



IQRA'



Newsletter of The Islamic Center of South Jersey

612 Garfield Ave., Palmyra, NJ 08065; Tel: 865 786 7440

Volume 1, Issue 1

December 5, 2008

Edited by Dr. Rafey Habib

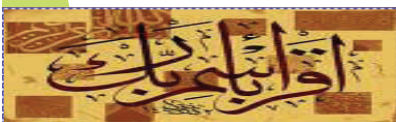
Editorial

Amina Syed and 'Aisha Muneen

Assalamu 'alaikum, and welcome to the first issue of *Iqra'*. This newsletter represents part of the general effort of our community and our masjid to disseminate an accurate portrayal of the religion of Islam as a religion of peace, equality and harmony for all human beings. In this and other issues, we will be looking at various aspects of Islam, including the connections of Islam with other faiths, the challenges of living as a Muslim in the West, and the various dilemmas that confront us in the modern world.

One problem faced by many of the world's Muslims today is their inability to understand the Arabic of the *Qur'an*. We often talk about how Islam is misunderstood in the West; but it is a sad fact that we ourselves are often ignorant about some of the important elements of our own religion. We would surely benefit from an attempt to study and understand the profound meanings of this Holy Book. As we will see in a later issue of this newsletter, the Prophet (SAW) placed a high value on knowledge and he insisted that when we talk of the *Qur'an*, our knowledge must be accurate and informed. To this

Continued on page 2



The Prophet Ibrahim (AS): Father of Three Faiths: Rafey Habib

The prophet Abraham (AS) has a crucial role in Islamic belief and practice. The Qur'an refers to him as the friend of God (4:125) and the father of prophets; Muslims believe that he is one of the ancestors of the prophet Muhammad (S). The prophet Muhammad and his companions believed in Abraham as the founder of their faith Muslims regard him as the last in a series of prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, all of whom appear in the *Qur'an*. This central role of Abraham is indicated in many ways. Muslims are required to pray five times a day, and in every single prayer they are required to ask God to send his blessings upon the prophet Abraham and his

family. Even more importantly, the direction in which Muslims pray in Mecca is facing a building – the Ka'bah – which they believe was built by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael (II, 127). The prophet Muhammad (S) told his followers that the traditions and rituals of the pilgrimage were descended from the prophet Abraham. At the pilgrimage Muslims also commemorate Abraham's wife Hajira in her search for water, and also the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac for the sake of the Lord.

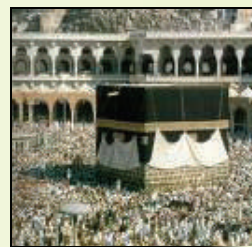
The prophet Abraham is traditionally regarded as the

father of the Jewish people, as recorded in the story of Genesis. In the New Testament he is also regarded as the father of Christianity by

Matthew who traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham. In the Gospel of John (8: 39) Jesus encourages practising the

virtues attributed to Abraham. And St. Paul wrote of all those who have faith being the sons of Abraham (Gal: 3:7).

The Bible and the Qur'an on Abraham: The Bible tells us that when Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said: "Behold, my covenant is with



Continued on page 4



Hadith of the Month: Selected by Br. Abdul Rasheed

"When Allah decreed the Creation He pledged Himself by writing in His book which is laid down with Him: My mercy prevails over my wrath."

"The fist of his actions for which a servant of Allah

will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded: and if they are wanting, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, the

Lord (glorified and exalted be He) will say: See if My servant has any supererogatory prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in like fashion."

Editorial continued from page 1

end, we will, inshallah, be starting Arabic classes at the Islamic Center in January 2009; Sister Suad has kindly agreed to teach these on a voluntary basis, and inshallah our community will avail itself of this opportunity.

We welcome your feedback and input, as well as any submissions you have for future issues. Please send us any poignant hadith you may find, or quotations from the Qur'an, any inspirational personal stories concerning you and your children, any interesting links about Islam and articles or information that might be useful to the community. We are grateful to Dr. Habib's colleague Ms. Emily Corse for her kind help. Please write to us if you have any questions or problems.

Jazakallah, and we will be in touch in the next issue.

