



themuslimreader

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Fitrah and Our Sense of the Sacred

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

**It is also charity to
utter a good word.**

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Book 2, Hadith 69



Fitrah and Our Sense of the Sacred



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common terms

ABBREVIATIONS IN TMR

AS: 'Allayhis Salam -
Meaning: Peace be upon him;
Used for Prophet who came before
Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

DA: Darul Arqam Singapore / The Muslim
Converts' Association of Singapore

RA: Radiyallahu 'Anhu/'Anha/'Anhum -
Meaning: May Allah be pleased with him/
her/them; Used for Companions of Prophet
Muhammad (SAW)

SAW: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wassallam -
Meaning: Peace be upon him;
Used for Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

SWT: Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala -
Meaning: Glorified and Exalted One;
Used for Allah (SWT)

TERMS IN THIS EDITION

Alhamdulillah: Praise be to God
Da'wah: Invitation to understand Islam
Deen: Religion; way of life
Doa: Supplication
Fitrah: Natural belief; instinct"
Hadith: Narrations about the words and
deeds of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
Halal: Permissible
Haram: Forbidden
Hijab / Tudung: Headgear that covers
hair and neck

Insha'Allah: If God wills
Jihad: Struggle
Madrasah/Madrassa: Islamic School
Masha'Allah: God has willed it
Shariah: Islamic Laws
Sunnah: Practices of Prophet Muhammad
(SAW)
Taqwa: God-consciousness
Ummah: Community
Ustadz (Ust): Teacher

Arabic terms have been represented
by simple Roman alphabets, and their
meanings briefly provided, to ease your
reading. For accurate pronunciation and
detailed meanings, it is highly advised to
refer to the original spelling and meanings
in Arabic.

TMR contains some of Allah's names and
Quranic verses. Please do not dispose in
the trash. Kindly keep, shred or recycle the
magazine.

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editorial note

Fitrah and Our Sense of the Sacred

The key qualities of mankind that distinguish them from the rest of God's creations are intellect and freewill. With these, humans are enabled to investigate and recognise right from wrong, make choices, and formulate solutions. Importantly, they can use these faculties to complement their *fitrah*, or their innate inclination, in their journey through life towards death.

In this edition of TMR, Dr Yamin Cheng highlights the essential aspects of *fitrah* and how this tendency brings us closer to sacredness. The article explores several other religious traditions and philosophies that also discuss the human inclination towards purity. As we seek to move closer towards purity, we also witness the fragility of inter-religious and inter-racial harmony. Amidst this challenge, a spark of hope in Berlin, Germany, brings an initiative of combining three religious places of worship into one building. Through architecture, the Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim groups in Berlin gather towards solidifying their Abrahamic bonds, as reported by Tom Lawson. Our volunteer, Hyder Gulam, also wrote of his experience travelling to Jerusalem in a group consisting of Christians, Jews and Muslims from Australia.

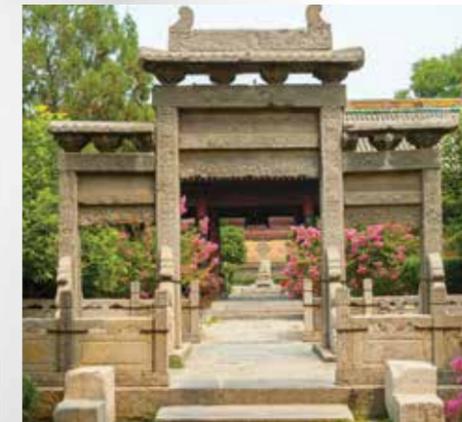
The movement to promote reading among Singaporeans is one that is in line with Islam's call towards knowledge. As it is also part of TMR's motivation, this edition focuses on Shaik Kadir's elaboration on the benefits of reading and Nurfarahin Mohamed Amin's *getaway* in reading - as a reminder of the 'almost indescribable' fulfilment that passionate readers only understand.

It is hoped that the compilation of writings in TMR for this edition brings to the fore the matters of faith and *fitrah* that show the complementary roles between intellect and freewill that usher peace into our lives. *Insha'Allah*, may Allah (SWT) guide us through our qualities towards being the bearers of peace and harmony in our time.

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The Grand Mosque of Xi'an Shaanxi, China



The Great Mosque of Xi'an covers an area of 130,000 square metres. Although they charge an entrance fee and has a gift shop, the mosque isn't a state-run tourist site. It is an active mosque still used by Chinese Muslims (mainly the Hui people) today as a place of worship. It is completely Chinese in its architectural style, except for the Arabic letterings and decorations. With a multi-story pagoda in the central courtyard as its minaret, the mosque is full of hidden courtyards, rooms with artifacts relating to the Hui people or Islam in Xi'an, and hallways that are open to the public if one manages to find them. You can also find sundials used to determine prayer times throughout the day.



Fitrah and Our Sense of the Sacred

Our instinct to be close to the sacred will lead us to understand the purpose of our being on earth.

text by YAMIN CHENG

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has said, "Every child is born in his *fitrah* (the natural belief, or instinct).

By way of his parents, he secures his identity, whether a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." Or, for that matter, whether a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Shinto, a Confucian, or a Taoist, to name some others.

We come into this world through our parents and obviously whatever path of life our parents take, we too follow, until such time when we are mature enough to make decisions of our own regarding our life's path. Notwithstanding, any path of life that is a good path is one that brings out our *fitrah* - those jolly-good elements of our soul,

conscience, or inner voice - into our life's activities, and make us desirable human beings.

Even when one or both parents have swerved from life's ideal path, their *fitrah* would not permit them to do the same to their children, for a father who steals would not advise his children to do the same. As such, while we may embrace different ways of living, we cannot suppress, reject, or deny our *fitrah* that is our human nature, no matter who we are as long as we are called human beings in the true sense of the word. A person who is disobedient to his parents and ignorant of his religion, would somehow, be guided by his *fitrah* in his conduct of life, even if he

had committed things that are unbecoming, as feeling regretful for the unpleasant things we did is surely a sign of our good-natured *fitrah*.

An essential aspect of our *fitrah* is our tendency for the sacred. Human beings, since the beginning of history, have always felt that their existence is not complete nor fulfilling if they do not feel a sense of sacredness in them and the things around them. Different societies interpret sacredness differently. Some societies, such as the primitive people, see sacredness in the natural environment that they inhabit. Primitive people depend on the natural environment for food, shelter, and clothing, but they have

always felt that certain forces are dwelling and moving in their natural habitat and unless appeased, these forces could disrupt their living condition. Not knowing what these forces are and where they come from, these people feel that there are boundaries in the natural environment upon which they should not intrude, otherwise, these forces would be stirred from their domain of quietude and move in the direction of their human counterparts.

Not only primitive people, but people in all times and places have always perceived the natural environment to be a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* - a mysterious presence that seems

to astound its human inhabitants, either with its beauty and usefulness, or with its wrath and prowess.

Ancient Greek Beliefs

Nature is at once the image of a beautiful lady as well as that of an angry man. The ancient Greeks, for instance, despite their civilizational achievements, thought that the world they lived in was full of gods - male and female. Zeus was the chief god, Poseidon was the god of the seas, and Hades was the god of the underworld. Asteria was the goddess of the stars, and Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, Nature, and birth. The gods and goddesses ruled the world, but they also fought among themselves.

Chinese Ancestral Guardians

The Chinese, on the other hand, see their world as inhabited by dead ancestors, especially by those who, during their lifetime, held public offices and were regarded as upright personalities. After their demise, they went on to become guardians of the living. They communicate with their living ones through the proper rituals that their living ones administered for them. For the Chinese, human beings are not just ordinary beings. They can turn into sacred beings once they die.

Sensing sacredness evokes in us the regard and respect for the things we see, touch, and feel. But as humans, we have the tendency to



INVITING TO ISLAM IS TO **ENGAGE** WITH OTHERS ON **OUR FITRAH**; ABOUT WHAT OUR **GOOD-NATURED SOUL** IS ABOUT, AND HOW WE CAN **INSPIRE** IT TO BECOME A MEANINGFUL ASPECT OF OUR **HUMANITY**



**CONFUCIUS,
THE MODEL PAR
EXCELLENCE OF CHINESE
CIVILIZATION, HIMSELF SAID,
“I DO NOT CREATE.
I ONLY TRANSMIT.”**

stretch our regard for these things beyond what they are, that these things carry a certain divinity we bind ourselves to, or even worship, for that matter. We see in stones and woods, fire and water - their power for our utility, and yet we also see that their power can loom over our psychology to the extent that we regard them as something to be fearful of.

The Chinese think that things, incidents, and even numbers have sacred elements that carry good and bad omen. Just like for some Westerners, '13' is considered an unlucky number, the Chinese sees '4' as an unlucky number because the number in Chinese sounds like death, and therefore, the Chinese would avoid having the number for their car plates, for instance, in case some mishap might happen to them because of the power the number carries.

In some societies, some people are regarded so special because of

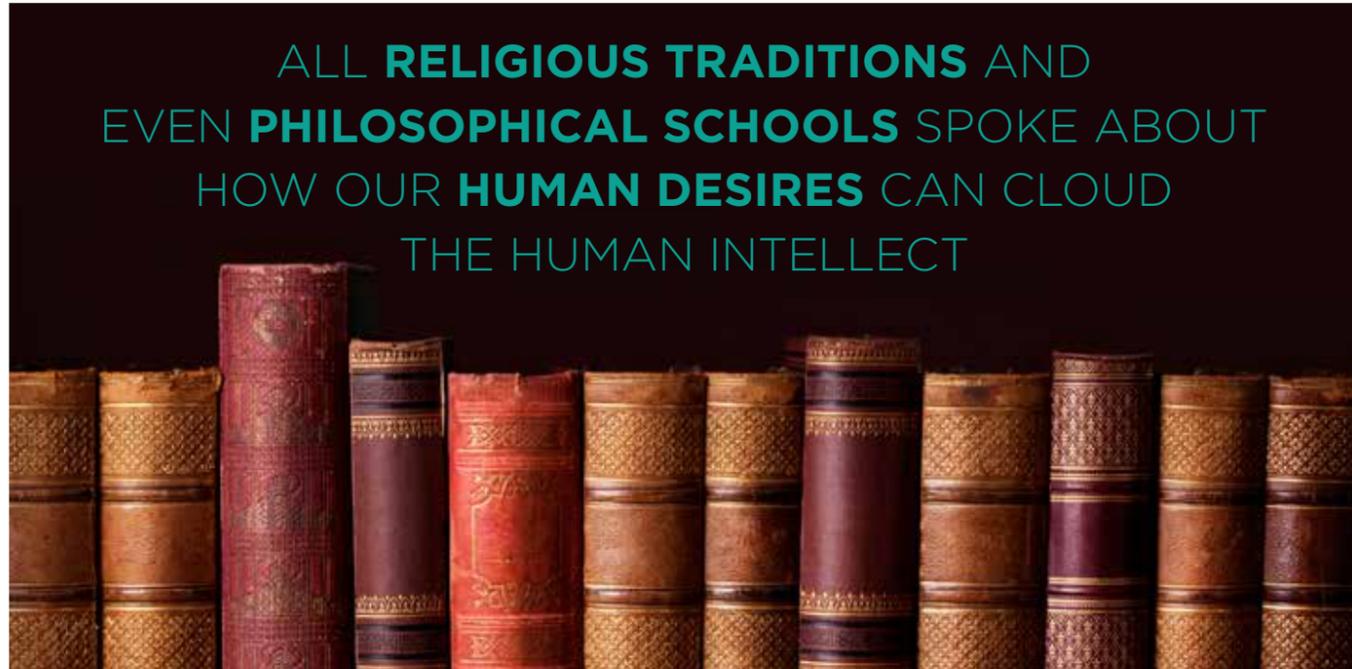
what they can do for others that after they die, they are not only remembered for what they did; they turn into some semi-divine beings, in the hope that they would continue to loom in the hopes and expectations of those who seek their intervention in times of plights and crises.

Without Sacredness...

Our inability to cope and deal with the many complexities and questions surrounding our human existence was said, by some, as the reason that has turned us in the direction of an outside source for answers. A person who fears that his boat will sink in the face of a wave, for instance, has the courage to believe that his boat will not sink because there is some kind of supernatural or divine intervention coming from somewhere 'out there' to appease the wave and make his boat safe. Such is the unique character of the human species that without sacredness, life is unthinkable, and civilization unrealisable.

In the face of this uniqueness about the human attachment for the sacred, the connection between the human yearning for sacredness and the source of this sacredness, in the view of Islam is, instead of ascribing a memory or a gratitude to things that live and die, the memory and gratitude should be directed at the source by which these things emerge from and return to. This source is God. When Prophet Muhammad (SAW) passed away, some of the Companions (RA) could not accept this news and started to behave erratically. Abu Bakr (RA), the Prophet's closest Companion as well as the first Caliph of Islam, had to calm these people down. Abu Bakr (RA) told them, "If you worship Muhammad, know that Muhammad is dead. But if you worship God, know that God is alive."

All religious traditions and even philosophical schools spoke about how our human desires can cloud the human intellect - no matter



how intelligent a person may be, his human desires can cause him to behave irrationally and erratically. Human beings, although they may serve as models for human behaviour, cannot by themselves, be the source of the models. The source of the models has to come from somewhere.

Confucius spoke of the Way

Confucius, the model *par excellence* of Chinese civilization, himself said, "I do not create. I only transmit." What Confucius transmits is the Way, and the Way is the Way of Heaven. The *Dao-De Jing (Tao-Te Ching)*, a foundation thought of Taoism and Chinese civilization, which says, "Humans model upon earth, earth models upon heaven, heaven models upon the Way, and the Way models upon What has existed from time immemorial."

Brahman is the reason

Hinduism speaks of Brahman, the reason for all existence. However, Brahman cannot be described as to what it is; yet, it is at the same

time everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing. A Hindu who looks at a tree not only sees a tree, but sees also Brahman by which the existence of the tree becomes possible.

The Greek thinkers

Even Plato and Aristotle, two very important Greek thinkers whose thoughts have impacted both Western and Islamic civilizations, came to the conclusion that behind everything that exists, there is a source behind their existence. Plato calls this source the Form, and everything that exists in this world is a carbon-copy of a form that is carried into their physical existence. Aristotle thinks that things move from the particular to the general, from things that we sense to things that we think, and from materiality to intellectuality. For many ancient Greek thinkers, material things are impure whereas non-material things, such as thought, are pure. Therefore the life of a human being is to move from impurity to purity, from material concerns of life to

spiritual concerns of life, from satisfaction of sensual desires to satisfaction in knowledge.

In short, all religious traditions and philosophical schools of thought hold the same view that things of Nature, as well as human beings, cannot be the ground of reality. The ground of reality must be one not immersed by impurity. And what would this be? For Muslims, it is God, it is *Allah* (SWT).

In this regard, inviting to Islam is to engage with others on our *fitrah*, about what our good-natured soul is about, and how we can inspire it to become a meaningful aspect of our humanity, for the other whom we engage with, and more so for us who engage with the other. Inviting to Islam, while it appears to be about reaching out to others, is really a venture and journey of self-discovery so that in finding others, I find me, and in finding me, I find my *fitrah*, and in finding my *fitrah*, I find God and my meaning as a human being. **TMR**



Mufti Menk Speaks on Racism

Zimbabwe's Mufti Ismail Musa Menk delivered a lecture, to a full-house audience at Kallang Theatre on 1 June 2014, entitled 'Say No to Racism: Islam Beyond Race & Colour'.

The lecture reminds us that Islam stresses the absolute unity in the variety of the human race.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MUHD IRFAN MASLAN



Colourful Iftars in Ramadhan 2014

Saturdays at Darul Arqam in Ramadhan were colourful, as always, with the special lectures themed around Ramadhan organised every week at 5.30pm.

