

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over ninety years

July – September 2013

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel
misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to
facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆

The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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Editor: Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

Circulation: Mrs. Samina Malik.

Contact information:

'The Light', P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

Phone: 614 – 873 1030 • **Fax:** 614 – 873 1022

E-mails: aaiil@aol.com

Website: www.muslim.org

The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words **La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah** (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
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Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: **Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

Rebutting Obsession (Part 1)

**Historical Facts Topple Film's Premise
That Violent Muslim Fundamentalists
are Nazis' Heirs, Expose its Fear-mongering**

**By Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak, Eli Clifton,
Jane Hunter and Robin Podolsky,**

[This article was originally published in November 2008 by JewsOnFirst, an organization dedicated to the protection of the separation of church and state under the First Amendment. The article is a devastating critique of the 2005 film titled "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West", which was delivered to people for free with local newspapers in various swing states leading up to the 2008 Presidential election. As the non-profit interfaith coalition Hate Hurts America argued, the film "cast[s] a wide net of suspicion against Muslims by blurring the line between violent radicalism and mainstream Islam." In this article, the authors (who are presumably all Jews) meticulously dismantle the fear-mongering objective of the film by presenting an historical account as to what led to current day conditions as well as identifying logical fallacies in the film's approach. Although the article deals with rebutting the film specifically, it is a valuable educational tool for rebutting the "clash of civilizations" theory in general. Produced below is Part 1 of article; Part 2 will be published in the Oct-Dec 2013 issue]

Whose Obsession And With What?

The film, *Obsession*, purports to be about national security issues; but it does not offer the kind of careful analysis that such crucially important topics deserve. Instead, it offers an agenda-driven combination of emotionally laden images, distortions, omissions and, deliberately or not, outright misstatements. It is our assertion that this film's title, *Obsession*, works as a command as much as a description. We believe that the attitudes and ideologies appearing to drive the film are mirror images of those that the makers of *Obsession* impute to what they dub "radical Islam:" a unifying, objectifying fear and hatred of a collection of disparate countries, religious orientations, ethnicities and political cliques that combines them into one powerful, inexplicable, alien enemy — one that, the film hints ominously, includes our Muslim fellow citizens and recent immigrants to our country. At a time of transition and economic pain for the United States, *Obsession* builds an epic narrative that allows the viewer to project all of his or her real and various fears and anxieties onto one externalized, hated foe.

Most dangerously, the film is structured to belie its ostensible disclaimer of any intention to portray the

entirety of Islam as a violent and hateful religion. Stock footage of Muslims bowing in prayer or circling the Ka'aba at Mecca are interspersed with frightening images of gun-wielding youths and speakers who misuse traditional Islamic concepts such as jihad to incite violence. Eerie, "Middle Eastern"-sounding world-beat music sets off both sets of clips.

The frankly anti-Islamic message of *Obsession* is most apparent when the viewer is being warned about the "danger at home." Undercutting the narrators' assurances that the masses of peaceful, "good" Muslims are not to blame and ought not to feel insulted by any insinuation they might infer from *Obsession*, is the repetition of the word "infiltrated," and the frightening message that the saboteurs among us may be indistinguishable by dress, manner or any outward sign — save that they are Muslim. To understand why this is dangerous, one need only remember the situation, during World War II, of Japanese Americans and the stigma faced earlier in the 20th century by non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, including Jews¹. Anyone needing reassurance after viewing *Obsession* might find it in remembering the degree to which all of those groups have, after all the fuss, helped to shape and become shaped by the culture of our country.

The Worst Accusation

Key to the *Obsession* narrative is an attempt to portray violent Islamic fundamentalism as a seamless continuation of Nazi fascism. *Obsession* strafes us with images, such as recurrent footage of the 9/11 attacks conflated with film from the Holocaust, to which we can't help but respond viscerally. It means to conflate outrage against these crimes with an acceptance of the very particular politics of the film, and to imply that a failure to accept the latter is a betrayal of the victims of the former. We are asked to forget the Cold War decades that elapsed between World War II and the rise of violent fundamentalism in the Middle East in order to associate that fundamentalism with the movement that in the West has become a key signifier of radical evil.

The argument that what *Obsession's* pundits persist in calling "radical Islam" is a direct ideological descendant of Nazi fascism, depends, as we will show, on staggering omissions and distortions. Any viewer who is effectively dissuaded from carrying on further research by fear of what the talking heads of *Obsession* dub political correctness, and what others might call a healthy curiosity, might come away from *Obsession* with a picture of history in which whole decades — those in which the Cold War and the struggles for independence by formerly colonized nations that configured much of international politics — never happened.

Obsession's invocation of the now familiar right-wing meme, "politically correct" is augmented with

pseudo-psychological reflections about “denial.” That discussion is punctuated with an image that has an inescapable, visceral effect on most Americans and any Jew watching the film: footage of a ranting Adolf Hitler. Itamar Marcus² of Palestinian Media Watch compares “the press” of today to Neville Chamberlain. The makers of *Obsession* wish for its audience to commit to the idea that “radical Islam” represents the sort of threat (that word is repeated over and over by the talking heads) that the Nazis did — and to regard their Muslim American neighbors with the suspicion that they might harbor within themselves just that degree of evil. The film juxtaposes footage of Hitler youth with awful scenes of very young children in Muslim and Arab societies purportedly being taught to envision themselves as soldiers and to parrot statements of deep contempt for Jews. (A professional translator has determined that, in at least one such scene that purports to children preparing to become suicide bombers, the on-screen translation is skewed to the point of misrepresentation. Please see *Obsession’s* Translation Errors: www.jewsonfirst.org/Obsession/translation.html.)