Amina and 'Aisha

Announcements

Eid Lunch

1:00 PM To 4:00PM Sunday,
21st December 2008 at the
Savoy Banquet Hall
(Formerly Woodbine Inn),
Pennsauken, NJ

YM Girls Bowling Trip
December 6, 2008 at Laurel
Lanes 4:30-6:30 PM

YM Girls Bake Sales:
Every Sunday during Break

FOOD DRIVE We are having a food drive to help the hungry in the local community. Please donate generously by bringing canned food to the Center.

Reflection upon Hajj: Br. Abdul Rasheed

The month of Dhul-Hijjah is one of the sacred months in which certain days are prescribed to perform Hajj. During this period millions of believers gather in Mecca to perform the rituals of Hajj. To acquire the full benefit of the spirit of Hajj, it is important to reflect upon the Seerah of Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam and the reasons of the rituals of Hajj.

The life of Ibrahim Aleh Salaam was totally dedicated to Allah. His whole life is an example of sacrifice, obedience and submission to the Will of Allah, who says in Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayah 124: *"Remember that when Ibrahim (Abraham) was tested by his Lord with certain commands, he fulfilled them. Allah said: "Surely, I will make you the leader of mankind." "What about my offspring?" Asked Ibrahim. "My pledge," said Allah," will not apply to the evil doers."*

From early youth to old age Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam went through trials and hardships, and he demonstrated patience and obedience to Allah in several important situations:

1. His own father turned against him:
"Relate to them the story of Ibrahim from the Book (The Qur'an), he was a truthful Prophet. Remember when he said to his father: "O my father! Why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see, nor yet profit you in any way? O my father! I have been given some knowledge which has not come to you, so follow me: I will guide you to the Right Way. O my father! Do not worship Shaitan: for Shaitan is disobedient to the Compassionate (Allah). O my father! I fear that a punishment of the Beneficent may afflict you, and you may become a friend of the Shaitan".

These Ayahs show just how much Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam loved his father and how polite he was in giving the message of Allah. But his father did not pay any attention to his words of wisdom and threatened to kill him.

"His father replied: "How dare you renounce my gods O Ibrahim? If you do not stop this folly, I will indeed stone you to death: so be gone from my house this very moment!"
(Surah Maryum; 19:41-46)

2. When Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam had broken all the idols except the largest one, his people intended to inflict upon him a severe punishment. They prepared a blazing fire to burn Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam. They thought that when Ibrahim saw this fire he would come to his senses and change his mind. Little did they know, Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam had complete faith in his Lord. Allah ordered the fire to be cool and comfortable for Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam. The plot of the disbelievers failed and actually they were the losers. Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam came out of the fire without any harm. *"They exclaimed, "Burn him alive and avenge your gods, if you want to take any action." When they threw him in the fire, We commanded, "O fire! Be cool and comfortable for Ibrahim." They sought to harm him, but We made them the big losers."*
(Surah Al-Anbiya; 21:68-70)



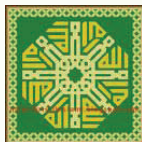
3. He had to migrate to another town: *"We delivered him and his nephew Lut (Lot) and directed them to the land which We have blessed for all the people of the world."*
(Surah Al-Anbiya; 21:71)

4. When Allah commanded him to take his wife Hajra and infant child Ismail to a distant unknown land, he and his family submitted to the Will of Allah. When Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam was leaving Hajra Aleh-Salaam in a desert where there was no water food or shelter, all she asked was: "Is this the command of your Lord?." Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam shook his head in affirmation, and she said then He will take care of us.
5. When the only son Ismail Aleh-Salaam reached the age to help his father, Ibrahim

Youth Corner

Muin Syed:

“Shaitan Can't Touch Me So Easily Now”
 On broken paths I walk my mark,
 As I hear whispers in the dark
 Hearing voices in my head,
 I walk to live from the dead (of heart):
 No more whispers of who, what, and how?
 Because Shaitan can't touch me so easily now
 The candle, a small sliver of light
 Shining in the dark, holding hands with light.
 And now I walk as I pick up the pace
 On broken paths of love as I make haste
 The candle still shining, the footsteps chiming.
 As I strive to my Lord, through the darkness I'm
 climbing
 Only for Allah's (swt) light I bow
 Because Shaitan can't touch me so easily now.
 At last I stand at the top of my height
 Darkness vanquished turning night into light,
 A vision so clear and his light so near
 There is now only hope and nothing to fear:
 No more whispers of who, what, and how?
 Because Shaitan can't touch me so easily now.