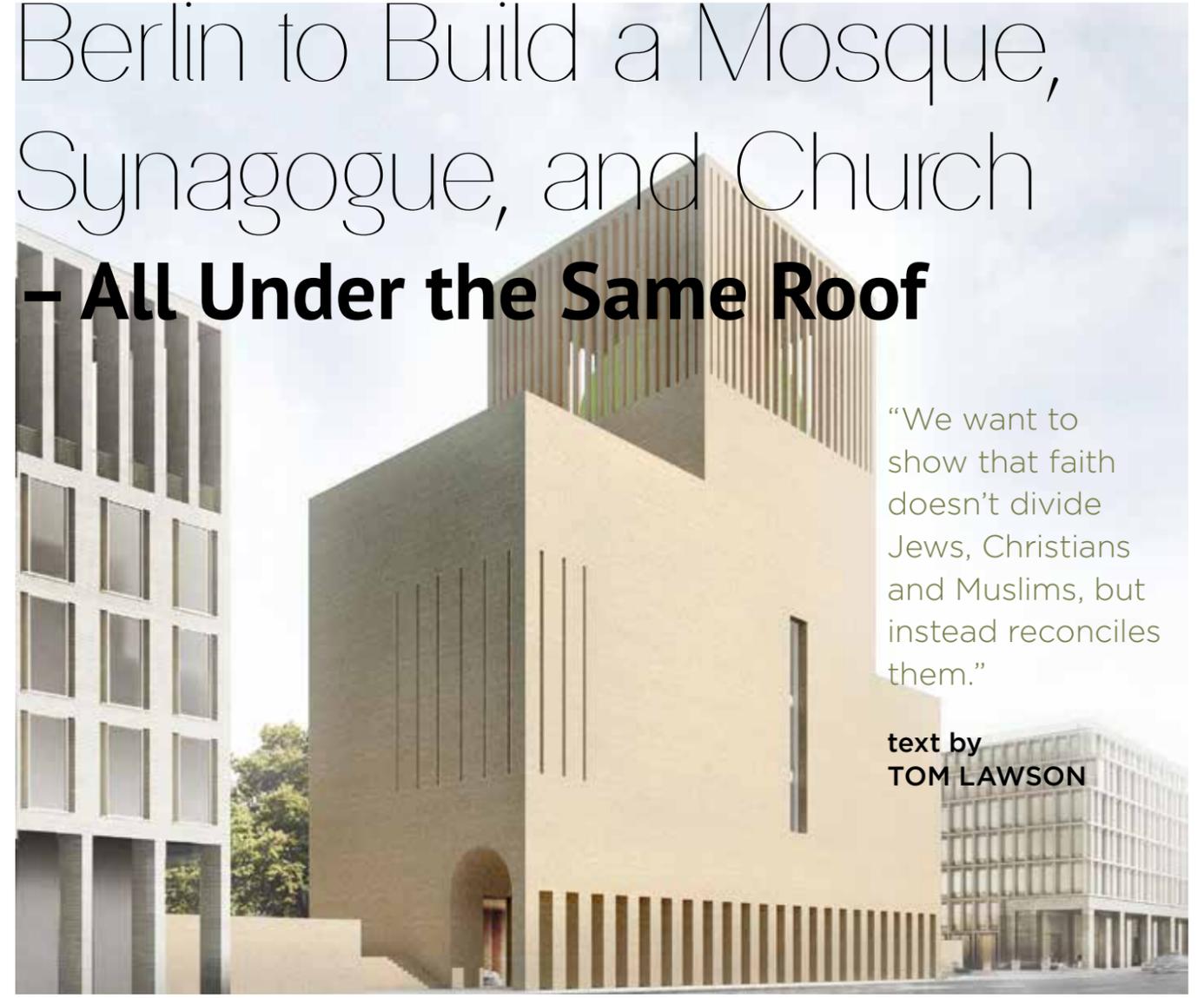


PHOTOGRAPHS BY AISHAH HUSSEIN

Alhamdulillah, Praise be to Allah (SWT) for blessing us with His bounty and mercy, especially in the month of Ramadhan that had just passed.



Berlin to Build a Mosque, Synagogue, and Church - All Under the Same Roof



“We want to show that faith doesn’t divide Jews, Christians and Muslims, but instead reconciles them.”

text by TOM LAWSON

In 2009, archaeologists working in the heart of Berlin excavated the foundations of what is thought to be one of the city’s first churches, St. Peter’s Church, built in the early 12th century, in what is now the Petriplatz area. The church was destroyed during WW II and in its aftermath. The site where the once-grand Romanesque building stood is now little more than a wasteland – but that is set to change.

Due to the religious significance of the site, city planners asked local Protestants if they would like to be involved in the site’s redevelopment. But representatives of the Protestant community thought that another church was not necessarily the way to go.

“It became clear that we didn’t want to build another church,” said Anna Poeschel, member of the local Protestant community. “We have two big churches in our parish

already, the Jewish population has exploded in the last 20 years, and the Muslims in the city need a mosque.”

What emerged instead was the the House of One—an idea for a new building hosting a church, a mosque, and a synagogue—all under the same roof. If all goes according to plan construction will begin next year and the doors will open in 2018.



From left to right, Pastor Gregor Hohberg, Rabbi Tovia Ben-Chorin, Imam Kadir Sancı.

“This square, where the city first came into existence and where its first church stood, is now to be home to the future. From the foundations of the old churches will grow a new place of worship, one that will allow people of different faiths to pray side by side. The people who come here will remain true to their own religion, continue to draw from its power, and engage in peaceable dialogue with one another and with members of the city’s secular population. This house will be home to equality, peace, and reconciliation.” Pastor Gregor Hohberg

A model plan for the House of One.
(Photo by Michel Koczy/House of One)

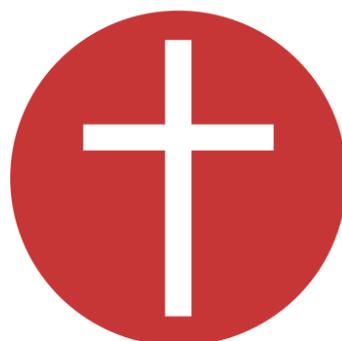
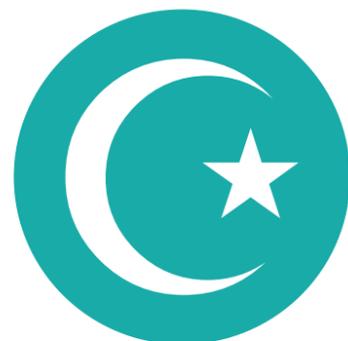


Pastor Gregor Hohberg first put forward the idea of multi-faith building, and Rabbi Tovia Ben-Chorin and Imam Kadir Sancı have now joined him in the project.

Each religion will have its own practice space, all equally sized but with different designs. There will also be a central room connecting the prayer rooms and providing an area where Christians, Muslims, and Jews can all meet, along with those of other faiths.

“We can see all over the world that faith can divide people,” said Markus Dröge, a Protestant bishop in Berlin. “We want to show that faith doesn’t divide Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but instead reconciles them.”

In 2012, local architect Wilfried Kuehn won a competition to design the building. To raise money for construction a crowdfunding campaign is under way, with a target of US\$58.6 million. So far



HOUSE OF ONE MAY BE THE FIRST PURPOSE-BUILT BUILDING TO HAVE **THREE RELIGIONS** COME TOGETHER UNDER THE SAME ROOF.

donations amount to just over US\$47,000 from more than 600 donors. But failure to reach the project's goal will not deter planners, who say a basic version of the building could be built for US\$13.5 million. If planners are unable to raise that, they still plan to fund smaller projects that promote understanding between religions.

"The project in Berlin is exciting and beautiful, but in no way the first to go this direction," said Paul Chaffee, editor of The Interfaith Observer. "There are lots of sanctuaries serving more than one tradition. You could write a whole book on the experiments to date."

In Omaha, Nebraska, the Tri-Faith Initiative is aiming to build a

church, mosque, and synagogue in the same park by 2015, although each building will be separate. There are also several examples of two religions using the same space. In Ontario, Canada, for example, the Westminster United Church and Temple Shalom share a building. Many university campuses, hospitals, and airports also incorporate multiple places of worship into their buildings. However, the House of One may be the first purpose-built building to have three religions come together under the same roof.

Those working on the project hope that their example can be followed elsewhere. "The House of One is not only for Berlin...the idea will spread to different countries all over the

world," said Tovia Ben Chorin, a rabbi and chair of the House of One board.

"As a Jew, I associate Berlin with memories of pain and deep wounds, but that is not the end of the story," said Chorin. "A place that has darkness in its past has the potential for peace in its future." **TMR**

Tom Lawson wrote this article for YES! Magazine, a national, non-profit media organisation that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Tom is a production editor at Positive News UK and a freelance writer living in the United Kingdom. Follow him at @Tom_Lawson88.

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Lecture by Sheikh Aslam

On 30 May 2014, Sheikh Aslam Abu Ismaeel delivered a lecture at Darul Arqam Singapore on the Virtues of Surah Al-Kahf.

The audience was reminded of the chapter in the Quran that shares wisdom and enlightens their hearts.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MUHD IRFAN MASLAN

And We made firm their hearts when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never will we invoke besides Him any deity. We would have certainly spoken, then, an excessive transgression." (Surah Al-Kahf, 18:14)

Celebrating Eid, Sharing Qurban with Refugees

This personal account highlights the writer's first-hand experience in reaching out to the Syrian refugees.

text by **MUHAMMAD TIMUZI ADNAN (TIM ALDEN)**
on behalf of MEX (The Muslim Expatriate Network)

In the name of God most Gracious most Merciful. It may have not been the wisest decision in life. I mean, in bringing my wife, four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter to Mardin, Southern Turkey, and 25 km from the Syrian border and west of Iraq, considering the news across the mainstream channels the week prior headlining that over 140,000 Kurdish refugees were crossing the border into Turkey to escape the evil ISIS. Notwithstanding the United Nations had just passed a resolution to launch a military offensive to "dismantle this network of death".

Mardin and Diyarbakir, the two cities we were visiting were also

being mentioned in some of the news reports. Nonetheless, our aid agency Kim Se Yok Mu (KYM) said that everything was safe and normal. Syrian refugees had been coming across the border for over three years so this was nothing new to them.

Personally Witness The Suffering

My intention was for the family to witness personally the suffering, to appreciate the safety and comfort that we are blessed with. Even though the kids are very young, I believe they can relate to this, and the bonding is the all important thing.

We arrived at Mardin on Friday, 3rd October, from Singapore via Zurich

after a night stopover in Istanbul, where we were able to freshen up and leave most of our luggage while staying with friends Diyana and Yilmez, whom we met at Darul Arqam Singapore.

On the way from the airport we detoured into a poor village along a dusty farm track, surrounded by beautifully manicured fields of varying crops. The temperature was very mild, warm yet dry heat, making the bumpy ride very pleasant with the windows rolled down, the fresh mountain air buffeting around the cabin.

Our host Serdar, the local Vice President of Kim Se Yok Mu, responsible for the welfare of over



The writer's wife, Salinah, carrying their one year-old daughter, while helping to distribute the donations.

1,000 Syrian refugees explained that we were going to slaughter a large sheep to be eaten at a special Bayram luncheon hosted by KYM, attended by people of different nations the next day on Eid-ul Adha. (Bayram: Turkish word for festival or celebration)

We picked up an old weather beaten man on the roadside. The hard creases in his face and rough hands spoke of a life of hard labour in the fields. He smiled gently while the afternoon sun was bringing out all the colour in his tanned face. His job was to cook the sheep for the next day.

The Ancient Town of Mardin

After a few kilometres we pulled up to a small village farmhouse with a pen at the back, housing some 50 sheep. A large ram was selected, weighing in on old fashioned balance scales at 63 kg. I was given the honour of conducting the slaughter. After washing up, we left

the old man there and drove on to the ancient town of Mardin, up on a hillside stopping to visit the KYM office along the way.

Our hotel had amazing views of the valley with the Syrian border in the distance. Mardin's history dates back some 6,000 years, and some time back this hotel consisted of several houses built on top of and next to each other - occupied by Jewish, Christian and Muslim families living as neighbours in peaceful co-existence.

We carried our luggage from the carpark up the hillside, checked into an old stone room with a small living area, paid the bill for two nights and preceded to dinner with the local President of KYM, Faruc Yucesoy, whose wife had cooked a beautiful meal of local dishes. Afterwards, we drank Turkish tea and coffee while discussing KYM's work.

After a good night's rest, Serdar and I prayed Fajr together at a local

mosque. After the Eid prayers, we had a hearty breakfast of olives, fresh bread, goat's cheese and Turkish Cha (while catching up on online correspondence).

The Lunch with KYM

By late morning, we were picked up to attend the lunch. The local Muchtar for the Mardin region and a prominent Imam were amongst the first guests. The Muchtar, whose role is similar to a regional Mayor, explained that there are approximately 50,000 Syrian guests in the Mardin region now. His job is to help them as a Citizen and try to find a solution to their problems.

It was an Eid Lunch, organised by the KYM. They called it a brotherhood table, as there were a number of people from overseas present, who were not at home for Eid. In total, there were about 40 men and women, most of whom were workers and volunteers of KYM.



The 63 kg sheep's head was split into two and served at opposite ends of the floor spread. I was asked for a short interview with KYM as they were interested in why a British living in Singapore would come all the way to Mardin in Southern Turkey with his family to spend Eid. I explained that we were here to do a small Qurban project for Syrians taking refuge in Turkey. It was a small contribution towards the humanitarian efforts from Singapore.

In our interview with the Vice President of KYM, Aisha, we were reminded that although humanity comes in many varying colours we are all from the same family, and how we must help the Syrians in their time of suffering.

Afterwards we gathered again and prayers were read in four different languages: Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, and English. As one of the foreign guests, I lead the prayers in English. We prayed for the protection of all

the aid workers, the volunteers and the supporters from the tribulations and forces against us.

We finished in the mid-afternoon and got into a Ford van with Serdar at the wheel again, heading for Diyabikr where the abattoir was.

Efficient Slaughtering of Qurban in the town of Diyabikr

The abattoir was hired by KYM exclusively to perform 10,000 Qurbans made up of cows and sheep. After the hour long drive through the dusty meandering valleys, we reached Diyabikr. Davut, the main operations man on the ground for the Qurban and other Syrian KYM projects, was there to meet us. However, due to our late arrival, they were now slaughtering cows, so we had time to pay a short visit to a Masjid with the *Maqam* (Tomb) of 27 Sahabats (Companions of the Prophet Muhammad [SAW]) in the city.

We arrived back at the abattoir by the sunset prayers and took a tour of the facility. It was a high speed production line operation - clean and efficient and what you would expect for the mass slaughter of such a large amount of animals. The whole process was conducted on site from the slaughter to the skinning, cutting, and packing of the animals. Finally, the meats were loaded straight into a chilled container truck in special cardboard boxes.

For someone used to the small 200 sheep operation conducted at a local Singapore mosque by the resident Imam and volunteers, I found this as a very different type of spectacle.

The animals come out of a pen hung by the hind leg on a conveyor belt and are slaughtered straight away. The knives are extremely sharp and constantly sharpened. The man performing the slaughter did so with precision accuracy in one swift cut



severing the jugular, windpipe and cortex in one momentary swipe, invoking the words *Allahu Akhbar* (Allah is the Greatest) as he thrived around from sheep to sheep in a Dervish like manner.

Within minutes, the head and hooves were removed, bodies inflated with air, and soon the entire production line process was completed.

It took me a while to absorb this mass scale linear process. It made me think of the Syrians, how they have been herded like animals, some led to their slaughter, some managing to stray away from the dangers only to be in another land cut off from their relatives, livelihood and shelter.

We left the facility late after 9.30pm, reaching Mardin by an hour later. The next morning, we had a short stop at one of the local Mosques which housed a footprint of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

a reassuring sign that this land is blessed and protected, despite the overwhelming circumstances across the border.