Some of the most repulsive footage shown is taken from a Syrian movie made for satellite television called *Al-Shatat*. The film presents the ancient blood libel, first propagated by the medieval Christian church, that Jews slaughter Christian children in order to use their blood in making the Passover ritual bread. However, even Bernard Lewis, advocate of the “clash of civilizations” theory, indicates that such imagery did not gain immediate currency among Muslims during World War II but has increased dramatically since the 1967 war leading to the occupation and military rule by Israel, of land inhabited by Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens.³ It is imperative to bear in mind that, before the military conflicts occasioned by the establishment of the state of Israel, the Christian blood libel was almost unheard-of among Muslims. Most Muslim countries contained sizable Jewish populations that had been mostly stable for centuries, albeit, as minority cultures, vulnerable.

It is not our purpose here to try to untangle the knot of national awakenings, religious imperatives and material needs that came into conflict between nascent Israelis and Palestinians in the 20th century or to go into questions of what might have been done differently. We may simply observe that many Arabs in what the British occupiers called the Palestinian Mandate in the years before 1948 were excited at the prospect that their European overlords would leave the land and unwilling to accept a new influx of people whom they perceived as Western occupiers. On their own side, increasing numbers of Jews who entered Palestine as Nazism grew stronger and Eastern Europe roiled with political conflict considered themselves to be returning, in an hour

of great need, to their legitimate, long-awaited homeland and could not perceive a difference between those Arabs who met them with hostility and the violent anti-Semites who had attacked them in the Diaspora.

Much is made, in *Obsession*, of the alliance, during World War II between the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and Adolf Hitler, and of the participation in the war of a brigade of Bosnian Muslims, on the Nazi side. (No mention is made of those Bosnian Muslims, who risked their lives in the anti-Nazi resistance; for example, the famous Dervis Korkut, who risked his life to save the *Sarajevo Haggadah*.⁴) Indeed, John Loftus, perhaps the most radical of *Obsession’s* pundits, asserts — with no evident documentation — that Muslims came from all over the Arab world to fight for the Nazis.

There is no question that the Mufti collaborated with the Nazis. Because of their hatred for Jews, al-Husseini saw in the Nazis allies for his central fight, resistance to what he considered European colonialism in the form of Zionism — which stood as an impediment to an independent Palestinian state. *Obsession* implies that their shared antipathy toward Jews amounted to a unique sort of ideological agreement between the Mufti and the Nazi regime. However, while overarching conflicts do shape global events, alliances do not divide up neatly on the basis of seamless ideological agreement.

What might be regarded either as the Mufti’s opportunism or as his engagement with *realpolitik* had its many duplicates in the leaders of countries and political factions that are now regarded as allies of the West. For example, in Latvia, Estonia and other Eastern European collaborator states, there is little doubt that a shared cultural hatred of Jews, who were portrayed by local rightists and the new “liberating” Nazis as the beneficiaries of the previous Soviet occupation of the Baltic states, existed. During the Soviet occupation of September 1939 through June 1941, Gentile and Jewish Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were sent to Siberia, but the old anti-Semitic tropes sufficed to help to fuel the idea of Jewish special privileges. Yet there is very much doubt that the makers of *Obsession* would want to paint current NATO allies or pro-United States members of the European Union as incipient fascists — or intractable anti-Semites.

Other examples abound. Several key fighters for Irish independence from Britain, including figures who were prominent in the mainstream Irish party, Fianna Fail, and in the Irish Republican Army, which now shares a government with its formerly hated Protestant rivals, traveled to Germany during WWII. They sought friendly relations with the country that they regarded as a useful ally against their main enemy, England,⁵ as did the anti-British Iraqi rebel, Rashid Ali al-Kailani. The

Finnish government not only fought with Germany on the Eastern Front but also fielded Jewish troops to fight by side-by-side with Nazis.⁶ (The protracted contemplation of that fact might make some members of *Obsession's* intended audience far more nauseous than repeated viewings of *Al-Shatat* ever could.) Questions remain about whether Pope Pius XII⁷, a possible candidate for sainthood, refrained from challenging the Nazi regime openly because he regarded the Bolsheviks to be a worse evil. For that matter, anti-Zionists often point gleefully to those Zionists who worked with the German government to get Jews out of the country and into Palestine in order to save their lives.⁸

All of these forces and factions found points of agreement with which to appeal to the Nazi government to form practical arrangements based on what they believed to be their political and existential interests. Anthropologist Osama Doumani, who lived in Palestine during the war, writes that the Mufti's "pro-German stance represented an extant sentiment of a section of the Palestinian people at the time, certainly not a position held by all." Writes Doumani: "Most Palestinians in the 1930s were still rural, illiterate or semi-literate people, living off the land. Even the townsfolk had no idea what Hitler stood for or what Nazism was all about. They would have been horrified to learn that he classified them, along with the Jews, toward the bottom of humanity!"

A look at the book, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, by Idith Zertal⁹, indicates that David Ben-Gurion (Israel's first prime minister, from May 14, 1948 until 1963) was one of the first Jewish political figures to make much of the Mufti's alliance with Hitler; he did so in the context of Israel's trial of Nazi administrator Adolf Eichmann in 1961 in service of the idea that only a strong, militarized Israel could protect world Jewry against the ongoing threat of anti-Semitism. According to Zertal, Ben-Gurion wanted to unite, in the public mind, the centuries-long history of European Jew-hatred with the newly kindled antagonism between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East in order to resist all political attempts to replace his government with one more sympathetic to the claims of Israel's Arab citizens and neighbors or with displaced Arab refugees. This move was an attempt to invest Ben-Gurion's political direction with the moral authority accorded to the struggles against Nazism and anti-Semitism. Zertal reports that State Prosecutor Gideon Hausner over-stressed the Mufti's role in his interrogation of Eichmann on the orders of Ben-Gurion. Zertal indicates that, while Hitler and the advantages he could offer may have been important to al-Husseini, the Mufti was never of great importance to Hitler or to his staff.

