctrinated and molded about how the Russians were coming to get us and force America to become a communist state. And it worked. By the time American children reached 18 years of age, most of them were ab-

solutely convinced that America was in grave danger of falling to the communists. That's what propelled them to blindly support the Cold War, the conversion of the federal government to a national-security state, the Korean War and the Vietnam War (both of which were waged without the constitutionally required congressional declaration of war), ever-growing support of foreign dictators, ever-growing interventions in foreign countries, ever-growing assassinations, ever-growing expenditures for the Pentagon, CIA, and NSA, and ever-growing infringements on the rights, liberties, and privacy of the American people.

Through it all, not a peep — not a single peep — about the supposed quest by the Muslims to establish a worldwide caliphate or about their supposed war to enslave Americans and force them to study the Koran and to establish Sharia law in the United States.

In fact, it was the exact opposite. When it was the Soviet Union, rather than the United States, doing the invading and occupying of Afghanistan, U.S. officials actually partnered with and supported some of the most extreme and fanatical Muslims who were fighting to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan.

When that happened, there wasn't a peep of protest from anyone who is a part of the anti-Muslim crowd today. On the contrary, they cheered the partnership with radical and fanatical Muslims because, again, communism, not Islam, and the Soviet Union (Russia) were the official bugaboos.

Those in the anti-Muslim crowd today were among the most ardent supporters of the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, notwithstanding the fact that Bush had not secured the constitutionally required congressional declaration of war against either country.

The anti-Muslim crowd cheered and celebrated the many years of deadly and destructive occupations that followed the invasions of both countries. By this time, their mindsets had shift-

ed from communism as the official bugaboo to Islam as the official bugaboo. So, every time that U.S. soldiers bombed, shot, killed, maimed, or tortured people in Iraq or Afghanistan, the anti-Muslim crowd made it a point to thank the troops for "their service" in both countries, notwithstanding the fact that neither the Afghan government nor the Iraqi government had ever attacked the United States or even threatened to do so.

To this day, the anti-Muslim crowd continues to support the U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

All that support for the Pentagon's and CIA's interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, however, poses a big problem for the anti-Islam crowd, one that they have never addressed and maybe not even considered.

That problem is this: The U.S. invasions and occupations succeeded in installing official Islamic regimes in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Don't believe me? Then take a look at the following two websites, which feature the official constitutions of Afghanistan and Iraq. You will immediately notice something important: Pursuant to the constitutions of both countries, the regimes are both official Islamic regimes.

Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Iraqi Constitution

Needless to say, this remarkable "achievement" by U.S. troops places the anti-Islam crowd in a very unenviable and quite awkward position. Do they renounce their longtime support for the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, given the fact that the interventions gave rise to two official Islamic regimes, ones that, according to the anti-Islam crowd, are coming to get us as part of the supposed quest by Muslims to establish a caliphate on the United States and the rest of the world?

So far, there have been no renunciations or denunciations of the U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan on the part of

the anti-Muslim crowd. In fact, they continue to thank the troops for their service in both countries.

Indeed, it's still not too late for the U.S. government to effect new regime-change operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, where U.S. troops continue to intervene. Have any of the anti-Muslim crowd called on the Pentagon and the CIA to oust these two official Islamic regimes, either with bombs or assassination, and replace them with Christian or Jewish or pro-Western regimes?

Nope. Not one call for a new regime-change operation. The anti-Muslim crowd continues to support the troops, who continue to fight to preserve the existence of these two official Islamic regimes. The anti-Muslim crowd continues to thank the troops for their service in Iraq and Afghanistan, which succeeded in bringing into existence two official Islamic regimes.

Very few in the anti-Muslim crowd are going out and killing Muslims here in the United States. They are wise not to do so, even if they are behaving contrary to their own "we are at war with the Muslims" paradigm. The reason is that if they were to start killing Muslims, they would be arrested, indicted, prosecuted, and punished for murder. During their trial, if they tried to tell the jury, "But we are at war with the Muslims, who are coming to get us part of their centuries-old quest to establish a worldwide caliphate," the judge would silence them and refuse to permit that to be considered a legitimate defense to the murder charge. The killers would ultimately end up spending many years of their lives in the penitentiary as convicted murderers or even possibly be executed by the state under the death penalty. One thing is for sure: They would not be celebrated by the judicial system as courageous heroes who were defending their homeland from the billions of Muslims who were supposedly coming to get them, force them to study the Koran, and live according to Sharia law.