Delivering Qurban Meats to the Refugees

We then headed out towards one of the villages, stopping first at a KYM warehousing facility sponsored by Faruc, to pick up meat distribution packages for us to deliver to 14 families. A large crowd of other volunteers had also gathered with vehicles to service other areas. We had a few hours to distribute the meat throughout the sparse village - moving to several areas by van. The houses were what you would expect - very basic, coated with mud and not cement, had a rug, and at the most, an old settee, bed and a fridge with a stove.

The families were very grateful, some wept. We smiled sympathetically at them as if to try to absorb some of their pain



and suffering. We did not need to communicate; their looks told us: "We know you understand. We appreciate it. God is with us, we will be ok. Thanks".

We knew there was nothing more we could do for these people at this time. With heavy hearts, we headed for the airport to catch our flight back to Istanbul.

Experiences at the Borders, A Glimpse Of Life as a Refugees

Two days later, we took a coach out of Istanbul to Thessaloniki. Upon entering Greece at the border, a customs official ordered everyone to take the bags out of the coach in extreme militant style, shouting at the passengers brutally as if we were a herd of animals. My family was pulled in for questioning by the head of customs officials. The whole experience lasted over an hour. We arrived the next morning in Thessaloniki and were fortunate to get on a connecting bus to Tirana,



The writer handed over the goods to a Syrian woman.



Albania. This was the only means by land of getting to our destination of Dubrovnik in Croatia, as we had decided to journey by land.

After a short one hour leg, the empty bus filled up with working class Albanians carrying one or two crates of food stocks. Again at the Greek border, exiting this time, the wares were unloaded and inspected by an angry female Greek customs inspector, whom you would not want to get on the wrong side of.

The scene gave us a glimpse of what life as a fresh refugee would be like.

On the Albanian side, things got worse. This time the customs officer came on the coach and very sternly took each passport, thoroughly inspecting it up and down. He then took them off to his "cubicle" and about 20 minutes later, I started hearing shouts of "Singapura, Singapura".

The coach driver caught my attention and we marched over to the customs officer in the cubicle. A lot of discussion and hand-waving took place amongst various officers; I was marched from place to place by another burly customs officer who nervously kept trying to call out on his mobile phone. He kept repeating my name, "Alden, Alden", hitting our passports with the back of his hand. An English-speaking official came into the room and more politely asked what we were doing in Albania, and the standard questionnaire ensued. Sometime later, the burly officer connected to someone and after more discussion, I was marched back to the cubicle, where our four passports were turned over, and I was "ordered" to return to the coach.

Finally after another 15 minutes or so, one of the passengers, who seemed like a peasant farmer, walked down to the back of the bus with our passports.

To have been stuck on that very remote border with two small kids and a lot of luggage would have been very testing. One cannot begin to imagine what life would be like for more than three years as a refugee.

It is in momentary circumstances like these that we truly value all the freedoms we have. The liberty of being able to move between countries on a passport securely with minimal troubles. The liberty of having money in one's pocket. The liberty of affording a safe place to stay.

We truly pray for an end to the suffering of the Syrian people. **TMR**

For more information on ASRIT (Aid to Syrian Refugees in Turkey). Please visit www.asrit.sg

Arabic for Beginners: Daily Life

الحياة اليوميّة al-Hayaah al-yawmiyyah

al-Hiwaar The dialogue

Ahmad: SabaaHul-khair
good morning

Khalid: SabaaHun-nur
good morning (reply)

Ahmad: mataa tastai-qiDH?
when do you wake up?

Khalid: astai-qiDH mubakkiran
I wake up early

Ahmad: fii ayyi saa'ah?
what time?

Khalid: fis-saa'ah as-saadisah
SabaaHan
at 6am

Ahmad: maadhaa taf'al ba'ca
dhaa-lik?
what do you do after that?

Khalid: uSallii al-fajr thumma
atanaawal al-fuTuur
I pray the morning prayer then I have(eat)breakfast

Ahmad: mataa tadh-Hab ilal 'amal?
when do you go to work?

Khalid: adh-hab ilal 'amal fissaah
ath-thaaminah SabaaHan
I go to work at 8am

Ahmad: kam yawman ta'mal filusbuu'c?
how many days you work in a week?

Khalid: a'mal khamsah ayyaam
fil-usbuu'c
I work 5 days in a week

الحوار

أحمد: صباح الخير

خالد: صباح النور

أحمد: متى تستيقظ؟

خالد: أستيقظ مبكراً

أحمد: في أي ساعة؟

خالد: في الساعة السادسة صباحاً

أحمد: ماذا تفعل بعد ذلك؟

خالد: أصلي الفجر ثم أتناول الفطور

أحمد: متى تذهب إلى العمل؟

خالد: أذهب إلى العمل في الساعة الثامنة صباحاً

أحمد: كم يوماً تعمل في الأسبوع؟

خالد: أعمل 5 أيام في الأسبوع



الحوار The dialogue

Ahmad: maa-dhaa taf'al ba'ca dal 'amal? ماذا تفعل بعد العمل؟
what do you do after work?

Khalid: arji' ilal bayt أرجع إلى البيت
I return home

Ahmad: maa-dhaa taf'al fii yawm as-sabt? ماذا تفعل في يوم السبت؟
what do you do on Saturday?

Khalid: astariiH fil bait wa aHyaanaan adh-hab ilaa markaz tijaariyy (muul) أستريح في البيت وأحياناً أذهب إلى مركز تجاري (مول)
I rest at home and sometimes, I go to a shopping centre (mall)

Ahmad: wa maa-dhaa taf'al fii yaum al-aHad? وماذا تفعل في يوم الأحد؟
what do you do on Sunday?

Khalid: azuuru jaddii wa jaddatii أزور جدّي وجدّتي
I visit my grandfather and grandmother

Ahmad: mataa tanaam? متى تنام؟
when do you sleep?

Khalid: anaam muta'akhraa fii saa'ah fis-saa'ah al-Haadiyah 'ashrah lailan أنام متأخراً في الساعة الحادية عشرة ليلاً
I sleep late at 11pm

VOCABS

Words	Arabic	Combination Word
mataa? when?	مَتَى؟	
*tas-tai-qiDH (you) wakes up	تَسْتَيْقِظُ	
mubakkiran early	مُبَكَّرًا	
fii in/at	فِي	
ayyi? which?	أَيِّ	فِي أَيِّ سَاعَةٍ...? fii ayyi saa ^c ah...? Used as "what time....." ? in English e.g. what time do you go to school?
saa ^c ah time / hour / watch / clock	سَاعَةٌ	
maa-dhaa? what (used with verbs or prepositions)	مَاذَا؟	
		<p><i>yaf^cal</i> (he does) – يَفْعَلُ <i>taf^cal</i> (she does) – تَفْعَلُ <i>taf^cal</i> (you do;m) – تَفْعَلُ <i>taf^caliina</i> (you do;f) – تَفْعَلِينَ <i>af^cal</i> (I do) – أَفْعَلُ <i>naf^cal</i> (we do) – نَفْعَلُ</p>
*taf ^c al (you) do	تَفْعَلُ	<p>an idea on how present tense verbs in Arabic are used in different pronouns. Do note the underlined alphabets that marked the change in pronouns.</p> <p>In order to negate these present tense verbs, simply add laa (don't/doesn't) before them e.g. laa af^cal I don't do – لا أَفْعَلُ</p> <p>Try practicing with the other present tense verbs marked with *</p>
ba ^c da after	بَعْدَ	بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ
dhaalik that	ذَلِكَ	ba ^c da dhaalik after that
*uSallii (I) pray	أُصَلِّي	

VOCABS

Words	Arabic	Combination Word
fajr dawn	فَجْرٌ	
thumma then	ثُمَّ	
*atanaawal (I) have (eat/consume)	أَتَنَاوَلُ	
fuTuur breakfast	فُطُورٌ	
*tadh-hab (you) go	تَذْهَبُ	
ilaa to	إِلَى	
^c amal work	عَمَلٌ	
thaaminah eight	ثَامِنَةٌ	السَّاعَةُ الثَّامِنَةُ as-saa ^c ah ath-thaaminah 8 'o'clock Ordinal numbers are used to tell time in Arabic e.g. 8 'o'clock is literally the eight hour
yawm plural. ayyaam day	يَوْمٌ ج. أَيَّامٌ	فِي الْيَوْمِ fil yawm in a day
usbuu ^c week	أُسْبُوعٌ	فِي الْأُسْبُوعِ fil usbuu ^c in a week
arjic (I) return	أَرْجِعُ	
bayt house(home)	بَيْتٌ	
as-sabt Saturday	السَّبْتِ	
*astariiH (I) rest	أَسْتَرِيحُ	

VOCABS

Words	Arabic	Combination Word
aHyaanan sometimes	أحياناً	
markaz centre	مركز	مركز تجاري markaz tijaariyy shopping centre or shopping mall
tijaariyy trading	تجاري	
al-aHad Sunday	الأحد	
*azuuru (I) visit	أزور	
*tanaam (you) sleep	تنام	
mu-ta-akh-khi-ran late	متأخراً	
lail night	ليل	

al-waqt Time	الوقت	al-waqt Time	الوقت
as-saa ^{ah} al-waaHidah 1 o'clock	الساعة الواحدة	as-saa ^{ah} al- ^{ca} aashirah 10 o'clock	الساعة العاشرة
as-saa ^{ah} ath-thaanayah 2 o'clock	الساعة الثانية	as-saa ^{ah} al-Haadiyah ^{ca} ashrah 11 o'clock	الساعة الحادية عشرة
as-saa ^{ah} ath-thaalithah 3 o'clock	الساعة الثالثة	as-saa ^{ah} ath-thaanayah ^{ca} ashrah 12 o'clock	الساعة الثانية عشرة
as-saa ^{ah} ar-raabi ^{ca} 4 o'clock	الساعة الرابعة	wa khams daqaa-iq :5 minutes	وخمسة دقائق
as-saa ^{ah} al-khaamisah 5 o'clock	الساعة الخامسة	wa ^{ca} ashr daqaa-iq :10 minutes	وعشر دقائق
as-saa ^{ah} as-saadisah 6 o'clock	الساعة السادسة	war-rubu ^c :15 minutes	والربع
as-saa ^{ah} as-saabi ^{ca} 7 o'clock	الساعة السابعة	wath-thuluth :20 minutes	والثلث
as-saa ^{ah} ath-thaaminah 8 o'clock	الساعة الثامنة	wan-niSf :30 minutes	والنصف
as-saa ^{ah} at-taasi ^{ca} 9 o'clock	الساعة التاسعة	il-laa khams daqaa-iq :55 minutes (except 5 minutes)	إلا خمس دقائق

al-waqt Time	الوقت
il-laa ^{ca} ashr daqaa-iq :50 minutes (except 10 minutes)	إلا عشر دقائق
il-lar-rubu ^c :45 minutes (except 15 minutes)	إلا الربع
il-lath-thuluth :40 minutes (except 20 minutes)	إلا الثلث

al-ayyaam days	الأيام
yawm day	يوم
al-ithnayn Monday	الاثنين
ath-thulaathaa' Tuesday	الثلاثاء
al-arbi ^{ca} ' Wednesday	الأربعاء
al-khamiis Thursday	الخميس
al-jumu ^{ca} Friday	الجمعة
as-sabt Saturday	السبت
al-aHad sunday	الأحد

"Learn Arabic, for it strengthens the intelligence and increases one's noble conduct (al-muruu'ah)" - Omar Ibn al-Khattab (RA)

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Enriching Session of Islam4all

Islam4all Workshop is a bi-annual event designed for the Muslim youth to engage in interactive lectures and discussions.

There were games and activities to foster cohesion, camaraderie and ukhwah to reinforce the messages discussed throughout.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MUHD IRFAN MASLAN

This workshop addresses the fundamental aspects of Islam, studies of cross-cultural da'wah and comparative religions, and contemporary issues facing Islam and the community.

Read

This is the key towards useful and beneficial knowledge.

text by SHAIK KADIR



“READ” IS THE FIRST WORD OF THE VERY FIRST REVELATION THAT ALLAH (SWT) SENT TO OUR PROPHET, PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAW), THROUGH THE ANGEL GABRIEL (JIBRAIL).

“Read!” is a direct instruction from Allah, our Lord and Cherisher.

Indeed, educated people read – they read anything from fiction to non-fiction books, newspapers and magazines – to reap knowledge. Nowadays, little children as early as three years old are already taught to read. Many mothers read stories to toddlers and babies, even to the baby who is still in the womb. This shows that reading is very important.

Indeed it is so important that though Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was unlettered, Allah (SWT) urged him to “Read” (Iqra’). Muslim

scholars understand that the word “iqra” which means “to read” also means “to recite”, “to study” and “to research” in the realm of education.

Reading is an interesting and important activity for pleasure, knowledge and inspiration.

Muslims must be very honoured to possess a Holy Book - the Quran - that:

- starts with the word “Read”,
- has a chapter entitled “Read!”, and
- instructs people to read.

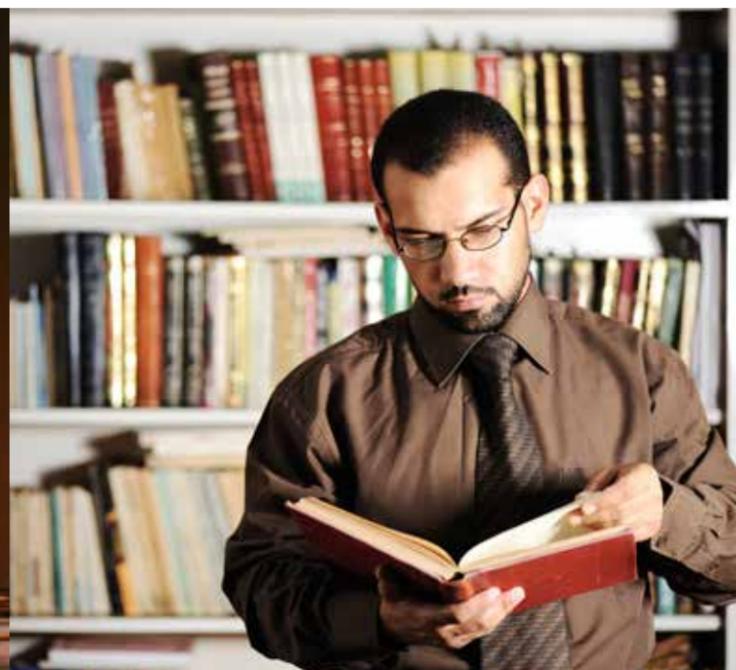
The First Revelation

“Read” is a noble instruction. “Read” is the first word of the very first revelation that Allah (SWT) sent to

our Prophet, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), through the Angel Gabriel (Jibrail).

The revelation contains the first five verses of Chapter 96, called Iqra’ (Read). The very first verse is: “Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher who created...” (Iqra, 96:01)

Although the instruction to “Read” was addressed to our Prophet (SAW), the instruction is also meant for all people because the Quran is for all humanity, Muslims and non-Muslims. Many non-Muslims have read the Quran and converted to Islam. The instruction indicates the importance of reading for personality refinement and



accomplishments, as well as for the progress of living and the development of the nation and the entire world.

The Basis Of Useful Knowledge

Reading is the cornerstone of education and the acquisition of all kinds of useful and beneficial knowledge. It is also the foundation for studies, researches and investigations for further and new knowledge.

For ordinary people, every literate person, whether he or she is a school student or already working, has to read. Most significantly, the person should read widely, not confining to reading certain specific areas of interest only. One has to read widely to acquire knowledge, instruction, guidance and wisdom.

The benefits of reading include:

1. Pleasure from the storyline of fiction, as well as in the usage of words and description, and the fun in learning and guessing

2. Ideas for writing essays and assignments, articles and literary works;
3. Researches for innovations and inventions;
4. Understanding the happenings around us from in-depth reporting and analysis;
5. Keeping informed of national and international events and be in touch with current affairs, thoughts and trends;
6. Knowledge of and accomplishments in fields like technical, commercial, medical, scientific and social; and
7. Thinking clearly and analytically on what is good for the community and country.