It is worth noting here how strongly Ben-Gurion and his political allies objected to Hannah Arendt's well-known book about the Eichmann trial, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*¹⁰; in particular to Arendt's devastating portrait of Eichmann, not as a fascinating monster, but as a mediocre little man who supervised mass murder with the same striving diligence that he would have devoted to the export of paper clips, a corporate team player whose sole genius was in organization and who could only express himself in clichés. It is striking how offensive this portrait of Eichmann became to those who were engaged in spinning a grand narrative of an ongoing heroic battle. What looks to be the current hunger of the makers of *Obsession* for an epic struggle with a suitably impressive opponent resembles Ben-Gurion's desire for a hideously impressive adversary to figure in the narrative of the need for his leadership.

World War II demonstrated how geopolitics makes for bedfellows that, looking backward, can appear very strange. We could find further illustrations of this idea by looking at the period that is entirely elided in *Obsession*, the decades of the Cold War. The great divide between West and East after World War II ended, and until the fall of the Soviet Union, was not about Islam but about political and economic systems and access to raw materials. It is well to remember, in this context, that for a brief period, the emergent state of Israel was courted by the Soviets as much as by the United States, which had come out of the war as the West's dominant power. Following the United States, the Soviet Union was the second nation to recognize Israel. Things changed, of course, as Israel became aligned firmly with the US and the longstanding cultural anti-Semitism of Russia and Eastern Europe became conflated with the USSR's anti-religiosity. For much of this period, the dominant trends in the Arab world and within countries in which Islam was the majority religion were secular nationalism, including Pan-Arabism, and various sorts of Marxism. The program of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, for example, which emerged as the dominant voice and leading faction of the Palestinian national movement called, before acceding to a two-state solution, for the replacement of Israel, not with an Islamic state, but with a democratic secular state in which no religion would be distinguished with special prerogatives.¹¹

As the alliance between the United States and Israel strengthened, each country shared with the other its own particular unpopularity in the Middle East. As bulwarks against Soviet influence, the United States threw its support behind several hated dictators, including Saddam Hussein and the autocratic shah of Iran. Of course, for its part, the Soviet Union also was involved with equally

atrocious dictators such as Syria's Hafiz Assad and, eventually, found itself bogged down in a seemingly endless war of conquest in Afghanistan. Soviet brutality and contempt for Afghan independence fostered hatred, not only of socialist and left-wing movements but also for modernist Western-influenced culture.¹²

After 1967, the state of Israel took over land that was mostly owned by Palestinians but had been governed, uneasily and violently, by the king of Jordan. Israel maintained a policy opposed to the establishment of a neighboring Palestinian state and fought a constantly simmering, and sometimes boiling, war against Palestinian forces, in particular the PLO's government in exile, based primarily in refugee camps in Lebanon. This PLO infrastructure maintained hospitals, libraries, social welfare organizations and many other community functions. The Palestinians, while officially supported in their aspirations by most Arab regimes, were often engaged in confrontations with those governments. Their movements tended to oppose such traditional hierarchal regimes as those in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Itinerant workers and businesspeople, with an average level of education higher than that in much of the Middle East, Palestinians tended to make trouble, forming labor unions, organizing students and despising monarchies on principle.¹³

In the 1980s, both the United States and Israel hit on the strategy of encouraging religious social movements as counter-forces to those — the Soviets and the PLO — they opposed. Fundamentalist movements that would evolve into the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Hamas were aided and, in some cases funded, by American and Israeli intelligence forces.¹⁴ (Ironically, according to Osama Doumani, the Fatah movement of the PLO had initially received some covert support from Israel in the hope that it would be a counterforce to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).) This support for fundamentalist Islamic groups coincided with the Lebanon war, in which much of the PLO infrastructure was destroyed. Generally speaking, religion began to replace nationalism after 1967. Islamic fundamentalism picked up steam in Egypt under Anwar Sadat in the early 1970s because he wanted to counter the Nasserites by promoting the Muslim Brotherhood, and was further advanced in 1979 by the rise to power, in Iran, of a government that granted significant state power to conservative mullahs, such as Ayatollah Khomeini. Hamas, as an organization, appeared in the ninth month of the first intifada, September 1988. Hezbollah and other Shi'ite resistance appeared in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the expulsion of the PLO.¹⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the carnage in Lebanon, and the doubts and divisions growing within

the nationalist left, created conditions in which fundamentalist forces were able to grow and to position themselves as a new, vigorous and wholesome force that would battle internal corruption along with all external forces that sought dominion.¹⁶ We see none of this history presented in *Obsession*. Instead, toward the end of the movie, footage of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center is intercut with scenes from the Holocaust. The emotional power of each set of images builds our vulnerability to the impact of the next. ■