So, what's really going on here?

After the Cold War suddenly and unexpect-

edly ended, the U.S. national-security establishment lost its official bugaboos — communism and the Soviet Union, which caused some Americans to question why it was necessary to continue devoting so much taxpayer money to fight a Cold War that was no longer in existence. To solve the problem, the Pentagon and the CIA intervened in the Middle East and began killing lots of people, many of whom were Muslims and many of whom were innocent children of Muslims (through the U.S.-enforced sanctions on Iraq).

When the inevitable "blowback" came in the form of anti-American terrorist attacks, including, but certainly not limited to, the 9/11 attacks, those people whose minds had been indoctrinated and molded into looking at communism and the Soviet Union as official bugaboos could not bring themselves to even consider the possibility that the U.S. national-security establishment was the root cause of the anti-American terrorism. By this time, the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA were their gods — their everything. At the same time, given that so many of them looked upon the federal government as their provider (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other dole programs), the last thing they wanted to do is question or antagonize their welfare provider, their sustainer, their daddy, their god.

So, while U.S. officials were claiming that the terrorists just hated America for its "freedom and values," the mindsets of some the people who, as children, had been indoctrinated and molded into seeing communism and the Soviet Union as the official bugaboos simply replaced those official bugaboos with Islam and Muslims as new official bugaboos. (Of course, Russia has now returned as a semi-official bugaboo, along with communist China, Iran, and North Korea. Vietnam, Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua are probably not far behind.) The obvious contradiction between their new anti-Islam mindsets and the gratitude they express to the troops for establishing official Islamic regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq doesn't even occur to them — or the fact

that they're obviously not out killing Muslims here in the United States who are supposedly waging a centuries-old war against them.

Once a critical mass of Americans recognizes that these official bugaboos are nothing but bunk and just a way to keep the old Cold War apparatus known as the national-security establishment (or military industrial complex) in existence and in high cotton, that will bring us ever closer to the restoration of a constitutionally limited government republic, a free-market economy, and a free, peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous society.

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Precious Gems

When a person lies, the angels stay a distance of a mile away from him because of the odour it causes. Tirmidhi

The best of days on which the sun rises is Friday. Sahih Muslim

Charity wipes out sins as water extinguishes fire. Tirmidhi

Truth is Timeless - and returning to Truth is better than continuing in Falsehood. Umar ibn Al Khattab RA

When a man knows his worth, no adulation can deceive him. Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal

If the servant were to know everything, yet he did not know his Lord, then it is as if he knows nothing at all. Ibn al-Qayyim

When you read or pursue knowledge, your knowledge should reform your heart and purify your soul. Imam al-Ghazali

Ignore those that make you fearful and sad, that degrade you back towards disease and death. Mawlana Rumi

Nothing is difficult if you seek it through your Lord. Nothing is easy if you seek it through yourself. Ibn Ata'allah

True certainty of faith means not to accuse your Lord of any of the things that befall you. Sufyan Al-Thawri

Whatever is in accordance with sharia is moderate, whatever exceeds is extreme, whatever falls short is laxity. Ibn Uthaymeen

There is no joy in the Dunya that can come close to the joy of Jannah other than the joy of iman". Ibn Al-Taymiyyah

Arguing with people removes the blessings of knowledge from one's heart. Imam Malik ibn Anas

Talut and Jalut

The Price of Oppression

The story of Talut and Jalut took place after the time of Musa AS. During this period, the Israelites had become a stingy and controlling race, oppressing non-Israelites and treating them with injustice and prejudice. Over the years, they had become a bad mannered people who were far away from Allah. They were lovers of the material life, and were not spreading the message of Allah. Therefore, to teach them humility and to remind them to go back to Allah, Allah sent the community a trial by “tasleat”: where He permitted one of the worst tyrants of this time, Jalut (Goliath), to oppress them as a sign of torture and humiliation from Allah.

Bani Israel was weakened and exhausted by continual wars, and were repeatedly humiliated and defeated by their powerful enemies. Their trial continued for years, during which time God did not predestine for them to gain victory. Their villages were destroyed, families were cast out of their homes, children and women were kidnapped and their economy was ruined. Even the ark of covenant, the indication of strength and support from Allah, was seized from them, again as a sign of humiliation from Allah.