Even when a person reads just for pleasure, like reading short stories or novels, one improves one's general knowledge on various cultures and practices of people and expands one's imagination and vocabulary.

The important thing is, reading broadens the mind. Reading ought to enable a person to think positively with openness and tolerance towards others, regardless of race and religion.

A former teacher and vice-president of the International Board on Books for Young People, Linda Pavonetti, in her article, "Reading early can make love for books last forever"

(The Straits Times, 19 August, 2013), advises teachers, grandparents and parents to read and share books with children.

She gave three directives as follows:

- "Demonstrate that you love to read. The example you provide is worth more than anything you say."
- "Take your children to the library. This is the best and least expensive way to share a wide variety of books to your children. Then, take home some of the books..."
- "Tell stories, recite poetry, read aloud and frequently with your children."

Journalist Wong Kim Hoh, in his article, "Bullied into reading" (The Sunday Times, 3 November 2013), says that his teacher forced him to buy "The Secret Seven" instead of a picture book with very few words, which he wanted to purchase. He bought the storybook as told, but, because of his Hokkien-speaking

background, started reading only when he was eight years old. "But it didn't matter because reading changed my life... In more ways than one, my love of the written word is responsible for my choice of a degree - literature - and profession - journalism."

Do Not Forget To Read The Quran

As for teenagers and adults, reading widely enables them to learn the importance of hard work, teamwork, tolerance and harmony, and do away with anything harmful to living graciously - all these are taught by the Quran. Therefore, as Muslims, while we read for enjoyment and knowledge, we must not forget to read the Quran - the Book of Wisdom.

Read the Quran with understanding to benefit from its wide spiritual and worldly coverage. Learning and knowing Arabic has its advantages. However, those who are unable to read and understand the Quran (Arabic) ought to read its

translations to get maximum benefit from this great book.

Today, with advancement in technology, the Quran is so near to us. Some Muslims have downloaded the Quran to their smart-phones and, in the mosque, while waiting for the solat (prayer) to begin, read the Quran from their phone screen. This is better than reading messages from friends or dozing off. Make the Quran our companion.

What is important is that reading the Quran is good, reading with understanding is better and putting into practice what is read is best, and this would make a Muslim a better Muslim in his country of residence.

Muslims have a good guidance from Allah (SWT) to read, understand and practise. This ought to be our habit, a valuable habit. So, "Read in the name of your Lord" for knowledge, wisdom and betterment of life. **TMR**



CDD Family Day 2014

On 28 December 2014, CDD organised a fun-filled event full of interactive games and bonding opportunities for the staff and volunteers.

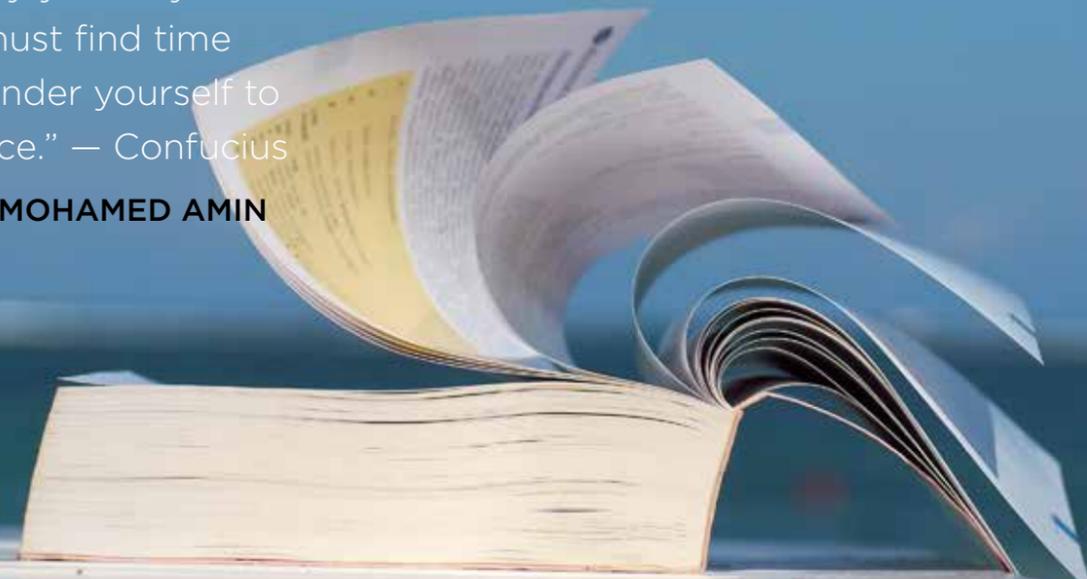
The joyful day involved participants from the Myanmar, Mabahay, Mandarin, Tamil, and several other clubs in Darul Arqam.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MOHD AMIN TEO & QURRAH SHUMAR

Freedom Within Reading

“No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.” — Confucius

text by NURFARAHIN MOHAMED AMIN



For as long as I can remember, I have always loved reading. Books fascinated me. There were always books in the house. My brothers were readers and I inherited their books. If I were to do really well for an exam, I would ask for a book as a present. I never grew tired of reading. In some ways books became my friends and I felt the fictional characters close and real. Of course, toys like Lego and stuffed animals still had its attraction for me, but I enjoyed reading more. My brother would also recommend books for me to read; I still remember him giving me his tattered copy of Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* (still my favourite book by the author today).

Books are an investment

Later, when I was older and had a bit of money myself, I started buying books. My university days bore witness to my buying books – topics ranging from religion to linguistics, from motivational to classics – and just collecting them. Although I told myself that I could not afford buying books all the time, somehow I always manage to convince myself that books are an investment. I have to admit, I have yet to read all of the books I bought. But just the idea of always having something to read and building my own little library at home (when I have the space) has always been an appealing one to me. I also knew then that I had to have a career that has to do with books, reading and

writing. So many different writers have inspired me; I have lost count of them all.

I realised, though, that despite a lack of money and space for more books, I had a lot to be grateful for – beginning with a childhood built upon reading. With His mercy, I grew up in a family that encouraged reading. With His mercy, I developed a great unparalleled love for reading, words and books. With His mercy, too, I love buying books more than clothes.

But why should I be so grateful? Because reading, is everything. Reading is the key to unlocking an endless, boundless world of exploration, imagination, curiosity,

READING GRANTS YOUR MIND
THE FREEDOM TO EXPAND AND YOUR SOUL
THE FREEDOM TO GROW.



knowledge, information – a world that stretches on and on and transcends time and space. Reading takes you into other worlds, souls and lives through the eyes of others just like you.

Reading – A God-given Gift

Reading is a God-given gift, because through reading God inspires in mankind the insights into just about every single avenue of life. A fulfilling journey always begins with the desire to answer the questions that arise either within oneself, or without, and reading helps you discover the answers to those questions.

Reading grants your mind the freedom to expand and your soul the freedom to grow. Reading instills in a person compassion for others. This is the same for both fiction and nonfiction. In fiction, you grow to be fond of the characters, and to go on the same journey that they do from start to finish, whereas in nonfiction, you see the world through a real

person’s eyes, by reading their heartfelt, honest accounts of their experiences, or the fruits of their lifelong researches and travels – all written down for you to learn from.

Reading not only helps you pass exams – they help you gain knowledge and information, and with the proper motivation help you retain what you already know.

Reading opens windows into the past, the present and the future. As mentioned in a previous paragraph, the world you find in reading transcends time and space, so you get to see what the world was like from hundreds of years ago, you get to see what the world is like right now at many faraway places, and you also can see what some writers envision the future to be.

Islam Promotes Reading

Islam is a religion that promotes reading. It encourages its followers to read, learn, and gain knowledge.

The proof is in the main source of reference for Muslims: the Quran.

The first word revealed of the Quran is also the first command from Creator to creation: **“Read!”** (Al-‘Alaq, 96:01). In this first verse, God ordered us to read in His name, He Who Has Created. The first command is not to eat, or to work, or to rest. It is to *read*. Even without deep understanding of Quranic verses, one can easily comprehend that Allah (SWT) has given knowledge a substantial significance.

Knowledge comes from Him. He has given mankind intellect (*‘aql*), the very thing that elevates mankind above other creatures, the one that is meant to differentiate between man and beast. Man, however, should not be carried away with the idea of how intelligent he is. If anything, he should be humbled by his intelligence, for his knowledge as compared to God’s Knowledge is less than a drop of water within an ocean.

In the Quran, the Almighty commanded Prophet Muhammad (SAW), “Say: ‘If the sea were ink for (writing) the Words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be finished, even if we brought (another sea) like it for its aid.’” (Al-Kahf, 18:109)

Isn’t it mindboggling to imagine that all the knowledge in all the books in the world, when combined, is hardly any fraction of His knowledge? Even the biggest, greatest library in the world does not contain everything.

True Knowledge Brings Out Modesty

True knowledge will make one humble – humble not only in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of others. There is a saying that goes, **“The more you learn, the less you know.”** This, I honestly think, cannot be any truer.

I believe, though, that all of these should not discourage you. They,

The more you read, the more you realise the world is much bigger than your own little one.

The more you read, the more you realise there are so many greater, more important things than what you thought were great and important.

The more you read, the more you realise how vast life on earth is, and how different people can be.

The more you read, the more you realise the books you have read cannot amount to the number of books scholars of the past (and even of the present) had pored over, spent countless sleepless nights over, studied tirelessly, and finally grasped and mastered.

The more you read, the more you realise just how much you do not know.

in turn, should actually fuel you on. What you cannot do all, you should not completely abandon. You have capabilities and God will never ask of you to do more than what you can. So if you can read one book per week, keep on reading one book per week. Perhaps slowly you can improve. Always make time for reading, and turn it into an *‘ibadah*, an act of worship. One of the best things in our religion is that whatever good we do for His sake, He rewards us. Imagine being rewarded for every line you read, for every word you digest.

Read. Read for knowledge. Read for pleasure. Widen your mental horizons. Reach to the furthest corners of the world by reading their stories. Any intellectual, past, present and future, will give you the same advice: read. Learn. Study. Only with knowledge can any real change be made. Wars can be waged and battles can be fought with tanks and bombs, but the best way to pave a new

path is with learned minds and educated souls.

Today I am a full-time librarian at a local library. One of the most inspiring sights I see is that of a child reading quietly to itself, absorbed in the book, lost to the world.

Another heart-warming view is that of a child and its parent, both reading, both learning, or that of a parent reading out loud to their child.

Being in this library almost daily is something I have come to love – after all, it *has* to do with books, reading and writing. So perhaps one of His missions for me is to promote reading, and to fall in love with reading over and over again. Perhaps He wants me to continue appreciating the gift of reading, as much as I, only a child then, used to appreciate getting books as presents for doing well in class. **TMR**

Understanding Parenting

Sheikh Alaa Elsayed shares his experiences as a counsellor for the Muslim community in Canada for twenty years.

interview by AISHAH HUSSEIN

Could you share with us the well-known Islamic figures that we should remember as model parents?

There's no better example than Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Khadijah (RA) actually. It is very difficult to beat that. However there are several more: Uthman bin Affan (RA), Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, Ali bin Abi Talib (RA) and Fatimah (RA).

What is the most common problem that Muslim parents have when dealing with their kids?

Generation gap – they just don't understand each other. There is no link; it is like a Microsoft and an Apple. The parents use the term "When I was your age..." all the time. "When I was your

age..." "When I was your age..." It is a broken record. You cannot do that.

I would usually recommend highly to them something that Ali bin Abi Talib (RA) talked about in the three steps of 7 years, 0 till 21 theory. He said, "Do not raise your children the way you were raised because you were born and raised in a different time than when they were born and raised."

Talk to them as a human being. In the child's first 7 years, you love them and embrace them; give them all the TLC (tender loving care) they want. In the second 7 years, you teach, you put the rules and expectations, build them and give them the tools that they want for them to be the best at everything. The third 7 years, you befriend them. That

is it. Unfortunately, some of us struck the ball earlier on and play catch up and react, not pro-act.

What is expected of the Muslim parents, as leader and motivator of the family unit?

First of all you have to have *taqwa* (God-consciousness) as a parent. If you care for your lineage, you want them to be righteous, you have to have *taqwa*. If you don't have *taqwa*, you will see the fruits, positive or negative, on your children, even your spouse, even in your *dagba*, meaning your car or your mode of transportation - according to one of the righteous who used to say, "I see my actions in deeds and needs." Second is to lead by example. If you don't have it, you can't

give it. Make sure you have two things under your belt.

You have to have righteous company for your children and you have to put them [your children] in righteous environment. These are two extremely important components that you have to do as parents. You have to spend time with them because if you don't spend time with them in the morgue, or prison, or hospital, or rehab, or the grave, and so on. If you don't spend time with them, they won't spend time with you either. If you don't spend time with them in their early stage, they won't spend time with you when you're in your older stage.

You have to remember to invest wisely in your children. Know their secrets. Know what they want to be. Go out with them on a personal level. Take one of your children out on a date, one at a time, specifically for that. Befriend them when they get to that age. Listen to them. Don't shout back when they tell you something like a secret or tell you about someone of the opposite gender, exclaiming "What? Haram!" and so on. Don't shut that door because they will go to somebody else that will give them the wrong advice. So you have to be very smart if you are a parent. It is the most important decision you'll ever make in your life.

What should parents always bear in mind? In good times, and also, in bad times.

It is very difficult to deal with children, especially teenagers. If you don't do your homework, and you don't invest in the things I mentioned earlier, you will pay the price. Again, it's a debt that you have to repay because you didn't listen to them, you didn't talk to them, you didn't know who they are, you were a negative instead of a positive guardian, you didn't nurture them, you didn't

provide them with at least a listening ear or open heart or hug or embrace or a kiss on the cheek, like Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used to kiss Fatimah (RA) every time she came to see him.

So, if you didn't do your homework and drop the ball when the child is young, you will definitely pay the price. However, do not shut the door and never give up on your children. Never despair of Allah's Mercy. You should always leave the door open for people to come back. Allah (SWT) leaves the door open 24/7 till the last breath. Never close the door on our children. Always have an open gate or open door communication with them. Try to reach out to them. Try to understand. Give them time. Make do'a for them. Make sure what we feed them is Halal. Make sure what we do is Halal. There are a lot of things that go into this formula. It is not as easy as people think: you know what... me, you, love, yeah I do, you do... let's have children, okay. It is not that. It is a lot more than that.

Hopefully, the advice I can give them is be patient, recognize and don't live in denial that you have an issue or concern that you need to address, do your homework, try to get them back, make lots of do'a, go back to Allah (SWT), repair the relationship between you and your Maker, and your Creator, Allah (SWT) will repair the relationship between you and His Creation. This is a key component, *Insha'Allah*.

What is the most challenging part of being a family counsellor?

One of the most difficult parts of my job is you live people's problems. You actually live them, you feel for them. In the beginning, I used to go home and cry a lot because I couldn't believe that there was a Muslim brother who would do *this* to his wife and that there was a Muslim sister that would do *that* to her husband. Kids are leaving parents,

and parents are saying that they are losing their child, or that their daughter is taking off the *Hijab*, or that my son married this person, and so on. I hear this all the time. It is very difficult to take and try to stay positive.

So, you try to shut it off and try to be a doctor because you can't help to treat your patient if you become personally involved. We are brothers and sisters in Islam, and you want to work hard to help them. Also, you have the passion and you believe in what you do. It makes a big difference.

There are a lot of rewards for doing it, in this life and the hereafter. But you have to put it in perspective. Now I limit the time to counselling. I have been doing it for 20 years. I pick and choose now. If they don't do what I asked them to do, that means they are wasting my time because a lot of people can benefit from this. I actually tell them that. It's like a Life Coach; I expect you to do 1, 2, 3 and I give them homework. I turn the table on them and get them to teach me what I have told them. And I will give them a set of DVDs and work on it and they will come back to me with the written proof. If they fail to meet these, I give them 3 strikes and then they are out. We really have to put priorities on our list and also keep ourselves sane. We get charged, so we have to discharge. There are some things that you have to deal with but it's a worthy cause. But it's not for everybody. It weighs you down. It is time-consuming. It burns a lot of energy. That is why I have to restrict it to certain time and certain days. Otherwise you will burn out and you can't help yourself or others.