Endnotes

1. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, Penguin: New York 1989, pg. 30, 148, 201, 231, 328-329. Naomi W. Cohen "Friends in Court: An American Jewish Response to Antisemitism" in *Living with Anti-Semitism: Modern Jewish Responses* (Brandeis University and University Press of New England: 1987). Edited by Jehuda Reinharz. Pgs. 316 and 317.
2. Marcus, who resides in the occupied territory, once worked on staff for David Bar Illan, communications director for Benjamin Netanyahu. According to an article in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, January 2, 2001, by Akiva Eldar, "What Did You Learn in School Today, Palestinian Child," Marcus has continued to blame "Palestinian textbooks" for teaching hatred of Jews, even though the first textbooks printed by the Palestinian Authority — as alternatives to the Egyptian and Jordanian books that contained the objectionable messages — have deleted all stereotypical references to Jews as "treacherous" and, also, all calls for the destruction of Israel. This lack of attention to important changes in the facts does not speak well of Marcus' analytical precision.
3. "Anti-Semitism in the 21st Century, Public Broadcasting System, first aired in January 2007.
4. *The New Yorker* website, reviewing Geraldine Brooks', *Chronicles*, "The Book of Exodus," *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2007, p. 74.
5. Irish Nationalism website (irish-nationalism.net/forum/showthread.php?t=5965)
6. "Jews in Finland During the Second World War." Tuulikki Vuonokari (Autumn 2003) English-language section website.
7. Eugenio Pacelli, the 260th pope from March 2, 1939 until his death in 1958.
8. *Holocaust: A History*, by Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, see especially pp. 113-114.
9. *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (University of Cambridge: 2005). Pages 100-110 are especially pertinent.
10. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Classics: 2006. In particular, see Chapter VIII: The Duties of a Law-Abiding Citizen.
11. *U.S. News and World Report*, December 5, 1997; *The New York Times*, November 8, 1983, "Foreign Affairs: A Report to Rumsfeld," by Flora Lewis. Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: People, Power and*

- Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 16. The secular democratic solution was declared by the PLO on January 1, 1968.
12. Ivan Watson. "Experts: Lessons of Soviets in Afghanistan Ignored," National Public Radio, June 6, 2008.
 13. Marvin Weinbaum. "The United States and Afghanistan: From Marginality to Global Concerns," in David W. Lesch, editor, *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Assessment*, 4th edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007 pp. 462-482, James Gelvin, *The Israel – Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years* (Cambridge Press, 2007) especially Chapter 9 pp. 196 – 228 "The Palestinian National Movement Comes of Age" and Chapter 10 pp. 229 – 255. "Coming Full Circle: Oslo and Its Aftermath." Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 188-191.
 14. *The New York Times*, March 15, 1996, "Roots of Terror" by John Kifner. Avi Schlaim *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (Norton Press: 2000), especially p. 459.
 15. Ziad Abu Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.
 16. *Ibid.* *The New York Times*, March 15, 1996, "Roots of Terror" by John Kifner. Avi Schlaim *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (Norton Press: 2000), especially pg. 459.

Islam and Human Rights

by Zahid Aziz

[This article is a transcript of a talk delivered at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, on November 17, 2012. In this article, Dr. Zahid Aziz presents an enlightening account of the principles of human rights as pronounced in the Holy Quran. From freedom of religion, to democratic governance, to fair and equal treatment and even due process, the Holy Quran is replete with detailed guidance on all aspects of what is today considered necessary to effectuate universal human rights. The article also provides an opportunity to reflect on the unfortunate stark difference between the distinguished ideals entrenched in Islam's holy scripture and what is practiced in much of the Muslim world today.]

Human Rights are, by definition, accorded to people on the basis that they have these rights in their capacity as humans. They are such a creation that, to play their role in life, to fulfil their naturally-endowed aspirations, they stand in utter and dire need of these rights. If Islam acknowledges and grants human rights then it must do so with reference to all human beings. And this is what Islam does. Chapter 4 opens with a verse addressing all human beings and saying:

"O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate

of the same (kind), and spread from the two of them many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship." (4:1)

The creation from a "single" being and to its mate does not necessarily refer to Adam and Eve, but that is a separate matter of discussion. The words relevant to the topic are: "And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship."

This covers both rights and responsibilities. While a human being can and should "demand" his or her rights from others, yet at the same time the said person should:

(1) keep his duty to God, meaning that the rights are to be demanded justly and not dishonestly or selfishly, and they are to be exercised to bring about moral good and not to be exploited.

(2) keep his duty to "the ties of relationship", in other words, the said person must fulfil his duty of observing the rights of others, rights which they possess due to ties of relationship with him. As this verse is read out at the Islamic marriage ceremony, this is understood as meaning that a person must observe the rights of his spouse, offspring and other blood and marriage relations. However, it is stated here that all humans are created from a single being, *so a person's ties of relationship extend to all humans with whom he/she had any dealings.*

In another verse, referring to the birth of human beings, it is indicated as to why human beings need rights and what is the most basic right of a human:

"Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless seeming water. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you hearing and sight and hearts; little thanks you give!" (32:8-9)

Every human, man or woman, has this Divine spirit breathed into him, and the purpose of his life is to develop that potential, and to manifest godly qualities in his life, to be, if I may put it this way, a small scale-model of God. And to achieve that, he has been given his senses of hearing and sight to gather information, and a brain and mind to process it and reach a conclusion. So that is the most basic human right in Islam: the right to use his **own** senses and to make up his **own** mind.

Not to use their natural faculties of intelligent observation and thinking reduces human to cattle, as the Quran says (7:179).

A human right could be under threat from an external authority, or it could be that some people themselves

may not be exercising it because they are unaware of it or have been kept in ignorance of it. So the Quran makes people aware of their own responsibility to exercise their God-endowed rights.

Freedom of religion

Ch. 76, after speaking of the creation of a human being in the womb, says:

“We have shown him the way, he may be thankful or ungrateful” (76:3).

“The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve.” (18:29).

The Prophet is told:

“Your duty (O Prophet) is only the delivery of the message, and Ours (God’s) is to call (people) to account.” (13:40)

“And you (O Prophet) are not one to compel them.” (50:45).

And, of course, the well-known:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256)

Islam recognises complete freedom of religion and belief for every human being, and consistently with this principle, it does not prescribe any punishment whatsoever for a person who leaves the religion of Islam to adopt some other faith.