Eventually, they sought the counsel of their prophet during this time, Samael (Samuel) AS, promising him that they would fight in Allah’s way under the leadership of a king appointed by Allah. The prophet prayed to Allah and Allah sent His verdict, to be relayed to Bani Israel. Allah had selected Talut, a humble and kind farmer, principally for his piety, but also for his physical strength, knowledge and wisdom, to be their king, and to lead the army. *Have you not thought about the group of the Chil-*

dren of Israel after (the time of) Musa (Moses)? When they said to a Prophet of theirs, “Appoint for us a king and we will fight in Allah’s Way.” He said, “Would you then refrain from fighting, if fighting was prescribed for you?” They said, “Why should we not fight in Allah’s Way while we have been driven out of our homes and our children (families have been taken as captives)?” (2:246) And their Prophet (Samuel) said to them, “Indeed Allah has appointed Talut (Saul) as a king over you.” They said, “How can he be a king over us when we are better fitted than him for the kingdom, and he has not been given enough wealth.” He said: “Verily, Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature. And Allah grants His Kingdom to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knower.” (2:247)

Talut did not originate from Bani Israel, and neither did he possess the rank of the elite and rich. He was an average farmer, without money or status, but Allah selected him due to the piety, knowledge and wisdom that Allah had bestowed upon him. With these qualities, Allah chose him as a king and a leader to lead the army, to demonstrate to Bani Israel that Allah can elevate whoever He wants. Such choice had nothing to do with social status or material wealth.

For Bani Israel, this was unacceptable. Like their stubborn predecessors during the time of Musa AS, they immediately rejected Allah’s verdict, and as usual, asked for a sign.

When they eventually accepted Allah’s decision, Allah gave them the miracle of the ark of

the covenant, which had been under the captivity of Jalut for years previously, materialising before them from the sky.

And their Prophet (Samuel) said to them: Verily! The sign of His Kingdom is that there shall come to you At-Tabut (a wooden box), wherein is Sakinah (peace and reassurance) from your Lord and a remnant of that which Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) left behind, carried by the angels. Verily, in this is a sign for you if you are indeed believers. (Qur'an 2:248)

The Army of Talut

According to some reports Talut recruited approximately 33,000 men from the society of Bani Israel. Jalut's army was 250,000 to 400,000 strong, and was mighty in strength and fully equipped.

Talut's army set out to fight Jalut and his men. It was then that they were given a trial by Allah to test their sincerity. When they arrived at a river, Talut, inspired to do so from Allah, commanded his men to sip not more than one handful of water from it, even though they were extremely thirsty. This did not make sense to the majority of the men, so they disobeyed his orders and drank to their fill.

Then when Talut (Saul) set out with the army, he said: "Verily! Allah will try you by a river. So whoever drinks thereof, he is not of me, and whoever tastes it not, he is of me, except him who takes (thereof) in the hollow of his hand." Yet, they drank thereof, all, except a few of them. (2:249)

Those who disobeyed, principally from the elite in society and who preferred to utilise their intellect and to argue with Talut than to obey Allah, suddenly found themselves weak and fatigued. They were discouraged and claimed that they were powerless to face Jalut and his men. Therefore, as in the past, the majority of Bani Israel broke their covenant with Allah.

But when fighting was ordered for them, they turned away, all except a few of them. And Allah is All-Aware of the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers). (2:246)

On the other hand, those who were steadfast in their obedience and trust in Allah continued with the journey and participated in the battle.

So when he had crossed it (the river), he and those who believed with him, they said: "We have no power this day against Jalut (Goliath) and his hosts." But those who knew with certainty that they were to meet their Lord, said: "How often a small group overcame a mighty host by Allah's Leave?" And Allah is with As-Sabirin (the patient ones, etc.). (Qur'an 2:249)

According to some reports, by the time they crossed the river, Talut's men were reduced to 313 in number, which was the same number as the army of Prophet Muhammad SAW in the Battle of Badr. These men were powerful because they trusted in Allah, and obeyed Him totally with full sincerity. They knew that even though they were pitiful in numbers, they had Allah's Might on their side.

The two armies confronted each other. Talut's army was barely equipped and vastly outnumbered by Jalut's soldiers who were also superior in physical stature, weaponry and experience. The odds against Talut's army were overwhelming – at best, 313 civilians against a quarter of a million soldiers! However, the believers neither panicked nor despaired. Instead, they called upon Allah for His help.