I always ask the people who come to me with two questions so I can focus: What is the purpose of the meeting? What do you expect out of me? This is so I can gear and channel the conversation, and focus on the road map that hopefully we can hope to reach. TMR

Satan, Man, and the Story of Pride

Ten key points from Sheikh Abdulbary Yahya's lecture.

text by SITI SYUHADA FAIZAL

A *lhamdulillah*, I had the pleasure of recently attending a talk by the jolliest and gentlest Sheikh I have ever met, Sheikh Abdulbary Yahya, organised by Darul Arqam Singapore. The following are key points from his talk entitled "Satan, Man, and the Story of Pride", that we can benefit from, *Insha-Allah*.

- 1) Surah Al-'Araf (07:11-24) narrates the story of Satan's disobedience to Allah (SWT) and refusing to prostrate to Adam (AS) out of arrogance and pride, believing that he was better than Adam (AS) as he was made from fire whereas Adam (AS) was made from clay.

As the verses unfold, we learn that Satan had deceived Adam (AS) and his wife into partaking from the forbidden tree. Here, we can compare and contrast the character of Satan with Adam (AS). Both Adam (AS) and

Satan had made a mistake by disobeying Allah (SWT). Satan kept on disobeying Allah (SWT) but Adam (AS) took responsibility and repented to Allah (SWT), as seen in verse 23: They (Adam and Hawa) said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers."

The lesson is that we should not let arrogance compound our mistakes; instead we should be humble, admit our mistakes, and repent.

- 2) For those who like to blame Adam (AS) for disobeying Allah (SWT) which resulted in us not being in *Jannah* now, keep in mind that we are not as pious as Adam (AS). We are much worse than him in disobeying Allah (SWT)! Were we in the place of Adam (AS), we would surely not last a few hours before disobeying Allah (SWT).

- 3) Arrogance (*kibr*) is rejecting the truth when you know it is the truth and belittling others. This is supported by a hadith reported by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (RA) in which the Prophet (SAW) said: "He who has, in his heart, a gnat's (or an atom's) weight of arrogance will not enter *Jannah*." Someone said: "A man likes to wear beautiful clothes and shoes?" Prophet (SAW) said, "Allah is Beautiful, He loves beauty. Arrogance means ridiculing and rejecting the Truth and despising people." (narrated by Muslim in *Riyad-us-Saliheen*, Book 1, Hadith 612)

Based on the above hadith, we can see that there are two types of arrogance:

- a) **Arrogance against Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW).** This refers to rejecting the truth of the religion despite knowing that it is the truth. For example, even on his death bed, Abu Talib,

the uncle of Rasulullah (SAW), still could not reject the way of his forefathers and accept that there is no other God but Allah.

- b) **Arrogance against other people**
This refers to the belittling of others whom we deemed to be "lower" than us.
- 4) Don't be arrogant and judge others for their sins. Perhaps Allah (SWT) the Most Merciful may forgive a person for their sins but may not forgive you for your arrogance. In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah (RA) in which the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

"There were two men among the Bani Israel, who were striving for the same goal. One of them would commit sin and the other would strive to do his best in the world. The man who exerted himself in worship continued to see the other in sin.

He (the worshipping man) would say: 'Refrain from it.' One day he found him in sin and said to him: 'Refrain from it.' He (the sinning man) said: 'Leave me alone with my Lord. Have you been sent as a watchman over me?' He (the worshipping man) said: 'I swear by Allah, Allah will not forgive you, nor will he admit you to Paradise.' Then their souls were taken back (by Allah), and they met together with the Lord of the worlds.

He (Allah) said to this man who had striven hard in worship: Had you knowledge about Me or had you power over that which I had in My hand? He said to the man who sinned: Go and enter Paradise by My Mercy. He said about the other: Take him to Hell." (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 43, Hadith 129)

- 5) To humble ourselves, we just need to know Allah (SWT) - through understanding

His Majesty and Greatness - and ourselves - through understanding how small we are in the grander scheme of things. In fact, it would suffice to just know who we are in order to be humble.

If we truly know ourselves and how small and weak we are in this universe, we would not even need to "lower" ourselves to be humble.

- 6) Nonetheless, if you are humble, Allah (SWT) will raise your status like how he raised the status of Omar Al-Khattab (RA). Omar (RA) was not arrogant despite being a Caliph, even walking while his slave rides on his steed.

Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) said that he waited for a whole year to ask Omar (RA) about a verse in the Quran because he respected Omar (RA) so much.





7) There are other *hadith* that show how disliked arrogance is by Allah (SWT).

a) Prophet (SAW) said, "There are three (types of) people to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, nor look at them, and they will have a painful punishment. These are: an aged man who commits *Zina* (illicit sexual act), a ruler who lies, and a proud poor person." (Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah (RA), Muslim in Riyad-us-Saliheen, Book 1, Hadith 617). These are people who have absolutely no need or excuse to act as such.

b) Prophet (SAW) said, "Indeed the most beloved among you to me, and the nearest to sit with me on the Day of Judgment is the best of you in character. And indeed, the most disliked among you to me, and the one sitting furthest from me on the Day of Judgment are the *Thartharun* (those who are talkative), and the *Mutashaddiqun* (those who like to exaggerate) and the *Muthafaihiqun*." They said: "O Messenger of Allah! We know about the *Thartharun*, and the *Mutashaddiqun*, but what about

the *Muthafaihiqun*?" He said: "The arrogant." (Hadith narrated by Jabir (RA) in Jami'at-Tirmidhi, Book 27, Hadith 124)

8) It is important to be mindful of the way we speak, when we speak, and what we speak about. The next time someone asks you inane questions, such as "*Why did the chicken cross the road?*", reply them with a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah (RA) in which the Prophet (SAW) said, "Part of the perfection of one's Islam is his leaving that which does not concern him." (Forty Hadith, Imam Nawawi, No 12)

9) The main reasons as to why people are arrogant:

a) **Wealth**
Wealth is not always a bad thing, until it makes us arrogant and makes us belittle those who have less than us. This is why we should always spend our wealth in the obedience of Allah (SWT) and always be thankful for such blessings.

b) **Status**
People of higher social status tend to look down on others

who are of lower social status than them, forgetting that one's status in this life is temporary and can be easily taken away by Allah (SWT).

c) **Lineage / Race**

People who think they are better than others because of their lineage or race forget that this was given by Allah (SWT) and they did not have any choice in it. In fact, they did not do anything to get it, so this should not be anything worthy of pride. Furthermore, everyone is a descendant of two prophets: Adam (AS) and Nuh (AS). Lastly, remember that lineage did not help Abu Talib (being Rasulullah SAW's uncle) - he still died as a non-Muslim.

10) *Sujud*, or prostration, during prayer reminds us of our origin, i.e. dust, and reminds us to be humble.

May Allah (SWT) help us to remember our origin and that we are only here to be His Slaves, so that we will remain humble in His Greatness. *Ameen.* **TMR**

All hadith references were taken from www.sunnah.com.

A Reason For Eid

Cherishing the significance of Eid and its merriment, from a Convert's perspective.

text by NADIA MAK

And so the celebrations begin.

- ❑ Fancy curtain holders - check.
- ❑ Raya *kueh* displayed in pretty jars - check.
- ❑ New, preferably matching clothes - check.
- ❑ Home-cooked goodness wafting through the air - check.

However, what truly defined the start of a new beginning to me was not made of material things. It was the act of seeking forgiveness from one another, and an acknowledgement that, despite all odds, family is family.

On the morning of the first day of Shawal, the uttering of "*Selamat Hari Raya and Maaf Zahir dan Batin*"

was humbling, nerve-wrecking, and joyous all at once. I watched my in-laws' hushed in tearful exchanges. By the grace of Allah (SWT), we can give thanks for what we have. We closed chapters with a few family photographs and looked forward to the days ahead of us.

This year, we have Baby D with us. Naturally, we were excited for her to participate. We could not resist putting her in her own baju kurung. With the loss of restraint, we returned to the bustling Geylang Serai bazaar where legendary sales took place on the last day of Ramadhan... and got her a second piece.

More Conversations
Baby D in her baju kurung

commanded plenty of attention when we went visiting, which is well and good as it opened more conversations with more relatives than before. At the first house on the first day, after we greeted the elders and other guests in the house, Baby D was promptly ushered away by relatives who missed her. We grabbed the chance to savour the home-made laksa and cakes in our own time, and catch up on each other's lives. Afterwards, the conversation flowed to Baby D as we all marvelled at how her personality was emerging. My cousins-in-law shared many stories on how they raised their own little ones.

Before I met the family of my husband, I was full of anxiety. "What



are they like?” “How will they see me?” “What if I don’t live up to their expectations, or fail to even be aware of my shortcomings?”

In the last two Eid gatherings, and again this year, those anxieties were proven needless. Uncles, aunts, cousins and in-laws of in-laws alike were generous in showing interest and respect to all including me. Through their life experiences, as I learned along the way, they have also come to take life with a healthy dose of humour. I counted myself lucky to have them as my new family, and for Baby D to grow up surrounded by good role models.

I remember how tiring it was conquering seven houses in a day, and actually dreaded that before this Eid rolled around. Visits were thankfully reasonably spread out this time. Plus, now that Baby D has come along, we got a second-hand car – a great privilege and help especially during such family celebrations.

Families with Chinese-Malay Parentage

So, we had more time on our visits to find out how Baby D

should address her different elders, and how other children were doing in school. In particular, we found out how children from two other families with Chinese-Malay parentage were faring in terms of language acquisition. The conclusion is, acquiring and mastering English, Mandarin, and Malay, at the same time is not going to be easy. *Insha’Allah*, we dream for Baby D to unlock her potential in all three languages, on top of Arabic, so that she can better access what makes her who she is. Our families have some work to do! I, for one, have a lot to catch up on.

Nursing is a challenge in baju kurung, unless you have them altered for nursing access. Fortunately, Baby D is already on solids, and I have alternatives in the form of expressed milk, so travelling with Baby D from house to house was manageable.

Our Own “Open House”

Having many mutual friends, we took the opportunity to catch up with them by having an “open house” at our own place. It turned out to be a large gathering of

babies, parents, and parents-to-be: one 3-year-old, five infants below 1-year-old, and two who were yet to be born. How different this was from the last Eid. Food and house preparation now had several other considerations. We had to cater to child-friendly and nursing-friendly diets and spaces for our “open house” – a far cry from when we were young and spontaneous. Nonetheless the gathering was a riot. We ended the day exhausted and happy.

On that note, our Eid celebrations drew to a close.

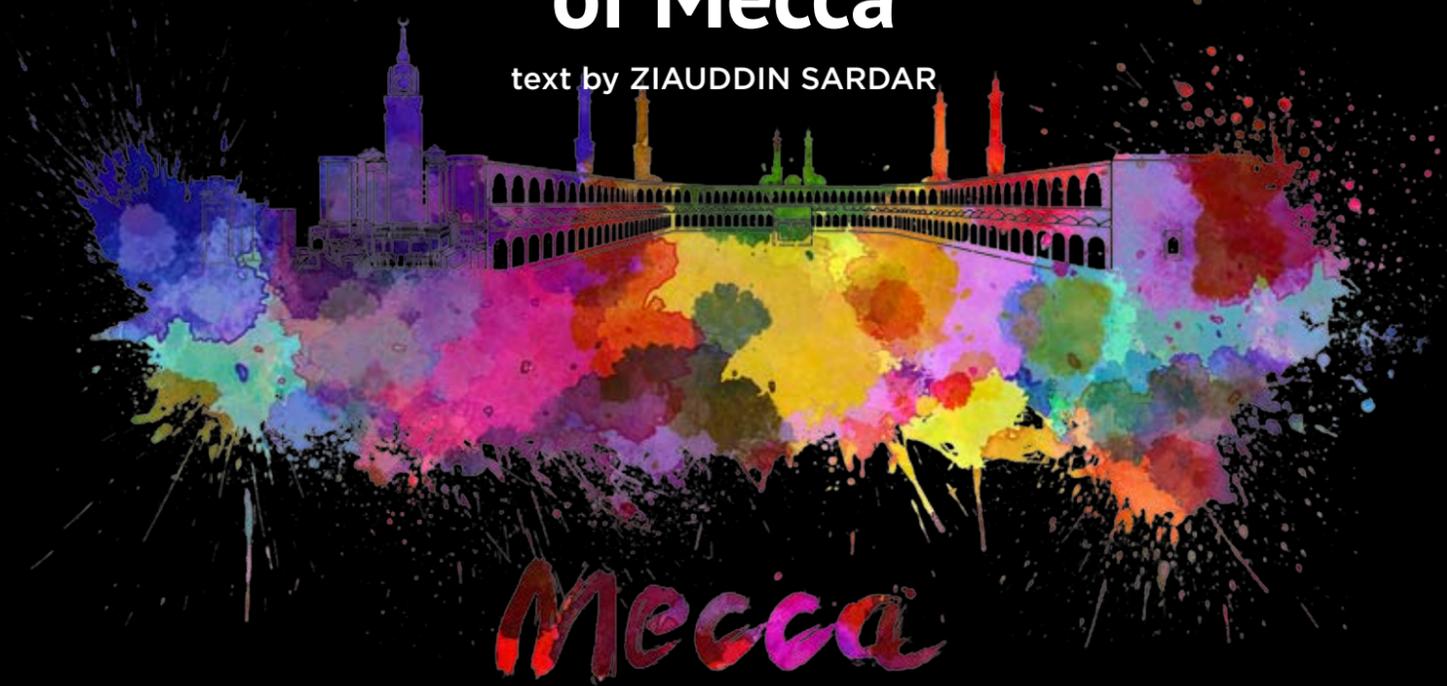
We gained more sustenance than we had started out with. With His provisions come the opportunity to show gratitude. With the challenges experienced through Ramadhan and the year, comes a time to overcome them and re-establish relationships – with others, with ourselves, and with God. With this clarity, we remember those who have less than we do and fulfil our obligations toward the needy.

It was indeed good reason for Eid.

TMR

The Destruction of Mecca

text by ZIAUDDIN SARDAR



When Malcolm X visited Mecca in 1964, he was enchanted. He found the city “as ancient as time itself,” and wrote that the partly constructed extension to the Sacred Mosque “will surpass the architectural beauty of India’s Taj Mahal.”

Fifty years on, no one could possibly describe Mecca as ancient, or associate beauty with Islam’s holiest city. Pilgrims performing the hajj this week will search in vain for Mecca’s history.

The dominant architectural site in the city is not the Sacred Mosque, where the Kaaba, the symbolic focus of Muslims everywhere, is. It is the obnoxious Makkah Royal

Clock Tower hotel, which, at 1,972 feet, is among the world’s tallest buildings. It is part of a mammoth development of skyscrapers that includes luxury shopping malls and hotels catering to the superrich. The skyline is no longer dominated by the rugged outline of encircling peaks. Ancient mountains have been flattened. The city is now surrounded by the brutalism of rectangular steel and concrete structures - an amalgam of Disneyland and Las Vegas.

The “guardians” of the Holy City, the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the clerics, have a deep hatred of history. They want everything to look brand-new. Meanwhile, the sites are expanding to accommodate the rising number

of pilgrims, up to almost 3 million today from 200,000 in the 1960s.

The initial phase of Mecca’s destruction began in the mid-1970s, and I was there to witness it. Innumerable ancient buildings, including the Bilal mosque, dating from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, were bulldozed. The old Ottoman houses, with their elegant mashrabiyyas - latticework windows - and elaborately carved doors, were replaced with hideous modern ones. Within a few years, Mecca was transformed into a “modern” city with large multilane roads, spaghetti junctions, gaudy hotels and shopping malls.