“O you who believe, should anyone of you turn back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people, whom He loves and who love Him, ...” (5:54)

The Quran mentions the person who turns back from Islam and “he dies while an unbeliever” (2:217). Thus a person who would leave the fold of Islam would spend his life and then die a natural death.

The Prophet Muhammad signed the treaty of Hudaibiya with his opponents, according to which if a Muslim wished to join the opponents of Islam he would be free to go and join them, and could not be forcibly retained by the Muslims.

Freedom of preaching by other religions

The Quran several times challenges proponents of other religions as follows:

“Bring your proof, if you are truthful” (27:64)

“Have you any knowledge (i.e. in support of your beliefs) so you would bring it forth to us?” (6:148)

How can then Islamic law ban other religions from arguing for their beliefs when the Quran is challenging them to adduce and put forward proof and knowledge in support of their religions?

Right of all religions to have their places of worship free and protected

The Quran requires Muslims to fight a war, if necessary, to ensure freedom of religious worship and protection of places of worship of other religions. When it allowed Muslims to fight in self-defence, the Quran told them:

“And if Allah did not repel some people by means of other people, then cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down” (22:40).

Right given to every religion to prove it is best in doing good works

“For everyone of you We appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. *So vie with one another in virtuous deeds.* To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of that wherein you differed” (5:48)

So under Islam, a Christian can say: ‘we are the best in doing good, just look at our work’, a Jew can say: ‘we are the best in doing good, look at our work’.

Islam gives the followers of every religion the right to prove that their religion is the best both in doctrines and in leading its followers to do good.

Right to ask questions about Islam:

“And if anyone of the idolaters seek your protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah, then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who know not.” (9:6)

An opponent of Islam, whose people were fighting against Muslims, had the right to seek shelter with Muslims in order to learn about Islam. After that, he was free to go back to his people if he did not wish to accept Islam.

Right of non-Muslims not to be subjected to offence:

Muslims are given the following instruction:

“abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance” (6:108)

On the other hand, if **they** offend Muslims, then Muslims are required to exercise self-control and how patience:

“you will certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from the idolaters much abuse. And if you are patient and keep your

duty, surely this is an affair of great resolution” (3:186)

“Bear patiently what they say, and withdraw from them in a seemly manner” (73:10)

Regarding the Prophet Muhammad and his companions it is recorded in Bukhari:

“The Messenger of Allah and his Companions used to forgive the idolators and the followers of previous books, as Allah had commanded them, and they used to show patience on hearing hurtful words.”

And the Prophet advised Muslims as follows:

“The Muslim who mixes with the people and bears patiently their hurtful words, is better than one who does not mix with people and does not show patience under their abuse.”

Right to express national and racial identity:

Again addressing all human beings, God says:

“O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you.” (49:13)

This verse gives every national and ethnic group the right to identify itself, so that others may know who they are. Therefore there can be no genocide against any group. But that right to national identity is not to be used to claim superiority for oneself and inferiority for others on the basis of race or ethnicity, as the “best” nation is the one which is most conscientious in fulfilling its obligations.

“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for the learned.” (30:22)

Again, this gives one the right to hold to one’s language and culture, and to preserve your heritage. But it is the *diversity itself* which is a sign of God, and not the belonging to a particular race or culture.

Individual responsibility

This repeated teaching given in the Quran means that it is the individual’s right to question what he is required to do by someone (e.g. by the state, by the society, by the family), as this will place a burden on him to bear. You cannot be ordered to do something by another on the basis that he will bear responsibility for your actions:

“And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another.” (17:15)

Blind following condemned: of leaders, or of tradition

Some people will present the following excuse before God:

“Our Lord, we only obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path.” (33:67)

This will not be accepted by God as an excuse.

About some people it is stated:

“And when it is said to them, Follow what Allah has revealed, they say: Nay, we follow that wherein we found our fathers. What! Even though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way.” (2:170)

A person thus has the right, indeed the duty, to think for himself, and he or she cannot be required to obey anyone **blindly**, without being given adequate reason.

Principle of electing decision-makers

The Quran instructs Muslims:

“Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to those **worthy of them**, and that when you judge between people, you **judge with justice**. Surely Allah admonishes you with what is excellent.” (4:58)

‘Trusts’ (*amanat*) here mean positions of ruling authority. Muslims have the **right** to choose their leaders and the **responsibility** to ensure that they choose those who are best suited to the task, i.e. trustworthy and competent.

The Prophet Muhammad, using the same word for ‘trust’ as in this verse, said:

“When the trust is wasted, wait for the *hour* (of doom). It was said, How will the trust be wasted, O Messenger of Allah? He said, When Government (*amr*) is entrusted to those unworthy of it, then wait for the doom.” (Bukhari).

The prime duty of the authorities is do justice between all the people under their charge.

National decisions by consultation

“... and those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and **whose affairs (*amr*) are by counsel among themselves**, and who spend (on good works) out of what We have given them” (42:38)

Here, between the two most fundamental injunctions of Islam — to keep up prayer and spend in charity — the instruction is given to Muslims that they must determine their governing affairs by mutual consultation. This shows the importance of this teaching.

Principle of consultation not to be abandoned

The majority decision can sometimes be the wrong one. But this principle cannot be set aside because of that possibility.

On one occasion when the majority decision of his followers proved to be wrong — and the Holy Prophet had agreed to it despite favouring the minority view — the Quran told him to forgive them and continue adhering to the principle of consultation:

“So pardon them and ask God’s forgiveness for them, and consult them in (important) matters.” (3:159)

Accountability of those in authority

The first requirement of accountability is that those in authority **are subject to the same law as the general public**. The Prophet Muhammad declared:

“Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the chastisement of a grievous day.” (6:15)

“I am the first of those who submit.” (6:163)

He was the first and foremost of all to submit to the commandments of God. Of prophet Joseph, whose life is a lesson in the Quran for Muslims, it is said:

“And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked.” (12:56)

Yet despite having this power:

“He could not take his brother under the king’s law, unless Allah pleased.” (12:76)

The law of the land of Egypt did not permit him to let his brother stay in the country. Joseph obeyed that law.