And when they advanced to meet Jalut (Goliath) and his forces, they invoked: "Our Lord! Pour forth on us patience and make us victorious over the disbelieving people." (2:250)

Before the battle commenced, Jalut arrogantly asked to challenge the best warrior from Talut's army. Talut, upon consultation with his people, decided on a very young man, whose name was Dawud (Daud or David) AS. Dawud AS was renowned for his constant state of zikr, or remembrance of Allah and was selected primarily for his piety and closeness to Allah.

Dawud AS was extremely skillful with the sling. He took aim, and the stone sailed through the air, and, by the will of Allah, met its mark. Accord-

ing to some reports, the stone decapitated Jalut. The battle commenced, but it was swift and decisive. Without their leader, the forces of Jalut were soundly defeated, and the men of Talut triumphed. *So they routed them by Allah's Leave and Dawud (David) killed Jalut (Goliath), and Allah gave him [Dawud (David)] the kingdom [after the death of Talut (Saul) and Samuel] and Al-Hikmah (Prophethood), and taught him of that which He willed. (2:251)*

Reflection for Us

Allah can humiliate a nation when its people have become stingy and so engulfed by their material needs that they stop caring for the poor and the needy, and neglect both their adherence to the message and responsibility to spread it. This can happen to anyone who disregards the message and is immersed in materialistic pursuits, individually, collectively or as a nation.

Say: "He has power to send torment on you from above or from under your feet, or to cover you with confusion in party strife, and make you to taste the violence of one another." See how variously We explain the Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.), so that they may understand. (6:65)

Humiliation, dignity and victory are from Allah. If one carries the covenant of the message and carries the message, Allah will award him victory and elevate him. Whereas if one disregards the message, Allah will humiliate him through numerous means. The trial will escalate until he goes back to Allah, or if not, severe torture will descend, resulting in a tragic ending.

Here, Allah had chosen a modest man of insignificant social standing to teach Bani Israel a lesson. Quality beloved to Allah is unrelated to financial means, or the status of name, family or tribe. This is illustrated by how a very young man, with a modest and unequipped army, with only a sip of water as sustenance, could defeat a vast and heavily equipped army.

This feat was impossible if one were to count the odds. However, Allah has a lesson for us. It is not the quantity of water, equipment or numbers, nor rank in society, that grants strength. Rather, it depends on the will and support of Allah. Those who have faith in Him can obtain victory against all the odds. All that is required is faith, trust, reliance and obedience to God, and in return He promises victory, and to change the condition regardless of the opposition.

Some men, in the old days, said that if a person is defeated inside (through lack of faith and indulgence in the material life) Allah promises to defeat him on the outside. Whereas if he is victorious on the inside, Allah promises to give him victory and support him outside. This is called the journey of victory within against the journey of defeat within.

This elementary message is much needed, individually, as a family and as a nation. The message is, not to simply look at the condition, the opposition or the situation. If you are a believer, look at Who is with you and the ultimate unlimited power and ability if He wants to support you. If Allah wants to grant you victory, nobody can defeat you, and if Allah wants to defeat you, nobody can give you victory.

Qur'anic stories are not tales to be read for entertainment, but lessons to us for every occasion and situation. Our condition today is insular and individualistic, with most of us immersed in family dramas, material lives and endless worries about the future. Such is our condition today, rife with confusion, division, indulgence in material life and conflict. We have drifted far away from the message. Whereas if we follow the news, the sad state of ourummah is apparent.

In this story, we cannot be busy trying to fix outside if we are corrupted on the inside. Rather, if we fix ourselves on the inside, Allah will fix the external circumstances for us. If we try to fix the outside, without changing inside, humiliation and defeat will be the ultimate consequence.

Source: Hadith of the day

Bilali Muhammad

The First Muslim-American Scholar

Firas al-Khateeb

An unfortunate misconception among today's American Muslim community is that Islam has only been present in America for less than 100 years. Many American Muslims are children of immigrants who came to the United States from the Middle East and South Asia in the mid-nineteenth century, and thus wrongly assume that the first Muslims in America were those immigrants. The reality, however, is that Islam has been in America for far longer than that. Besides possible pre-Colombian Muslim explorers from al-Andalus and West Africa, Islam arrived on America's shores in waves through the Atlantic slave trade from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. While hundreds of thousands of slaves arrived in America during this time, the stories of only a few have been preserved and are known today. One of the most enduring and unique is that of Bilali Muhammad.