Hamza Farooq:

O dear Muslims, if you were sincere
 and trod the path of the righteous,
 The living among you,
 would have fallen in love,
 with Islam, the true faith.
 If you practised it the true way,
 Your manners were the best
 in what you thought and what you said.
 Just looking at you,
 they would know the beauty
 in Islam.
 What will we say to our beloved
 Prophet (May Allah's peace and blessings
 be upon him)
 on Judgment Day?
 Will he have a smile
 on his face for us?
 Or will he turn away?
 O Muslims, pray not only for your families:
 Pray for the Ummah.

Hajj continued from page 2

Aleh-Salaam had a vision: *“When he reached the age to work with him, Ibrahim said to him: “O my son! I have seen a vision that I should offer you as a sacrifice, now tell me what your view is.” He replied: “O my father! Do as you are commanded: you will find me, if Allah so wills, of the patient. And when they both submitted to Allah and Ibrahim laid down his son prostrate upon his forehead for sacrifice; We called out to him: “O Ibrahim stop! You have fulfilled your vision.” Thus do We reward the righteous. That was indeed a manifest test. ” (Surah As-Saffat; 37:102-106)*

The son was as obedient to Allah as father. This is the life of Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam: Allah granted him the status of Imam of all the nations and honored him with the status of *“Khalil Allah,”* the friend of Allah.

The Rituals of Hajj

Meeqat: A place from where Hajj starts. People from all around the world come to Meeqat. People from different parts of the world wearing different dresses of their nationality say good bye to their individuality. Everyone puts on the same garment, *ihram*, two pieces of white plain, unstitched cloth. There is no differentiation of nationality or status. This is how we will be meeting our Lord, Malik-e-yaumid-Din, on the Day of Judgment. We wear no perfume, no adornment, in simplicity, humility and modesty. We make the intention to be aware that what we are doing is to please Allah. We forget the different languages we speak. Everyone speaks only one language: *“Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk”* One dress, one language: all the barriers of this world are broken; we are in a different world. From here we start our journey towards the House of Allah, Bait-ul-Atiq, The Ka'bah.

The Ka'bah: This is a very simple cubicle building made of stones, the magnificence of which cannot be expressed in words. When we see it our heart is pounding and our feelings cannot be described. We feel the love of Allah, the Grace and Mercy of Allah. Hajera Aleh-Salaam migrated with her infant son to this land which was barren, rugged, without vegetation and water. She relied on her Lord. Later Ibrahim and Ismail Aleh-Salaam rebuilt the Ka'bah at the Command of Allah. They were praying to their Lord:

“Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) raised the foundations of the House and dedicated it by saying: “Accept this from us, O Rabb, You are the one who hears all and knows all. O Rabb, make us both Muslims (submissive to You); and make our descendants a nation that will be Muslims (submissive to You). Teach us our rites of worship and forbear our shortcomings; surely, You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Merciful. O Rabb, appoint from among them a Rasul who shall recite to them Your Revelations and teach them the Book and the Wisdom and sanctify them; surely, You are the Almighty, the Wise.” (Surah Al-Baqarah; 2:127-129)

Allah accepted their supplication and here we are the Ummah of that Rasul (saw) for whom Ibrahim and Ismail Aleh-Salaam prayed. We perform Tawaaf, we forget ourselves and become a drop in the ocean of people. Everyone has only one purpose. We complete our Tawaaf and come to Maqam-e-Ibrahim and offer 2 Rakahs of Salat. *“Remember when We made the House (the Ka'bah) a center and sanctuary for mankind saying, “Take the station of Ibrahim as a place of prayer;” We entrusted Ibrahim and Isma'il to cleanse Our House for those who walk around it, who meditate in it, and who kneel and prostrate in prayers.”(Surah Albaqarah; 2:125)*

Sa'iy: We run between Safa and Marwa which is Sa'iy. Sa'iy means searching, movement with an aim. Hajera Aleh-Salaam was running between these two hills searching for water. She ran between these two hills seven times. She came to see if her infant son was safe; she heard the sound of gushing water. This is *“Zamzam,”* the water which millions of people have been using for thousands of years.