The few remaining buildings and sites of religious and cultural

TODAY, HAJJ IS A PACKAGED TOUR, WHERE YOU MOVE, TIED TO YOUR GROUP, FROM HOTEL TO HOTEL, AND SELDOM ENCOUNTER PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND ETHNICITIES. DRAINED OF HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PLURALITY, HAJJ IS NO LONGER A TRANSFORMING, ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. IT HAS BEEN REDUCED TO A MUNDANE EXERCISE IN RITUALS AND SHOPPING.

significance were erased more recently. The Makkah Royal Clock Tower, completed in 2012, was built on the graves of an estimated 400 sites of cultural and historical significance, including the city's few remaining millennium-old buildings. Bulldozers arrived in the middle of the night, displacing families that had lived there for centuries. The complex stands on top of Ajyad Fortress, built around 1780, to protect Mecca from bandits and invaders. The house of Khadijah, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, has been turned into a block of toilets. The Makkah Hilton is built over the house of Abu Bakr, the closest companion of the prophet and the first caliph. Apart from the Kaaba itself, only the inner core of the Sacred Mosque retains a fragment of history. It consists of intricately carved marble columns, adorned with calligraphy of the names of the prophet's companions. Built by a succession of Ottoman sultans, the columns date from the early 16th century. And yet plans are afoot to demolish them, along with the whole of the interior of the Sacred Mosque, and to replace it with an ultramodern doughnut-shaped building.

The only other building of religious significance in the city is the house where the Prophet Muhammad lived. During most of the Saudi era it was used first as a cattle market, then turned into a library, which is not open to the people. But even this is too much for the radical Saudi clerics who have repeatedly called for its demolition. The clerics

fear that, once inside, pilgrims would pray to the prophet, rather than to God - an unpardonable sin. It is only a matter of time before it is razed and turned, probably, into a parking lot.

The cultural devastation of Mecca has radically transformed the city. Unlike Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, Mecca was never a great intellectual and cultural center of Islam. But it was always a pluralistic city where debate among different Muslim sects and schools of thought was not unusual. Now it has been reduced to a monolithic religious entity where only one, ahistoric, literal interpretation of Islam is permitted, and where all other sects, outside of the Salafist brand of Saudi Islam, are regarded as false. Indeed, zealots frequently threaten pilgrims of different sects. Last year, a group of Shiite pilgrims from Michigan were attacked with knives by extremists, and in August, a coalition of American Muslim groups wrote to the State Department asking for protection during this year's hajj.

The erasure of Meccan history has had a tremendous impact on the hajj itself. The word "hajj" means effort. It is through the effort of traveling to Mecca, walking from

one ritual site to another, finding and engaging with people from different cultures and sects, and soaking in the history of Islam that the pilgrims acquired knowledge as well as spiritual fulfillment. Today, hajj is a packaged tour, where you move, tied to your group, from hotel to hotel, and seldom encounter people of different cultures and ethnicities. Drained of history and religious and cultural plurality, hajj is no longer a transforming, once-in-a-lifetime spiritual experience. It has been reduced to a mundane exercise in rituals and shopping. Mecca is a microcosm of the Muslim world. What happens to and in the city has a profound effect on Muslims everywhere. The spiritual heart of Islam is an ultramodern, monolithic enclave, where difference is not tolerated, history has no meaning, and consumerism is paramount. It is hardly surprising then that literalism, and the murderous interpretations of Islam associated with it, have become so dominant in Muslim lands. **TMR**

(Ziauddin Sardar is the editor of the quarterly Critical Muslim and the author of "Mecca: The Sacred City.")

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Sustaining Religious Harmony in Singapore

An analysis of the study on 'Religiosity and the Management of Religious Harmony' by the Institute of Policy Studies.

TEXT BY MURSHIDA MOHAMED KADIR

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) recently released a working paper titled 'Religiosity and the Management of Religious Harmony: Responses from the IPS Survey on Race, Religion and Language'. The working paper aims to document the religious beliefs of the Singapore population and how these beliefs relate to life orientation, moral beliefs and inter-religious relations.

Such analysis is timely in light of the growing sentiments about the declining moral values among Singaporeans which was brought up frequently during the Our Singapore Conversation held across the island last year. Adherents of religious faiths often uphold

morality and ethics and emphasise the critical role of moral values in maintaining a stable and cohesive society.

While religious differences are deemed as taboo topics to be discussed in the public platforms, racial differences had been put in the limelight recently through controversies, such as comments made by Amy Cheong on void deck weddings by the Malays, and disputes about the smell of curry between two neighbours of different races, which sparked online furore.

Demarcation of Inter-Religious Relationships

Despite the differences, many believed that Singaporeans of

different faith live in peaceful coexistence. The IPS paper highlighted that nine out of ten respondents across religious faiths stated that they would be comfortable having someone of different faith as their colleague and next-door neighbour. While this is a reassuring indicator, it does not translate to trusting and having personal relationship with people of other religious faith. We may be comfortable working or living next door to someone of a different faith but how many of us actually reach out and exchange deep, meaningful conversations with our co-workers and neighbours of different faiths? Or do we choose to stick to our own racial and religious enclaves when it comes to personal relationships?



“All Mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white; [none have superiority over another] except by piety and good action”.

Extract from Prophet Muhammad’s last sermon, at Arafat.

The above view is supported by the survey findings, which highlighted that many respondents are uncomfortable in establishing inter-religious relationships in the private sphere, for example, having someone of a different religion as a close relative or spouse. This demarcation of inter-religious relationships between the public and private sphere could stem from a lack of understanding or appreciation of inter-religious practices. It could also lead one to ponder whether religious harmony is a precarious entity, held together by state policies and top down initiatives.

The Role of the State

Many felt that the state plays a crucial role in prosecuting those who threaten racial and religious harmony. Six out of ten respondents felt that it is important to report to the authorities any infractions that threaten religious and racial harmony. This indicated that Singaporeans place their trust in the state to ensure the maintenance

of religious and racial harmony through authoritative approach, if required.

Political leaders have always been vocal on issues that concern racial and religious sensitivities, cautioning the people to maintain a moderate stance and leveraging on the religious leaders to echo the national views.

Equality in Islam

Consistent with the paper’s findings, people of monotheistic faith, including Islam, are greatly influenced by their faith in shaping their life philosophies. As a Muslim, our life is greatly shaped by the teachings of Islam and the examples as prescribed by Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

The message of justice and equality between races was reiterated by the Prophet (SAW) in his last sermon as he emphasised that all of mankind is the descendent of Adam and Eve and that God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and

performing good deeds are the only criteria of attaining human dignity and honour in the eyes of Allah.

Hence, as Muslims, we are enjoined to treat everyone equally, regardless of race or religion. The concept of brotherhood is especially prevalent in Islam and Christianity. Renowned poet, Jalaluddin Rumi, summed up this concept of brotherhood aptly in his quote:

“The lamps are different but the light is the same”

Rumi

The Significant Role of Religious Teachers

The IPS study found that many Muslims and Protestant Christians, more than any other faiths, stated that religious teachers play a significant role in influencing how they live their lives. This could potentially be an issue of concern for the state, as the authority of the political leaders may be subjugated

by the authority of the religious leaders, if left unchecked.

The recent Wear White movement initiated by religious teacher, Ustadz Noor Deros, and supported by Senior Pastor from Faith Community Baptist Church, Pastor Lawrence Khong, was an example of how the religious teachers could galvanise the community into action to defend religious and moral values.

Establishing Universal Principles

The IPS paper acknowledged that the population of Singapore do adhere to maintaining religious harmony and recognise the need to make concessions and respect differences in a multi-religious society. The paper called for greater dialogue to establish a set of universal principles agreeable to all, including secularists. This suggestion is a worthy one that will ensure that the Singapore population remain united through mutually accepted values, such as respect, compassion, tolerance, and

kindness, among others. Dialogues between inter-religious and secular entities could also help to bridge differences, create awareness of sensitivities and prevent groups from stepping on perceived or intangible religious landmines.

The role of religious leaders in preserving peace is widely recognised in Singapore. This is especially so in a society with unbridled access to information about the development happening elsewhere across the globe. Hence, religious leaders are often tasked to remind adherents to remain rational and take on a moderate, non-confrontational approach in religious actions. This will be supported by the state’s views, channelled through the mainstream media, in reminding the community that we live in a multi-religious society and should not be influenced by global trends.

The flow of immigration, along with their culturally influenced religious practices is another trend

highlighted by the IPS paper that needed attention. It is important to inculcate the ‘Singaporean’ values to immigrants and create awareness of the realities and concessions needed to ensure peaceful coexistence in a multi-religious society.

Lastly, the IPS paper highlighted the existence of splinter groups that impose their own views on the interpretations of the religion and cause the dilution of religious authority. The paper suggested that religious structures remain open to incorporate these groups and steer them away from tendencies that may jeopardise religious harmony. While remaining open is a criteria of almost all religious faiths that preach love and acceptance for all mankind, splinter groups may not be susceptible in identifying with the larger religious community. In such cases, it is important therefore for religious scholars and moderate followers of the faith to speak up and mitigate the popularity of these splinter groups. **TMR**

All The Raves About Burgers And Sandwiches

text by HAKIM NORDIN



Which? Sandwich

Where: Asli Village, Downtown East, Pasir Ris, Singapore 519559

Tel: 8366 9241

Facebook: Which Sandwich

Best For: Those days you want to stick to your diet but your lunch buddy wants to indulge. And you will re-think your diet once you're there.

Feeling famished after that workout, but can't decide where to go to kill off the unbearable feeling of hunger? Or are you contemplating where to head to because you are still on a diet but your partner wants to indulge? Located in the eastern part of the island, 'Which? Sandwich' might be the solution to your problems.

Serving a wide range of food, from mouth-watering burgers and sandwiches made of the freshest ingredients to freshly made pizzas with a generous amount of cheese, customers and patrons better prepare themselves for a mind-blowing eating experience.

'Which? Sandwich', owned and run by a Singaporean Muslim, is situated in a small, humble corner, of Asli Village, a food centre in Downtown East Pasir Ris. In just a short time, it has built a reputation by word-of-mouth for its unique and unforgettable dishes. The mark of a good restaurant or stall

is not necessarily its size, but the quality of its food, and you won't be disappointed.

Initially started to cater to Muslim patrons looking for fresh sandwiches and burgers i.e. an alternative to the typical fast food offerings, 'Which? Sandwich' found that their dishes and creations appeal to a bigger audience than that.

Accompanied by a friend, who happened to be non-Muslim, I made my way to Downtown East with the intention of pampering our taste buds. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a friendly-looking lady in *hijab*, whom I later learnt is the wife of the 'Which? Sandwich' stall owner. After introducing us to the range of items on the menu, we decided to go along with her recommendations of a Coney Dog, Messy Burger, and Cheese n Steak Submarine Foot long Sandwich. We had actually requested for the popular, stack sandwich but luck was not on our side that day. Note

to future patrons: get there early, the best items on the menu sell out fast! Since our stomachs were starting to growl, we decided to make do with what was available. On a side note, we appreciated the excellent customer service, from the warm greetings the moment we approached the counter to the time taken to explain their offerings and the solid recommendations by the co-owner.

The waiting time for the food to be served varies, depending on the crowd. We were lucky as there was no crowd, and our foods were ready simultaneously within 10 minutes. We started digging into the Messy Burger and indeed, the messiness gets overlooked once our mouths got in contact with the tender patty, crisp lettuce, and fresh red tomatoes with pickles and onions topped with its savoury signature sauce. At the first glance, the patty looked like a fish cutlet but we later learnt that it was actually made from calamari. The burger was served with crispy fries and

my only grouse would be that they didn't serve me more. Little wonder, that the Messy Burger is one of the bestsellers on the menu.

Next up were the Coney Dogs. As corny as the name may sound, the taste was exceptional a work of art, both for the eyes and for the taste buds. Imagine, cheesy chicken hotdogs combined with sweet-flavourful minced beef, topped with wet mayonnaise, cheese and chilli sauce on them. An exemplary blend of ingredients to sink our teeth into - for the price of S\$4.50.

While we were busy chomping down our food, a familiar aroma swarmed into our noses and our gazes shifted to the table beside us - a 12-inch pizza with the perfect harmony of ingredients. We found out from the stall assistant that the pizza is topped with generous servings of premium chicken and beef salami, minced beef marinated in Mexican chilli and burrito sauce, with super-gooey mozzarella cheese and Spanish olives. For

S\$11.00, customers would also have the option of customisation according to their preferences.

As the saying goes, we saved the best for last. For us, this was the Cheese n Steak Submarine Foot long Sandwich. If we could put it into words, the luxurious feeling of euphoria was made up in the generous fillings of large slices of beef, with fresh tomatoes, lettuce, onions and pickles to go with the flaxseed bread, along with the rich creamy cheese and signature sauce for the toppings. With its humongous size, the foot long sandwich, which cost S\$11.00, is large enough for two persons. People with smaller appetites can also opt for a smaller version of this sandwich at S\$6.00. Customers will definitely be spoilt for choices with a variety of toppings and bread types, similar to the choices you might find at Subway.

Other than the sandwiches, burgers and pizzas, 'Which? Sandwich' also offers other dishes such as

meatballs with dips, kebabs and wraps at affordable prices. Apart from dining in, 'Which? Sandwich' also offers home deliveries to Pasir Ris, Tampines, Bedok, Simei, Loyang, Changi Airport, Sengkang and Punggol. They also cater for corporate functions, meetings and weddings.

My non-Muslim companion personally "ranked it amongst the best of the sandwich joints in Singapore, competing even with those popular non-Halal ones". 'Which? Sandwich' is a classic example that good Western food does not have to be from the West. It could be born and perfected right here amongst us, and made specially to cater to our Muslim dietary needs. All we need is some imagination, plus a touch of creativity, and we are able to create culinary pleasures that are of the finest quality.

So, which sandwich are you going to choose? **TMR**

The Syrian Conflict

This article is adapted from Religious Rehabilitation Group's Public Education series.



Atmeh, Syria - January 14, 2013: A family sits outside their tent at the refugee camp in Atmeh (Qatma), Syria. They fled violence in their home town in Idlib province and are part of the mammoth humanitarian disaster facing Syria and surrounding countries today. Photo by © jcarillet.

An Overview

The conflict began as another 'Arab Spring' uprising against President Assad's rule. Since then, it has mushroomed into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in regional and world powers. The Alawite-led government of President Assad is reported to have the support of Iran and Russia while the Sunni-dominated opposition is said to have the support of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Arab states along with the US, UK and France. Armed groups and rebel forces in Syria include Lebanon's Shia Islamist Hezbollah movement and

al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups, supporting opposing sides and contributing to the steady rise of sectarianism in Syria, which has now spread to Iraq as well.

Meanwhile, Muslims from many parts of the world are also joining the armed groups and rebel forces in Syria, most of them drawn and moved by the horrific images of the conflict, stories about alleged atrocities committed by government forces, and the perceived lack of support from Western and Arab countries.

The Syrian Conflict and Extremism

The involvement of Muslims from other countries in the Syrian conflict warrants some attention. While not everyone who has travelled to Syria is involved in terrorism after returning to their home countries, it would be erroneous to conclude that individuals who have trained and fought in Syria pose no potential security threat.

Numerous studies show that individuals with foreign training and fighting experience have featured prominently in home-based terrorist plots. In fact, we have already seen



Atmeh, Syria - January 14, 2013: Internally displaced Syrians, including children, at a refugee camp near the Turkish border in Atmeh, Syria. Photo by © jcarillet.

terrorist plots in the UK and France, and an attack in Belgium, that were perpetrated by returnees of the Syrian conflict.

Those who actively participate in armed conflict or assist become radicalised and acquire new skills - including the ability to mount an attack on local soil, radicalise others and impart knowledge and skills gained offshore.

Furthermore, the relationships they have forged with other foreign fighters can lead to the establishment of terrorist networks which will pose a significant national security risk should these individuals decide to pursue a violent agenda at home. As such, the Syrian crisis has presented a complex set of national security challenges that threaten the peace that we enjoy today.