The Slave Trade

As European nations began to colonize the New World in the 1500s, a demand for cheap labor arose. Plantations, mines, and farms needed workers throughout North and South America, and the native population of the New World proved unsuitable due to their lack of immunity to European diseases. As a result, European powers such as Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain looked south, towards Africa, for a source of slave labor they could exploit.

Thus, European slave traders began arriving at ports in Africa, looking to buy slaves. Generally, Europeans did not go and capture slaves themselves. Instead, they would commonly pay local rulers to go to war with other African states, capture warriors, and sell them to be taken to America. The African rulers would be paid commonly in weapons, which would further perpetuate the cycle of violence and enslavement. The entire system worked to handicap Africa's social, political, and economic development, and the results of this genocide are still felt in Africa today.

Estimates vary, but over 12 million Africans were probably forcibly taken from their homelands to serve as slaves in America, with as many as 20% of them dying on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Since much of the slave trade was focused on West Africa, a large number of those slaves were undoubtedly Muslim. The savanna kingdoms of Mali and Songhai had long been centers of Islamic civilization in West Africa and a huge Muslim population existed in the region.

One of the many Muslim slaves taken to America was Bilali Muhammad. He was from the Fulbe tribe and was born around 1770 in the city of Timbo, in what is now Guinea. He came from a well-educated family, and received a high level of education himself in Africa before being captured as a slave some time in the late 1700s. He was fluent in the Fula language along

with Arabic, and had knowledge of high level Islamic studies, including Hadith, Shari'ah, and Tafsir. How he was captured is unknown, but he was originally taken to an island plantation in the Caribbean, and by 1802, he arrived at Sapelo Island, off the coast of Georgia in the southern United States.

At Sapelo Island, Bilali was fortunate enough to have Thomas Spalding as a slave owner. While conditions across the South were horrendous for slaves, who were forced to work throughout the day and were commonly denied such basic necessities as clothes and stable shelter, Spalding gave certain freedoms to his slaves that were absent elsewhere. He did not push the slaves to work more than six hours per day, had no white slave drivers, and even allowed his Muslim slaves to practice their religion openly, a rare freedom in the deeply Christian South. Bilali was even allowed to construct a small mosque on the plantation, which very well may have been the first mosque in North America.

Because of Bilali's relatively high level of education, he rose to the top of the slave community, and was relied upon by his owner to take care of much of the administration of the plantation and its few hundred slaves. Perhaps the most remarkable account of Bilali Muhammad's leadership and trustworthiness occurred during the War of 1812 between the United States and the United Kingdom. Spalding reportedly left the plantation with his family, fearing a British attack, and put Bilali in charge of the plantation's defense. He even gave Bilali 80 muskets to defend the island with, which were distributed among the plantation's Muslim population. Bilali kept true to his word and managed the plantation while his owner was gone and turned it back over to Spalding after the war. The fact that a slave owner trusted his slaves so much as to give them control of the plantation along with weapons speaks volumes about the character and trustworthiness of Bilali Muhammad.

The Bilali Document

As a well-educated Muslim from West Africa, Bilali no doubt brought his Islamic education with him to America. This is evidenced by a thirteen-page manuscript he wrote and gifted to a southern writer, Francis Robert Goulding, before he died in 1857. The manuscript was written in Arabic, and was thus unreadable for most Americans for decades. It made its way eventually to the Georgia State Library by 1931, who attempted to decipher the manuscript, which was popularly believed to have been Bilali's diary.

After years of effort that involved numerous scholars as far away as al-Azhar University in Egypt, scholars finally managed to decipher the manuscript. It turned out that it wasn't a diary at all, but was actually a copy of passages from a treatise on Islamic law in the Maliki madhab written by a Muslim scholar of fiqh, Ibn Abu Zayd al-Qairawani in Tunisia in the 900s. The Risala of Ibn Abu Zayd was a part of the West African law curriculum prevalent in Bilali's homeland in the 1700s when he was a student. When he came to America as a slave, he was of course unable to bring any personal belongings with him, and thus his copy of the Risala was written entirely from memory decades after he learned it in West Africa. This exemplifies the level of knowledge present in West Africa, even as it was ravaged by the Atlantic slave trade.