When we perform Sa'iy, what are we searching for? It is not water, there is abun-

Ibrahim (AS): Continued from page 1

you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations...your name shall be Abraham" (17: 4-5). Of the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the Lord says to Abraham: "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael...behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation" (17: 19-20)

In the *Qur'an*, God is quoted as saying to Abraham: "I will make thee/An Imam to the nations" (II, 124) ["Imam" means leader, model, pattern]. It also warns that it is folly to turn away from the religion of Abraham (II, 130). The *Qur'an* admonishes the prophet Muhammad to say: "(I would rather follow) the religion of Abraham the True,/And he joined not gods with God"(II, 135). Here is a passage that is worth quoting in full. The *Qur'an* instructs Muhammad (S) and his followers to say:

**ﷻ will make thee
An Imam
to the nations**

We believe
In God, and in what
Has been revealed to us
And what was revealed
To Abraham, Ismail,
Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,
And in (the Books)
Given to Moses, Jesus
And the Prophets
From their Lord:
We make no distinction
Between one and another
Among them, and to God do we
Bow our will (in Islam)

(III, 84)

These passages from the *Qur'an* show clearly that, while the account of the prophet Abraham is not identical in all of its details with that of the Bible, the prophet Abraham (AS) occupies a uniquely revered position in Islam, as the father of the three faiths, the distant ancestor of Muhammad (S) himself, and as an ideal or exemplary human being in his submission to the will of God.

That is why Muslims regard the prophet Abraham as a Muslim: the word Muslim literally means someone who submits entirely to the will of God, the Most High.



Haji: Continued from page 3

dance of it. We are seeking the spiritual water, the faith, the love of Allah, the hope in Allah which Hajera Aleh-Salaam had in her Lord. Every time we reach the top of each hill we adore Allah, praise Allah, acknowledge His Sovereignty, ask for guidance, His forgiveness and blessings

"Behold! Safa and Marwah (two hills in the Sacred Mosque) are among the symbols of Allah. So anyone who performs Hajj or Umrah (pilgrimage) to the House, there is no blame if one goes around both of them; and anyone who does good voluntarily should know that surely Allah knows the grateful."

Arafat: This word means knowledge, and represents the beginning of man's creation and his end. We stand in the plain of Arafat a picture of humility and devotion. This is how we will be standing in front of our Lord on the Day of Judgment, in plain white unstitched pieces of cloth, humble, helpless and waiting for the Judgment. Here in Arafat we make supplication: O our Lord! I seek your refuge from the torment of the grave, from the punishment of hell fire. A day is spent in Arafat making supplications, and the night is spent in Muzdalifah reflecting on ourselves, making more supplications and getting ready to fight the Shaitan.

Rami is to throw and hit a target. Shaitan tried to make Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam stray from his task. He won over Shaitan, who tried again and again, but Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam was absolutely obedient and devoted to Allah; Ismail must be sacrificed. We symbolically throw stones at Jamrat, which is the Shaitan within us over whom we want to win. It is Shaitan within our nafs that we want to get rid of. If we have done that we are successful.

Sacrifice (Qurbani): Ponder upon what Ibrahim Aleh-Salaam was asked to sacrifice, the most beloved thing among his possessions. If we love something more than Allah, then that thing has become our idol and we must be ready to sacrifice that for the love of Allah. Are we ready to sacrifice our worldly desires, our worldly love? If we are, then our Qurbani, our Hajj is Mabroor.



The ICSJ would like to take this opportunity to state in the strongest terms its condemnation of the recent attacks in Mumbai. Such acts are contrary to the teachings of Islam, no matter what their perpetrators claim. We call on Muslims and non-Muslims alike to engage in rational mutual understanding and dialogue.

For further information, please contact us at 8567867440 or icsj@verizon.net. If you would like to submit an article or announcement, please send it to mhabib@camden.rutgers.edu