Is fighting in Syria an act of jihad?

The conflict in Syria has led to confusion about the obligation of

jihad among many Muslims. Many Muslims are being misled into thinking that fighting in Syria is an act of jihad. This is not true.

The Syrian conflict is a sectarian war amongst Muslims in Syria. It is about political power and influence and determining who has control of land and resources. The conflict has nothing to do with Islam. It is not about defending the faith or the ummah. SO, DO NOT BE MISLED.

Is it necessary for Singaporean Muslims to go to Syria and be involved in the conflict?

Singaporean Muslims should not be involved in any armed conflict in other countries including Syria because of the following reasons:

- It violates the laws of the country.
- It is not a religious obligation.
- It compromises the safety and security of those who travel to the conflict areas.
- There are other legal channels to assist the suffering Muslims.

What do Muslim scholars say about fighting in Syria?

In Islam, there are two kinds of "jihad," which literally translates as "struggle" from Arabic. Scholars explained that the grand jihad is restraining oneself from sins, and the minor jihad is the fight for righteousness and helping the subjects of injustice.

Many Muslim scholars have denounced the acts of violence in Syria and discouraged Muslims from being involved in the conflict. Even the scholars in Syria said that there is no need for foreign Muslims to join the cause in Syria. Sheikh Sariah al-Rifaie of Syria advised Muslims worldwide that their intention to perform jihad in Syria is an erroneous one. The political international conflict in Syria does not qualify as "jihad." Tunisia's Mufti, Sheikh Othman Battikh, has described calls for jihad against the government in Syria as a "huge mistake" that is not permitted under Islam. Sheikh Battikh



Atmeh, Syria - January 14, 2013: Syrian refugees, both children and adults, stand among tents as two people cut fire wood. The Atmeh camp is in Idlib Province, beside the Turkish border. Photo by © jcarillet.

How YOU Can Help The People Of Syria

Please refer to the following for more information on the Syrian Humanitarian Aid Appeal:

- Simply Islam
<http://www.simplyislam.com.sg/main/aid-to-syrian-refugees/>
- Rahmatan Lil'Alamin Foundation
<http://www.rlafoundation.org.sg/>
- Badan Agama & Pelajaran Radin Mas (B.A.P.A.) (Religious & Educational League of Radin Mas)
<http://www.bapa.org.sg/Syrian-Humanitarian-Appeal.html>

The public are welcome to seek clarification and understanding on the Syrian conflict and other matters related to religious extremism from the Religious Rehabilitation Group Resource and Counselling Centre located at Khadijah Mosque Auditorium Building, 583 Geylang Road, Singapore 389522, and Telephone: 6747 5607. They can also visit the official website of RRG at www.rrg.sg and visit the Facebook page of RRG.

stressed that those who went to fight in Syria under the banner of jihad were “fooled and have been brainwashed.”

Dr Ali Gomaa, the former Grand Mufti of Egypt warns that the fighting in Syria is in no way an act of jihad. This is because the indiscriminate killings and bloodshed that has been taking place in Syria between the different Muslim groups is against the teachings of Islam.

Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram, the Mufti of Singapore, warns that jihad cannot be determined and declared by any individual or organization, but should be endorsed by the highest Islamic authority. He added that it is a big mistake for Singaporeans to help the Syrians through participating in the armed conflict in Syria.

Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamed, Co-Chairman of the Religious Rehabilitation Group, says that

participation in the Syrian conflict is neither a religious nor a national obligation. He added that Muslims in Singapore should remain calm and avoid getting involved in the conflict.

Some Muslims have linked the war in Syria to the signs of the end of the world. Is this true?

Some individuals are easily swayed by the narrative of performing armed jihad in Syria. These individuals may have been influenced by the “doomsday narrative” that perpetuates the belief that the Syrian conflict is a prelude to the anticipated *Yaumul Qiyamah* (End of Time). These are rumours and speculations that are unfounded. No one knows when the End of Time is or when is the Last Hour. These are matters that reside within the knowledge of the Almighty. Beware of those who spread such messages.

What can Singaporean Muslims do to support the innocent and

suffering Muslims in Syria?

Muslims in Singapore can show sympathy and support to the Muslims in Syria through a variety of means which include:

- Offering financial assistance through trusted organisations that channel aid to humanitarian missions to Syria
- Offering prayers of peace for the suffering Muslims and for the restoration of peace

Apart from offering financial assistance and prayers, Singaporean Muslims are advised to:

- Understand the context and reality of the conflict in Syria;
- Be discerning of information they receive from the media and Internet;
- Seek legitimate Islamic sources and religious guidance from MUIS, RRG and accredited *asatizah* (scholars) in Singapore. **TMR**

This article has been reprinted with the kind permission of RRG.

Jasa Bakti Award for Moiz Tyebally



The Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore (Darul Arqam Singapore) congratulates its Assistant Vice President, Finance Division, Moiz Tyebally, age 63, for being one of the eight recipients of the Jasa Bakti Award, presented by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) at the MUIS Awards Ceremony in 2014.

Moiz has contributed more than 20 years in community service in areas that have benefited both the Muslim community and society at large. He had served with distinction as a council member in the MUIS Council from 2005-2008. The MUIS Council operates as the overall decision-making body and has responsibility over the formulation of policies and operational plans of the organisation.

While serving as an Ex-Co Member with Darul Arqam Singapore, he has contributed his expertise on Islamic Banking and Finance for the investment issues of the Association. He also plays a major

role to ensure that the welfare and interest of the Muslim Converts in Singapore are being taken care of.

Moiz is also a member, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer of Abdul Aleem Siddique Mosque since 2009. He is also a member of Madrasah Irsyad Management Committee since 2003 and has served the madrasah and seen its transformation to a key primary madrasah under the Joint Madrasah System. With the formation of the Joint Madrasah System, he has also been appointed to the Board of Governors for Madrasah Irsyad and very much contribute to the discussion on changes to the madrasah system under the arrangements among the 3 madrasahs.

Moiz has served with distinction for almost two decades at the Home Team Connection Programme, under Ministry of Home Affairs. His soft spot for the rehabilitation of offenders and being a strong advocate of the 'Yellow Ribbon Project' and giving ex-offenders

second chances is evident in his community work with the Prison Service. His responsibilities include monitoring the inmate's well-being, recreational facilities, discipline and welfare to ensure that everything is satisfactory. He had performed his heavy responsibilities with compassion and sincerity as he believed that every individual must be respected and given a second chance to change.

Moiz also served as a Board Member with the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) for almost 10 years. He is currently a Director of Mercu Learning Point, a wholly-owned subsidiary of AMP offering childcare, student care and tuition with 7 centres running and services for more than 1,000 students.

Moiz is currently a volunteer mediator at the family court. In the last 2 years, he has mediated in about 150 cases involving Muslim couples with a success rate of more than 70% of the disputes amicably resolved. **TMR**

MUIS Awards Ceremony 2014



All nine award winners in a group phototaking session with President Dr Tony Tan, Minister Dr Yaacob Ibrahim and Chief Executive of Muis Hj Abdul Razak Maricar at the end of the Muis Awards Ceremony 2014

Annually, the Muis Awards are presented by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) in appreciation of outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the socio-religious life of the Singapore Muslim Community. This is the 37th year that the Muis Awards Ceremony is held.

Candidates for the Muis Awards are nominated by Mosque Management Board members, Muslim volunteer organisations and Madrasah Management committees. Internally, a committee of Muis senior officials will consider possible candidates from the Appeal Board, Haj Pilgrimage Committee and other Muis' Committees for the Awards.

There are 2 types of awards presented every year - the **Jasa Bakti** award presented to a few outstanding individuals for their

contribution to the community, and the **Jasa Cemerlang** award presented to one individual in honour of his lifelong achievements and contribution to the community.

This year, the **Jasa Bakti** or Long Service Award will be conferred to **eight** individuals, while the **Jasa Cemerlang** or Distinguished Service Award will be conferred to only **one** individual.

Jasa Cemerlang

1) Haider Mohamedally Sithawalla
Chairman, Board of Directors,
Warees Investments Pte Ltd
Board of Trustees, Rahmatan Lil
Alamin Foundation (RLAF)

Jasa Bakti

1) Ustaz Saripi Rawi
Member of the Muis Appeal Board
Member of the Religious
Rehabilitation Group (RRG)

2) Moiz Tyebally
Member, Abdul Aleem Siddique
Mosque Management Board (MMB)
Madrasah Al-Irsyad Madrasah
Management Committee (MMC)
Board of Governors, Joint Madrasah
Committee (JMC)
3) Zainun Ibrahim
Member, Wak Tanjong MMB
4) Abdul Rahman Sinwan
Member, An Nur MMB
5) Mohamed Rafeeq s/o Mohamed
Yusuf
Vice-Chairman, Bencoolen MMB

6) Rahmat Mawa
Previously Secretary, Kampong
Holland Mosque
Member of Qaryah Kampong
Holland
7) Sadir Osman
Vice-Chairman, Jamiyah Ar-Rabitah
MMB
8) Ahmad Muda
Member, Al Abdul Razak Mosque

TMR

The Free Digital Library

The online site www.muslim-library.com serves literature for all, aiming to feature books in international languages as well.

review by SITI KHAIRUNNISA ZAINAL

The Digital Revolution has impacted the world we live in today in more ways than one, ensuring that information is readily available at our fingertips. The digitization of information meant that two people from different ends of the planet could share and retrieve information in a matter of seconds, without having to go through the hassle of delivering tangible objects. The same can be said about digitizing Islamic books and ideas, thanks to the generosity of the Al-Najat Charity Society in Kuwait.

Features

At first glance, a web user might struggle to decide which portion of the website to focus on. This might be the case because the layout of the website is fashioned in a rather compact manner, making it appear as though too many functions are being squeezed onto one page. While this might not be fashionable, seeing as to how minimalist designs

are preferred these days, it does not take long to get used to the web functions. The web creators have also tapped on to the affordances brought about by the advent of social media to further publicise the website.

What was really attractive about the website is the ability to select different language options, to suit the needs of the web user. This will definitely make it easier for people from all over the world to learn about Islam because language will not pose as a barrier.

Content

The online material found on the site is categorised according to different religious topics and different religions. This is an affordance as it allows web users to sieve through the online content according to different areas of interest.

The categories of content found on this section of the website all appear pertinent to our times. For

instance, the Apologetics portion may serve as guidance for answers to the criticisms that have been made towards Islam in general. While it was impossible for me to go through every single e-book on the website, I urge readers to do a simple cross-reference analysis when forming opinions as opposed to relying on one single text. The process of learning is, after all, about being open-minded and analytical.

If our own Muslim historical counterparts had shunned works from the Ancient Greeks just because they were pagans, the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution might not have taken place at all!

Apart from that, popular books are showcased in the middle of the web display. For web viewers who are new to the religion of Islam, this portion of the website would be useful because popular books would immediately be prompted to them, making it easier to make a selection.



How to upload a book

If web users are interested to upload a book, it can easily be done by contacting administrators of the website. This can be done by clicking the 'Contact Us' icon located on the top left hand corner of the website. I suppose the administrators would actually have to filter the content before actually publishing it online so the process might take a while.

Although unclear about whether the web user would have to digitize the book themselves before it can be uploaded onto the website or if the web administrators actually help with the digitization, I think it would help the web user to explain why they think the knowledge from the e-book would be beneficial for public use.

Advantages

The website has been reformatted to suit mobile devices like mobile phones and tablets. This ensures that the e-books can be easily

retrieved as long as internet access is available.

The myriad of content available allow for different content options. Apart from the e-books found on the website, the web creators have also introduced numerous beneficial features such as links to other Islamic awareness websites to foster learning about Islam in general. The endorsement of such websites will cater to web users who are genuinely interested in all aspects of Islam.

Disadvantages

As previously mentioned, the initial outlook of the web layout may appear distracting to a first time web user who might not know where to focus their attention on. Subsequently, reading the texts on the website itself could be quite an uncomfortable experience. I myself have taken the liberty of downloading some e-books into my e-book reader and even then, there was some issue with the format of

the texts. This is usually the case if the format of the original text is in PDF as opposed to the MOBI or EPUB format.

Lastly, although the website exists to cater to people of different nationalities and ethnicities (i.e. people who speak different languages), the core of the website, which is the learning materials, are mostly written in English. For instance, if an Italian was to visit the website they would find that their choice of e-books in Italian was severely limited. An Italian would not even be provided different categories to choose from. Similarly, the social media pages tagged to the website are written in Arabic, making it irrelevant to non-Arabic speakers. In this regard, the only people who would fully benefit from the creation of this website are either English-speaking or Arabic-speaking users. As such, perhaps the administrators could do more to address these constraints.



Book review of **The Search for Truth**

compiled by Dr Saleh as-Saleh

[<http://www.muslim-library.com/english/the-search-for-the-truth-by-a-man-known-as-salman-the-persian/?lang=English>]

The Search for Truth is a profound story about a Persian man's quest for meaning and revelation in relation to his surrounding community. The protagonist, Salman, goes against his family, tradition and even death of teachers, to pursue spiritual enlightenment from those learned among him. An earnest man's perseverance to seek religious knowledge eventually led him to the path of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). We all can learn something from Salman's story, be it his curiosity, his open mind or his thirst for truth; whichever it may be, surely it will lead us closer to the Almighty, *Insha'Allah*.

The protagonist, Salman, is first introduced as the son of a devout Zoroastrian fire worshipper in Ash-Shaam (The Levant: today known as Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan). At the beginning, Salman encounters a group of Christians in

a church when he leaves his home to complete some tasks given by his father. The worshipping Christians intrigued Salman so much that he stayed with them for one whole day and completely abandoned his chores. This momentous incident sparked Salman's interest and it made him realise that there was so much about religion and spirituality that he did not know about. It was also a significant event which opened his eyes to the possibilities of Allah's religion. When Salman reached home, he informed his father of his visit to the church but unfortunately he was met with threats because unlike Salman, Salman's father was not open-minded; he was likened to the men of previous generations who follow their forefathers' religion blindly. This of course, did not stop Salman from finding out more about Allah's religion. After some time, Salman left his home and family to learn more about Allah's religion.

Salman later travelled and lived with different individuals, all of whom were known to be loyal followers of Allah's religion and they each taught him different things. His travels finally brought him to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during the infantile stages of Islam. Salman did not need validation from those around him to know

that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was a special person, who was very close to the God that Salman had been searching for his entire life. Salman went through trials and tribulations in pursuit of Allah (SWT) and the promised Prophet. Today, we recognise him as Salman the Persian or Salman al-Farisi, one of Prophet Muhammad's most loyal Companions.

The only downside to this book is the fragmented compilation of paragraphs; many a times, the flow of the story would be interrupted by quotes or verses. This affected the structural integrity of the story at hand and could confuse readers who have no knowledge on the history of Abrahamic religions. On the other hand, this should be overlooked because this "story" was meant to be a compilation as opposed to a traditionally written linear narrative. Nevertheless, I believe that Salman's story is still relevant in today's modern world. To find our place in this world, we may face challenges different from that of Salman's but in essence, obstacles like ignorance, societal pressures and idleness still exist to stray us from *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* (the straight path) and this is precisely why Salman's story can still serve to inspire us, even in this age.

The Organisation That Hosts The Site

The Al-Najat Charity Society is a non-profit organisation based in Kuwait. It aims to provide charitable aid to people, regardless of religion, homeland, gender or skin colour. Help exists in the form of food donations, education donations and health services. Aid is also provided to disaster stricken areas; specifically places which have been touched by famine, wars and natural disasters. The organisation also aims to develop potential by providing educational training through a myriad of projects to eliminate, firstly, illiteracy. Other services provided by the organisation also include development of poor societies by providing job opportunities through the means of various projects, and raising awareness to attract volunteers for different charitable causes. By coordinating with charitable organisations, help can thus be given to entities that need it the most.