The Bilali Document is thus probably the first book of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) ever written in the United States. And while Islam slowly died out among the African American community in the United States in the nineteenth century, it is important to recognize and appreciate the stories of the the first American Muslims. They were not a small, inconsequential group. They numbered hundreds of thousands and despite almost insurmountable difficulties, they struggled to preserve their Islamic

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Tough Times

W. Hamza

We read the Prophet's story hundreds of years after it was over. It is a successful story that contains one victory after another with a very positive final outcome. This positive experience masked all the difficult times in his life and we tend to overlook them when reading or relating the story, especially in the absence of deep analysis.

The fact of the matter is that the Prophet (SAWS) went through a lot of challenges and difficult times throughout his whole life. In one year, his uncle and his wife, who both supported him emotionally and physically, died. In the very same year, he was subjected to physical abuse from the people of Makkah.

The following story, as narrated by one of the Prophet's companions, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (RA), tells you how he was treated during this very tough year:

Seven from the leaders of Makkah were gathering next to Al-Ka'bah while the Prophet (SAWS) was praying. He elongated his prostration. Abu Jahl, one of those leaders, said,

"Who would bring the innards of the camel so-and-so family just slaughtered? We can put it on top of Muhammad while prostrating!"

'Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu'ait, the most idiot amongst them, brought it and put it on the back of the Prophet while prostrating. The Prophet did not move and I ('Abdullah is talking) could not dare to do anything, for I have no clan to protect me.

Fatimah (RA), the Prophet's young daughter, came and removed the dirt and insulted all of them. The Prophet (SAWS) then raised his

head and started supplicating to Allah against them all.

He was also challenged as a messenger tasked by Allah to convey His message. He was called a liar, a sorcerer, a poet, and a fortuneteller, and people started calling him Mudthamam (dispraise worthy) while his name is Muhammad (praise worthy) (SAWS).

His reputation was attacked, and his companions were tortured to the extent that people stopped listening to him. For two consecutive years before he migrated to Medina, only four people believed in him, two of whom died shortly after.

His trip to the neighboring city of Ta'if was just another example of those tough times. He traveled, walking, for over fifty miles to deliver his message to the people of Ta'if and ask for their support. Not only did they mock him, disbelieve in him, and let him down, but also asked their slaves and youngsters to throw stones at him for a few miles until his sandals turned red from his bleeding.

Even after migration to Madinah, his life wasn't easy. He suffered the curses and the disrespect of the hypocrites in Madina. His noble wife 'Aishah (RA) was subject to an ugly rumor spread in the society for days.

Madinah under his leadership was challenged by war from almost every single tribe in Arabia. He witnessed the killing of seventy of his companions among whom was his dear uncle Hamzah (RA).

He faced a siege of ten thousand soldiers, an attack on which his whole city, where all the be-

lievers lived, was about to be destroyed.

He faced treason from Jewish tribes in Madinah: some plotted to kill him and others betrayed him to side with an attacking army.

Many of the messengers he sent to teach people Islam were killed in cold blood and he grieved for them for months, seventy of them in one incident and twelve in another.

Learning from our Messenger (SAWS)

How did the Prophet manage to face all these challenges?

How was he able to come out of them stronger and with even more influence?

How did he develop such a community that was able to be steadfast in the face of difficult times during his life and after he died?

Below are a few simple, yet very effective, concepts that the Prophet embraced and taught his Companions.

These concepts are extremely important for us to understand and embrace. While going through the ideas below, you will realize that they are a mix of:

- Personal qualities the Prophet and his Companions displayed
- Ideas taught by the Qur'an and the words of the Prophet
- Practical actions taken by the Prophet to face difficult times

1. Know! Difficulties are inevitable tests

This is the first and the most important concept one should believe in: going through difficult times is almost inevitable.

Do people think they will be left alone and they will not be tried? ... (29:3)

When you claim to believe in Allah, stand for what is right, oppose what is wrong, support justice, or fight oppression, these claims will all be tested. Allah will show who is truthful and who is lying.

This is the tradition of those on the straight path at all times. The Prophet and his compan-

ions were asked in the Qur'an, a question that is also asked to all of us,

Do you suppose that you will enter Paradise untouched by the suffering endured by the people who passed before you?