The following incident shows that the Prophet Muhammad regarded himself as accountable to his followers:

He was walking with his wife Safiya one night when two Muslims passed by them, looked at the Prophet and went by. The Holy Prophet called them back saying: ‘Come here, She is my wife Safiya!’ Those two men said: ‘*Subhan Allah!*’ (meaning, we dare not think that you were doing something wrong). The Holy Prophet said: ‘Satan circulates in the human body as blood does and I was afraid lest Satan might insert an evil thought in your minds’. (Bukhari)

The prophet Joseph was imprisoned on a false charge. From prison he interpreted a dream of the king. The king was pleased and said: “Bring him to me.” Joseph sent back the message: First investigate the charge against me. Only when the accusers exonerated him did he agree to leave prison. (12:50–53).

During the times of the early khalifas, the public had full freedom openly to hold the ruler’s actions to account.

Members of the public had the **right** to challenge any proposed law and to call officials to account for their actions.

Abu Bakr, on becoming khalifa, addressed people saying:

“Help me if I am in the right, and set me right if I am in the wrong.”

Umar, as khalifa, used to say:

“The person whom I love most is the one who lets me know of my faults”.

Once while Umar was about to deliver the Friday sermon, a young man stood up and asked for an explanation of the following:

“The other day each one of us obtained a piece of cloth from the Public Treasury. Today I find two pieces of cloth on the person of the Caliph. I want to know what right had the Caliph to get a share twice the share of an ordinary Muslim?”

Umar’s son Abdullah gave the explanation:

“Like every other person my father and myself obtained a piece of cloth each. My father is so tall that the piece of cloth that he got did not suffice him. So I gave him my piece of the cloth.”

Once Umar was unwell. People advised him to take honey for his complaint. There was a bowl full of honey in the national treasury. Umar said to people: “If you allow me to use it then I will take it; otherwise it is unlawful for me.” So people allowed him to take it for his use.

Accessibility to the public

“The Prophet passed by a woman who was weeping beside a grave. He told her to be patient. She said to him, ‘Go away, for you have not been afflicted with a calamity like mine’. And she did not recognize him. Later she was informed that he was the Prophet. So she went to the house of the Prophet and **there she did not find any guard**. Then she said to him, ‘I did not recognize you’. He said, ‘Surely, patience is at the first stroke of a calamity’.” (Bukhari)

Umar’s gave the following instructions to his governors:

“... you shall not eat bread made of fine flour; you shall not wear fine clothes; and you shall not shut your doors against the needs of the people. If you do any of these things, punishment (from Allah) shall descend on you.”

Freedom of speech

In Prophet Muhammad's time Muslims had freedom to express their opinions openly. For example, Umar expressed misgivings at the signing of the treaty of Hudaibiyya. Sometimes some people even said hurtful things. A man said about an action of the Prophet that Muhammad by this action "did not intend to please Allah". When this was reported to the Prophet, although he was angry yet he said:

"May Allah bestow His mercy on Moses, for he was hurt with more than this, yet he remained patient."

Non-Muslims also had the freedom of raising objections against Islam and the Prophet. The Quran teaches Muslims to behave as follows: "Bear patiently what they say" (20:130).

Right to differ with your own community and oppose its actions:

The Quran tells Muslims:

"...help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression" (5:2).

This means that they should co-operate with one another, in a group, only in good things, but not in wrong-doing. This gives a Muslim the right not to support community actions he regards as wrongful.

Right of justice

Everyone has the right to ask for and to receive justice, since the Muslim authorities are told:

"Allah commands you that ... when you judge between people, you judge with justice" (4:58).

Judgments must be based on truthful evidence, given by witnesses without regard to their personal prejudices for or against other parties:

"O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it [your evidence] be against your own selves or parents or relatives, or rich or poor" (4:135)

"Do not conceal testimony. Whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful." (2:283).

Right to justice without national/religious prejudice:

The Quran requires Muslims to set aside all national or religious prejudices in doing justice:

"Let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to godliness." (5:8)

Once, in a case between a Muslim and a Jew before the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim was the guilty

party and his tribe approached the Prophet to give the decision in his favour or risk antagonising that whole tribe. God revealed to the Prophet in this connection:

"Be not one pleading the cause of the dishonest ... contend not on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls." (4:105,107)

Freedom from vigilante justice and privately-executed punishments

The law is above all persons and parties. Vigilante justice and privately-executed punishments are illegal in Islam. In the Prophet Muhammad's time a husband once accused his wife of adultery. The Prophet told him:

"Either you bring forth proof or you will receive the legal punishment for slander".

The man said:

"O Allah's Messenger, if anyone of us saw a man with his wife, would he go to seek after witnesses?"

But the Prophet kept on repeating: Bring your proof or you will receive the legal punishment for slander.

Without evidence presented through due legal process, which is challenged and tested, no one can be convicted or punished.

Right to demand rights

The most ordinary of people has the right to approach authorities with complaint and demand their rights, and to point out if the law disadvantages them. The Quran records that a woman complained to the Prophet about her husband "putting her away", depriving her of her conjugal rights. There is a chapter of the Quran named after her act of complaining, entitled 'The Woman Who Pleads' (ch. 58). It begins:

"Allah indeed has heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah; and Allah hears the contentions of both of you."

Allah revealed to the Prophet a severe disapproval for such husbands and a punishment like what is known today as community service.