With that in mind, the muslim-library.com was created to provide free materials to help the public understand more about Islam. The website is aimed at people of different ethnicities, religion and nationalities. The Muslim-Library.com "provides comprehensive resources in dozens of languages about Islam, Muslims, other faiths and contemporary issues that may concern the whole world in different aspects of life and scholarship. It aspires to develop spiritual and intellectual minds of users for them to be morally upright, religiously knowledgeable and globally aware of events." And this is in line with the values upheld by the owners of the website. **TMR**

Book review of

Dajjal? The Judeo-Christian 'Civilization'

by Mohammad Bayazeed Khan Panni

[<http://www.muslim-library.com/english/dajjal-the-judeo-christian-39civilization39/?lang=English>]

Panni's book discusses the different interpretations about the prophesized coming of the Dajjal. According to Islamic Eschatology, the Dajjal is a one-eyed evil imposter, whose aim is to have human beings deviated from the right path, by claiming himself to be God. This monstrous figure has been prophesized to be so powerful and influential that during its peak, it will control the world's precious resources like food and water. Thereupon, in his book, Panni places emphasis on the relevant significance of the prophecy in accordance with modernity in today's Judeo-Christian western civilization.

Panni structured the content of the book in a systematic way. This gives the book a clear framework, outlining his points and arguments. Panni first talks about the significance of the Dajjal's emergence. He supports this assertion by quoting Islamic Prophets when they were preaching about the Dajjal to their people. Panni next considers the possible identity of the Dajjal by discussing various interpretations of what the

Dajjal could be: a solitary figure, a collective way of life and even nationalistic identities. Panni also justifies his claims by providing contextual justification from the Hadith and the Christian Bible. Later on, Panni deliberates the present state of mankind, which he deemed lost to the Judeo-Christian influence. He ends his book by alluding to what he thought to be actual *ibadah* (worship) and how Muslims in general have the opportunity to make themselves worthy in the eyes of Allah (SWT) if they resisted the Dajjal's temptations.

The book was written in an intense, almost fervent tone, perhaps to convince the readers of the authenticity of the content. There was a general flow for readers to follow and this makes it easy to read. The disappointment I felt after reading the book was that I could not find substantial information about the author, both within and outside the book, when I did a simple online search. I like to believe that I am thorough in the pursuit of acquiring knowledge; hence, I like to perform cross-references to authenticate the validity of the content, especially reading secondary sources of information. I urge others to do the same before forming personal opinions. Incidentally, Panni's book opened my eyes about the Dajjal in general and how its foretold emergence should be taken into account through people's everyday lives. After all, the coming of the Dajjal is anything but obsolete.

Living with the Beautiful Names of Allah Al-Jameel (The Beautiful, The Graceful)

text by SITI SYUHADA FAIZAL

Al-Jameel comes from the Arabic word that means beauty. Allah (SWT) is Al-Jameel, or The Beautiful, which means that He is beautiful in His divine essence, names, actions, and attributes. This name is reported in a Hadith by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (RA) in which the Prophet (SAW) said, "He who has, in his heart, an ant's weight of arrogance will not enter Jannah." Someone said: "A man likes to wear beautiful clothes and shoes?" Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, "Allah is Beautiful, He loves beauty. Arrogance means ridiculing and rejecting the Truth and despising people." (Sahih Muslim, Riyad-us-Saliheen, Book 1, Hadith 612).

Based on the above hadith, many would be surprised to know that it is in fact not a sin to wear beautiful clothes and shoes, as long as it is done in moderation and one can afford it. Indeed, Allah (SWT) loves beauty and loves for His *ummah* to look smart, presentable, and beautiful, for this reflects Allah's blessing and generosity. In a Hadith, Abu Al-Ahwas' father said that he came to the Prophet (SAW) wearing shabby clothes. The Prophet (SAW) said to him: "Do you have any wealth?" He said: "Yes, all kinds of wealth." He (SAW) said: "What kinds of wealth?" He said: "Allah has given me camels, cattle, sheep, horses and slaves." He (SAW) said: "If Allah has given you wealth, then let the effect of

Allah's blessing and generosity be seen on you." (Sunan An-Nasa'i, Book 48, Hadith 185)

Let us also remember that beauty is not limited to one's physical appearance but also refers to one's internal beauty, i.e. one's manners and characters. Scholar Ibn Qayyim said, "Allah loves His blessings to be manifested upon his creations. And it is from this gratitude in His blessings that shows outer beauty. The internal beauty is from your good manners and character." Indeed, physical beauty may be ephemeral but internal beauty is what we will carry to our grave, *Insha'Allah*. Interestingly, some manners have been described in the Quran as beautiful, such as "beautiful patience" (Surah Yusuf, 12:18) and "beautiful forgiveness" (Surah Al-Hijr, 15:85).

To live with Allah Al-Jameel and apply this holistic concept of beauty in our life, we can first beautify our bodies and clothing by wearing nice, clean, and presentable clothing, thus showing Allah's blessings upon us. This is also an excellent form of *da'wah* when we show the world that Muslims upkeep their hygiene and outward presentation. This is not to say that we should be arrogant about our beauty or seek attention through it; rather, purify our intentions and wear nice clothes because we want to show our gratitude to Allah (SWT) for blessing us.

Secondly, we can beautify our eyes by lowering our gaze when seeing members of the opposite sex, always seeing the good in others, and seeing the positive in difficult situations. Let us also beautify our lips and tongues by speaking the truth and refraining from the evils of the mouth such as backbiting, gossiping, or idle chit-chatting. Let us beautify our voice by constantly reciting the Quran. Let us beautify our ears by listening to the Quran and let us beautify our hands by doing good deeds and helping others.

Lastly, we can beautify our minds by constantly seeking knowledge for the sake of Allah (SWT). We can also beautify our hearts by constantly seeking to purify our intentions with sincere devotion when seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT). This, in turn, will beautify all of our actions and moral conduct, thus making us closer to Allah Al-Jameel.

I will end this article with one of my favourite do'as (supplications) that I recite when looking at myself in the mirror: "O Allah, just as You have made my external features beautiful, make my character beautiful as well". May Allah (SWT) fulfil this do'a for all of us, *Ameen*.

All hadith references were taken from www.sunnah.com.

An Ummah of Moderation

Understand why moderation is the best behaviour for Muslims.

text by NISHAAD TAZKIYA



The characteristics of the worldwide Muslim community (*ummah*) are that they should live their lives and practise their *deen* (way of life) in the most moderate and balanced way.

Allah (SWT) says in the noble Quran, "And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you" (Al-Baqarah, 02:143). In this verse, Allah (SWT) says that He has made this Muslim *ummah* an *ummah* of *wasat*. And no one has the authority to change the objectives of *Wasatiyyah*.

What is the meaning of wasat?
In Arabic, the term *wasat* has three meanings:
1. to be moderate
2. to be in the middle
3. to be the best

Therefore, when Allah (SWT) describes the Muslim *ummah* as a nation that is *wasat*, He means that we are moderate, we are an *ummah* that is in the middle, and that we are the best nation.

The Importance of Moderation
The best way for a Muslim to behave is in moderation. Every

good characteristic has two extreme and bad sides.

For example, generosity is a good and moderate behaviour, and comes between two bad behaviours: on the one side, stinginess, and on the other side, overspending. So humans have been ordered to avoid all bad behaviours. By staying away from two bad behaviours, a person will be exactly in the middle which is the farthest point from each extreme.

As a religion, Islam is the midpoint among all other religions. The Muslims believe in the Messengers of Allah in a moderate way. For

example, they do not go to extremes in their beliefs about the Prophets as the Christians do, nor do they put the Messengers at such a low status, as the Jews do. Muslims should always stand in the middle when it comes to matters of *deen*.

As Muslims, we should encourage people to take a moderate stand, because it will rescue us from transgression. So we find the middle position between two extremes to be the most balanced and just, where a person will find all the benefits and comforts of this worldly life and the Hereafter.

We find that there are many Quranic verses and hadiths of the Prophet (SAW) that order us to be moderate and balanced. They also forbid us from extremism in all matters of life or religion. Below are a few examples.

In the Quran, Allah (SWT) orders us to be moderate when we spend.

- "And let not your hand be tied (like a stingy person) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like the squanderer of money), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty" (Al-Israa, 17:29)
- "And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor stingy, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes)" (Al-Furqan, 25:67)

Allah (SWT) also orders us to be moderate in our food and drink.

- "And eat and drink but do not waste extravagantly; certainly He (Allah) does not like the extravagant" (Al-Araaf, 07:31)

The Messenger (SAW) taught his companions to be moderate in what they say and what they do. He

always made sure that he and his Companions behaved moderately. Whenever any of his Companions went to the extreme with a sincere intention to increase their reward, he used to condemn them and not remain silent. This is because he knew that it contradicted the characteristics of *wasatiyah*: moderation in knowledge and practice. In this way the Messenger (SAW) is a witness over his *ummah* with what he conveyed and guided them with. Below are three hadiths.

- Imam Bukhari (RA) reported that three Companions came to the houses of the Wives (RA) of the Prophet (SAW) to enquire about how much the Prophet (SAW) worshipped. When the men were informed, they considered the amount of worship to be insufficient and said, "Where are we in comparison with the Prophet while Allah has forgiven his past sins and future sins?" One of them said, "As for me, I shall offer prayer all night long." Another said, "I shall observe fasting continuously and shall not break it." Another said, "I shall abstain from women and shall never marry." The Prophet (SAW) came to them and said, "Are you the ones who said such things? By Allah, I fear Allah more than you do, and I am most obedient and dutiful among you to Him. But still I fast (some days) and I don't fast (other days); I pray at night and I also sleep (meaning he does not pray all night); and I married. And whoever does not follow my *sunnah* (way of life) does not belong to me."

- Imam Bukhari (RA) also reported that the Prophet (SAW) made a bond of brotherhood between two Companions, Salman (RA) and Abu Ad-Darda' (RA). Salman went to visit Abu Ad-Darda' and

found Umm Ad-Darda' (his wife) dressed in shabby clothes and asked her why she was in that state. She replied, "Your brother Abu Ad-Darda' is not interested in the luxuries of this world." In the meantime Abu Ad-Darda' came in and prepared a meal for Salman. Salman requested Abu Ad-Darda' to eat with him but Abu Ad-Darda' said, "I am fasting." Salman said, "I am not going to eat, unless you eat." So, Abu Ad-Darda' ate with Salman. When it was night and a part of the night passed, Abu Ad-Darda' got up to offer the night prayer but Salman asked him to sleep and Abu Ad-Darda' slept. When it was the last hours of the night, Salman asked him to get up and both of them prayed *Tahajjud*. Then Salman told Abu Adarda', "Your Lord has a right upon you, your body has a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, and your guest has a right upon you, so you should give to everyone his right." Abu Ad-Darda' came to the Prophet (SAW) and narrated the whole story. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Salman is right."

- Imam Muslim (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAW) warned us by saying, "Ruined are those who insist on hardship in matters of *deen*." He repeated this three times.

Therefore let us, as part of the Muslim *ummah*, keep it in mind to be moderate in our way of life, and strive to strike a balance for our betterment in this worldly life and the Hereafter. **TMR**

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Abrahamic Communities' Joint Journey to Jerusalem

text by HYDER GULAM



Muslim females walking in an alley



The view of the city



Prayer direction



The writer Hyder on the left



This article is about a Joint Journey to Jerusalem that I was invited to undertake with members of the Abrahamic community. Briefly, Rabbi Adam Stein (Kehilat Nitzan Synagogue), Reverend Dr John Dupuche (Catholic Priest), and Sheikh Riad Galil OAM (all from Melbourne, Australia) led a multi-faith Abrahamic group on a 'Joint Journey to Jerusalem' during May 2014. The group consisted of twelve people, four from each of the three Abrahamic faiths, comprising clergy and lay people, men and women. Jerusalem means city of two peace, one of earthly realm, and the other above in heaven. You certainly have a feeling of great energy and spirituality when you walk the

streets of the old city and pray at Masjid Al Aqsa and Domes of the Rock. What is amazing is that unlike other Muslim holy sites, the relics and reminders of the past have not been destroyed.

Interfaith Experience

The purpose of the trip was to visit each other's sacred places in Jerusalem, to study texts from our sacred writings, to discuss points of agreement and disagreement, and so, sense the religious experience that is proper to our faiths. In short, the group well and truly 'met' in the City, which is sacred to all three traditions. All the participants have/had been involved in interfaith work, so we went with a broad platform of understanding, as

well as with open hearts and a willingness to listen to the others' narratives. We also roomed with someone of another faith, which was very special.

I was very excited about this trip, the dates of which coincided with Isra' Miraj (The Night Journey) and also the Pope's visit to Jerusalem. *Alhamdulillah*, we visited each other's holy sites in this blessed city, and to hear from each other and the locals why the sites were significant from the other's perspective.

The list of places of religious and historical significance was really quite amazing, such as: Al Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the



Rock, the Muslim/Jewish/Christian Quarters, Mount of Olives, the Western Wall, Tomb of Mary, Sisters of Zion Convent 'Ecce Homo', Dolorosa, the Holy Sepulchre, the Cenacle, Bethlehem, Al-Quds and Hebrew University. It was amazing to see and learn that 25% of the population of Israel are Arab (both Muslim and Christian), and that a sizeable population of Hebrew University are Arabs.

The other places we visited together, included Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Centre and Museum), and the Hadassah Medical Centre and Hospital. What does it mean when we do not love one another? (to save those escaping persecution). What do we have in common? (illness/death - for example at Hadassah Hospital Jews and Arabs work together as staff; Jews and Arabs share the same wards, comfort one another, listen to one another within the common experiences of grief or fear).

The Common Longing for Peace

There were many highlights, one being attending a Friday night Jewish Shabbat service, and afterwards having a meal with a family. The passionate singing was very moving, and the intensity of the prayers was amazing, and I could hear echoes of my Muslim

supplication. Each day would conclude with a long period of debriefing about the day, and then briefing for the following day. There were many laughs, some tears, and a common longing for peace, not only in Jerusalem, but also in the wider world. We may not have brought world peace, but the groups we spoke with, and listened to, were amazed that representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths were traveling together. Why not? We are family, and should we not get to know one another and share a common word in dialogue?

We met a great diverse cross section of humanity, from the Muslim families who are the custodians of the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (which is the holiest place in Christendom), to ordinary residents of Jerusalem. From the Palestinians I met, the only words they asked me to share were to ask fellow Muslims around the world to visit them, no matter what the obstacles. One can certainly see the hardship and difficulty that they live under, but they ask no more than for their fellow Muslims to visit them and keep them in their prayers.

The personal highlight for me was the amazing feeling at Dome

of the Rock, on the night of Isra' Miraj, to share in the 1,000 year tradition of praise of Allah (SWT) and remembrance of the Prophet (SAW), and in keeping all-night vigil in . This was the place that many Prophets (AS) have walked on and prayed to our Lord.

There are certainly challenges in dealing with the interfaith environment (that is, with other religions and their believers), and dare I say it with intra-faith (which is how we deal with the Muslim groups within Islam). It is easy to be negative, judgmental and scathing of others who may not share your beliefs, culture or experiences. But, we have to learn to live together and create a brother and sister-hood of man. Otherwise, we are doomed to keep on fighting each other, and in that process, forgetting that our Lord is both Beneficent and Merciful. Our religion is Peace, so let us be the first to give peace to others. The Joint Journey to Jerusalem was one humble step towards peace. *Insha'Allah*, we hope to organise something similar from Singapore.

TMR

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If you want to learn more about the Journey, please visit the Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Understanding-Each-Other-Joint-Journey-to-Jerusalem-18-27-May-2014/640696559311315>

On courtesy and humility,Allah (SWT) has said,

... ascribe not purity to yourselves - (For) He knows best who it is that guards against evil.



Translation of the Quran
An-Najm
(The Star)
53:32



ONE-MINUTE DAWAH

Spread the message of peace through our actions

#1. BE COURTEOUS. GREET ANYONE YOU MEET
IN THE LIFT AND LIFT LOBBY



Show the kindness and beauty of Islam beyond media stereotypes