They were afflicted by the misery and hardship and they were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him cried out: "When will Allah's help arrive?" (2: 214)

2. Know! Difficulties happen by the Will of Allah

It is very important to know and believe that nothing will happen to you except what Allah has decreed for you. The Prophet was asked to say, {Nothing will befall us except what Allah has decreed for us } (At-Tawbah 9:51)

He taught one of his young cousins, `Abdullah Ibn `Abbas, "Know that what hits you would not have missed you"

This belief gives you comfort and prevents fear from future difficulty, but more importantly, helps you overcome any difficulty you are already going through. Allah said,

No misfortune ever befalls unless it be by Allah. And whosoever has faith in Allah, Allah guides his heart ... (64:11)

3. Flee to Allah

"O Allah I display before you my weakness ..." This phrase was part of the prayer of the Prophet while coming back from his trip to Al Ta'if. Taking refuge in Allah and asking for His help and support is a very important action we should do during the time of difficulty. This is a trial by Allah, it happened with His permission, and it is only He who can alleviate it.

4. Examine your actions

"If you are not angry with me, I do not care ..." was also part of the Prophet's prayer returning from Al Ta'if. During times of difficulty, we should examine our actions. This difficulty may very well be a warning from Allah that we are

doing something wrong. It may be because of our sins and mistakes:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds ... (42:30).

It may be because we strayed and Allah sent this difficulty to us as a reminder to bring us back. Malek Ibn Deenar, one of the great scholars of Islam, transformed from being an alcoholic person to the great person we know as a result of the death of his own two-year old daughter.

5. Be optimistic

Having hope and being optimistic were two important attitudes the Prophet embraced when facing difficulty.

“By Allah, Allah will perfect this matter until the traveler can travel from Sana’a to Hadhramaut fearing no one but Allah and the wolf that may eat his sheep”; The Prophet told Khabbab when he complained to him about the severity of torture he and other Muslims in Makkah were going through. (Al-Bukhari)

It was this hope in Allah, and confidence that there will be ease after difficulty, that kept them going.

This hope was not only kept in the hearts but was also spread through words and attitude. The Prophet mastered optimism and looked for optimism:

“Evil omen is false! And I likes Al-fa’l (good omen)” the prophet told his companions. They asked, “What is Al-Fa’l?” He responded, “A good word.” (Muslim)

6. Do not get distracted

One of the very bad consequences of going through difficult times is the amount of distraction the difficulty creates. Ibn Al-Qayim says,

“It is a complete fiasco to be distracted by the blessing away from the One who blesses, and by the trial away from the One who tries.”

Sometimes the difficulty itself scares us away from the good we are doing. Allah says,
And let it never happen that they might turn

you away from the revelations of Allah after they have been revealed to you... (28-87)

The prophet never stopped delivering his message because of a personal difficulty he went through or because of a threat or torture he received from his enemies.

7. Expect reward

This was one of the teachings the Qur’an instilled in the hearts of Muslims. Whether the calamity happens naturally, or whether it is due to the harm of others, being patient and perseverant results in a lot of reward. The calamity will eventually be over,

Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease. Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease. (94:5-6)

And when the ease comes, the pain will go away and will be forgotten. What remains and will never go away is the tremendous reward one would get,

We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient. Those, who when any affliction smites them, they say: “Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him we shall return.” Upon them will be the blessings of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided. (2:155-157)

Cont’d from page 41
heritage under the oppression of slavery. The story of Bilali Muhammad is a perfect example of the efforts of this early American Muslim community, one that could inspire American Muslims of the present, whether they be of African descent or not.

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Valentine Day, Birthdays, and Other Daze

M. Khalid Baig

What commercial and cultural propaganda presents as beautiful is rooted in ugly paganism but most blind followers do not know.

There is a group of practices that we can consider as the twin sister of bid'ah. Like bid'ah they flourish on the twin foundations of ignorance and outside influence. Like bid'ah they entail rituals. But unlike bid'ah the rituals have not been given an Islamic face. They are followed because they are considered an acceptable cultural practice or the hottest imported "in" thing.

Most of those who indulge in them do not know what they are doing. They are just blind followers of their equally blind cultural leaders. Little do they realize that what they consider as innocent fun may in fact be rooted in paganism. That the symbols they embrace may be symbols of unbelief. That the ideas they borrow may be products of superstition. That all of these may be a negation of what Islam stands for.

Consider Valentine's Day, a day that after dying out a well deserved death in most of Europe (but surviving in Britain and United States) has suddenly started to emerge across a good

swath of Muslim countries. Who was Valentine? Why is this day observed? Legends abound, as they do in all such cases, but this much is clear: Valentine's Day began as a pagan ritual started by Romans in the 4th century BCE to honor the god Lupercus. The main attraction of this ritual was a lottery held to distribute young women to young men for "entertainment and pleasure"--until the next year's lottery. Among other equally despicable practic-

es associated with this day was the lashing of young women by two young men, clad only in a bit of goatskin and wielding goatskin thongs, who had been smeared with blood of sacrificial goats and dogs. A lash of the "sacred" thongs by these "holy men" was believed to make them better able to bear children.

As usual, Christianity tried, without success, to stop the evil celebration of Lupercalia. It first replaced the lottery of the names of women with a lottery of the names of the saints. The idea was that during the following year the young men would emulate the life of the saint whose name they had drawn. (The idea that you can preserve the appearance of a popular evil and yet somehow turn it to serve the purpose of virtue, has survived. Look at all those people who are still trying, helplessly, to use the formats of popular television entertainments to promote good. They might learn something from this bit of history. It failed miserably) Christianity ended up doing in Rome, and elsewhere, as the Romans did.

The only success it had was in changing the name from Lupercalia to St. Valentine's Day. It

was done in CE 496 by Pope Gelasius, in honor of some Saint Valentine. There are as many as 50 different Valentines in Christian legends. Two of them are more famous, although their lives and characters are also shrouded in mystery. According to one legend, and the one more in line with the true nature of this celebration, St. Valentine was a “lovers” saint, who had himself fallen in love with his jailer’s daughter.

Due to serious troubles that accompanied such lottery, French government banned the practice in 1776. In Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Germany also the ritual vanished over the years. Earlier, it had been banned in England during the 17th century when the Puritans were strong. However in 1660 Charles II revived it. From there it also reached the New World, where enterprising Yankees spotted a good means of making money. Esther A. Howland, who produced one of the first commercial American Valentine’s Day cards called--- what else--- valentines, in the 1840s, sold \$5,000 worth--when \$5,000 was a lot of money--the first year. The valentine industry has been booming ever since.

It is the same story with Halloween, which has otherwise normal human beings dressing like ghosts and goblins in a reenactment of an ancient pagan ritual of demon worship. Five star hotels in Muslim countries arrange Halloween parties so the rich can celebrate the superstitions of a distant period of ignorance that at one time even included the shameful practice of human sacrifice. The pagan name for that event was Samhain (pronounced sow-en). Just as in case of Valentine’s Day, Christianity changed its name, but not the pagan moorings.

Christmas is another story. Today Muslim shopkeepers sell and shoppers buy Christmas symbols in Islamabad or Dubai or Cairo. To engage in a known religious celebration of another religion is bad enough. What is worse is the fact that here is another pagan celebration (Saturnalia) that has been changed in name ---

and in little else--- by Christianity.

Even the celebration considered most innocent might have pagan foundations. According to one account, in pagan cultures, people feared evil spirits - especially on their birthdays. It was a common belief that evil spirits were more dangerous to a person when he or she experienced a change in their daily life, such as turning a year older. So family and friends surrounded the person with laughter and joy on their birthdays in order to protect them from evil.

How can anyone in his right mind think that Islam would be indifferent to practices seeped in anti-Islamic ideas and beliefs? Islam came to destroy paganism in all its forms and it cannot tolerate any trace of it in the lives of its followers.

Further, Islam is very sensitive about maintaining its purity and the unique identity of its followers. Islamic laws and teachings go to extra lengths to ensure it. Salat is forbidden at the precise times of sunrise, transition, and sunset to eliminate the possibility of confusion with the practice of sun worship. To the voluntary recommended fast on the tenth of Muharram, Muslims are required to add another day (9th or 11th) to differentiate it from the then prevalent Jewish practice. Muslims are forbidden to emulate the appearance of non-Muslims.

A Muslim is a Muslim for life. During joys and sorrows, during celebrations and sufferings, we must follow the one straight path --- not many divergent paths. It is a great tragedy that under the constant barrage of commercial and cultural propaganda from the forces of globalization and the relentless media machine, Muslims have begun to embrace the Valentines, the Halloween ghost, and even the Santa Claus. Given our terrible and increasing surrender to paganism the only day we should be observing is a day of mourning. Better yet it should be a day of repentance that could liberate us from all these days. And all this daze.

Appeal

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