Lastly, the Quran speaks of people who make a default in their duty to others as follows:

"Woe to the cheaters, who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from people, take it fully, but when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they give less than is due!" (83: 1-3)

These are people who demand and take their rights from others in full, but when they have to give others their due rights they give less than what is due. This

happens between individuals as well as between the state and the individual. The state demands observance of law but is usually reluctant to give the rights that it commits itself to giving. ■

Id al Adha Khutba (2012)

Sermon delivered in South Africa

by Ebrahim Muhamed

[This article is a transcript of the Id al Adha Khutba (Sermon) delivered on October 26, 2012 by Ebrahim Muhamed, the President of the South Africa branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In his khutba, Mr. Ebrahim Muhamed provides a historical account of the “grand sacrifice” commemorated on Id al Adha and also presents insightful advice on topics for discussion that Muslims today can incorporate into their hajj activities.]

I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad (PBUH) is the Messenger of Allah.

“And when We pointed to Abraham the place of the House, saying: Associate naught with Me, and purify My House for those who make circuits and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. And proclaim to men the pilgrimage (Hajj)” (22:26, 27).

Today is known as *yaum al-nahr* which literally means, *the day of sacrifices*, being the day which is celebrated as *Id al Adzha*. Normally on this day which comes towards the end of the Hajj, animals are sacrificed. The sacrifice of an animal offered is a tribute to the spirit of sacrifice shown by Prophet Abraham when he was ready to sacrifice his son Ishmael in obedience to the Divine command.

Abraham - background

Abraham is known as the Father of Nations. He had two famous sons who were both prophets. The eldest was Ishmael born from Hagar and the second Isaac born from Sarah. The dynasty of Abraham stretches over many generations which were blessed with many prophets of which some were Isaac, Ishmael, Joseph, David, Solomon, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, and Muhammad, the last Prophet to mankind. These prophets gave rise to what is known as the Monotheistic (One God) Abrahamic faiths which consist of more than two thirds of the global worshipping nations; that is Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Abraham lived approximately 2000 years BC. He came from the city known as UR in Mesopotamia, held by many historians as the cradle of civilization, located near the modern

town of Nasiriya in far southern Iraq. He later migrated to Canaan, today known as Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and parts of Syria and Jordan. He lived at a time when idol worship and human sacrifices were rife. His countrymen in Mesopotamia believed in four different gods in honour of whom they built towers and effigies. Elaborate rituals accompanied human sacrifices to satisfy bloodthirsty gods. In Canaan children were supposedly sacrificed for the god, Moloch. Thus idol worship and human sacrifices were not uncommon in the so-called birthplace of civilization, Mesopotamia and in Canaan. Abraham, based on a misinterpretation of a vision he had, had no hesitation to sacrifice his son Ishmael when God commanded him. The subsequent sacrifice of an animal instead completely abolished the foul practice of human sacrifices.

The revolutionary role played by Abraham in shaping the Religion of Islam (Peace)

Of Abraham, the Holy Prophet is told in the Holy Quran;

“...Follow the faith (milla) of Abraham...” (16:123)

and

“My Lord has guided me to the right path—a right religion, the faith (milla) of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists” (6:162)

Abraham changed the concept of GOD from a polytheistic creed depicting the Gods as tyrannical and punitive, to whom human offerings were made to appease their anger, to the One, Loving, Merciful and Caring God of the Universe. He openly, at great risk to his own life, defied the worship of the stars, moon and sun. He destroyed idols so as to challenge worshippers to entreat the very idols to identify the perpetrator which he argued should be easy for them if they were alive and All-Knowing. His uncompromising opposition to the worshipping of idols, is prophetic of the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who put a final nail in the coffin of idol worship and who referred to Abraham as “my Father” and whose Faith (milla) he was commanded to follow. Abraham was indeed a precursor of and an inseparable link to that grand Divine Institution that ultimately firmly established man’s complete submission to the will of Allah, called Islam.

Under Divine guidance Abraham introduced an entirely new meaning to the concept of sacrifice. He championed what can most probably be seen today as ground breaking ‘human rights’ activism when he entrenched what all Muslims celebrate today, the preservation and sanctity of human life. Under Divine guidance he understood that the offering of his son, Ishmael only meant that his son was to play a great role in laying

the foundation of a futuristic New World Order that was ushered in by the universal and final Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH). The holy Quran refers to this:

“And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide in (it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves.” 2:125

“And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! Accept from us” (2:127).

The “House” is a reference to the Holy Ka’abah in Mecca regarded by many as the first house of worship and symbolic of true Monotheism. This prayer of Abraham and Ishmael was answered in the form of the Holy Prophet Muhammad with whom Religion was perfected.

“This day have I perfected for you your religion...” 5:3

The Holy Quran further makes it clear that the sacrificing of the animals are for humanitarian reasons in both a physical and moral sense:

“...eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar.” (22:36)

“Neither their flesh, nor their blood reaches Allah, but to him is acceptable observance of duty on your part...” (22:27)

So the whole concept that God stands in need of animal offerings are dismissed here. Allah does not stand in need of their meat as humans do. The sacrificial act is to impress on man the need to sacrifice his own animal tendencies for higher moral qualities of righteousness and justice. This is what the Holy Quran, in several places, calls upon the believers to do. For example:

“O you who believe, violate not the signs of Allah, nor the Sacred Month, nor the offerings...And let not hatred of a people – because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression...” (5:2)

This verse lays down a principle of uprightness in dealing with even those we hate, a code the modern International world is sorely in need of. We are called upon to sacrifice vengeful tendencies for the sake of righteousness and piety. We are warned not to transgress and violate the rights of others by sinful and aggressive means. This brings us to the subject of the violations of Muslims by Muslims much in the news these days. The Muslim on Muslim aggression we witness daily in the form of suicide bombings are in direct violation of the

clear commandments of the Holy Quran. It is further clearly stated in the Holy Quran:

“Do not cast yourselves to destruction by your own hands.” – 2:195

and

“Do not kill yourselves” – 4:29

On days like today when we celebrate the sanctity of human life, Muslims should use the occasion of the Hajj gathering to collectively condemn such barbaric acts as suicide bombings. Through ill-intended, malicious processes of indoctrination and brainwashing, young boys and girls are led to believe that ‘suicide’ and mass murder are sanctified as pious under the guise of “Jihad” and “Martyrdom”. This is totally against the teachings of the Holy Quran as shown above. These are blatant criminal acts and have nothing to do with religion. What these poor children should be taught is that self-destruction or suicide is a sin in Islam, and that self-preservation of human life is a duty of every Muslim, young or old. They should be taught that the true definition of a martyr in Islam is one who **dies as a result of someone else’s hostile and violent action against him which he resists as far as possible in defence of human rights and the preservation of life. It is the abolition of human sacrifices**, not its continuation, that we celebrate today, in commemoration of the great patriarch Abraham and his devoted son Ishmael.

What is the collective duty of Muslims with regard to Hajj?

“...And proclaim for men the Hajj...” (22:27)

Every Muslim should pass the noble message of the Hajj to all mankind especially those who belong to the progeny of Abraham like the Jews and Christians (some say even the Hindus). It is Hajj alone that brings into the domain of practicality what would otherwise seem impossible, namely, that all people, to whatever class or country they belong, are equal in birth and death; that they come into life and pass out of it in the same way. Let them celebrate with us the Hajj - the only occasion on which mankind are taught how to live alike, how to act alike and how to feel alike. But we can only do this effectively if we carry forth the great lesson of Hajj into our own lives, practically, and stop the hostilities that are rending the unity of the Muslim brotherhood apart.

Hajj carries with it many benefits including, material benefits

“...It is no sin that you seek the bounty of your Lord” (2:198)

The seeking of bounty is accepted here by all commentators as meaning the seeking of increase in one’s

wealth by means of trade in the pilgrimage season. The Holy Qur'an thus not only allows the carrying on of trade in the pilgrimage season, but in a way recommends it by calling it a "bounty of your Lord." It is easy to see that, even if trading is allowed in the pilgrimage season, this great assemblage of Muslims from all quarters of the world may also be made the occasion of other advantages of a material or cultural nature, and it should serve the purpose of unifying the Muslim world and removing misunderstanding between nation and nation. World-wide conferences are held on many occasions, and this should, in the new conditions of the world, be a regular feature of the Hajj, and the best minds among the various nations should on this occasion discuss all problems affecting the Muslim world, not the least important of which is the advancement of Islam itself.

They should engage in dialogue and consultations with each other around issues such as:

- Unity, based on the Holy Kalima (Islamic profession of faith) alone, among all Muslim nations. Muslims first then Arabs, Indian etc.
- Finding peaceful solutions to political and sectarian differences – put in place effective steps based on a spirit of sincerity and fear of Allah, to stop all the violence.
- The upliftment of society through proper education, health care and financial security regardless of gender or race.
- Propagation of Islam through peaceful means.
- Condemnation and prohibition of all forms of extremism that breed fanaticism, intolerance, and social evils such as child and women abuse.
- Protection and procurement of the whole environment especially Muslim lands, its cultural heritages, and natural resources.
- An economy based on a non-usurious banking system, backed by healthy trade and industrial means and relations.
- Maintain a constitution based on freedom of political choice, religion and speech underpinned by a code of moral and ethical decency and respect for all, etc...

Until the Muslim community has evolved to the stage of using the occasion of the Hajj to this ultimate advantage, which Allah has provided for them, they will not have achieved the true, all-pervading benefits of the Hajj, that wonderful institution of a united human race under one God, which the great sacrifices of the patriarch Abraham (on whom be peace) and his son Ishmael (on whom be peace) helped to shape and which we proudly celebrate today.

Allah Hu Akbar! Allah Hu Akbar! Allah Hu Akbar! ■

Lessons on the Quran:

Sura Al-Baqarah, Section 8

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[Lahore Ahmadiyya members in various locations gather each week for a Quran study group via skype. The study group commenced with lessons from Sura Fatihah and continued with a subsequent section of the Quran every week. Members take turns presenting on a particular section, and discussion from all participants follow. This article is based on a lesson presented to the study group by the Editor. It deals with Section 8 of Sura Al-Baqarah.]

This particular section seems to provide some clarification to questions that naturally arise from previous sections in this chapter. Surah Al-Baqara started with providing the example of Prophet Adam. And we were provided with the lessons of how man is blessed with so much, but is vulnerable to making mistakes. We learned that although man can conquer nature (symbolized by the angels making submission to him), he is weak against his own inner passions (symbolized by iblis, or the devil, refusing to make submission to him). Just as Prophet Adam was used to illustrate the balance between the greatness of man and his inherent weakness, we were then provided with the example of Israel – a nation that was blessed with unparalleled material and spiritual blessings but still wavered from the guidance that was given to it. So, the references to the Israelite nation – it being gifted with divine favors, and its members making mistakes, even outright rejecting the guidance provided at times – is an illustration of the lessons on the struggle of man on a *national* scale, similar to that of Adam at an *individual* level.

And the purpose of relating these lessons early on in this second chapter of the Holy Quran is basically a response to the prayer that we make in Sura Fatihah. We pray:

“Guide us on the right path. The path of those upon whom thou has bestowed thy favors; not those upon whom wrath is brought down nor those who go astray.”

Because we pray for guidance and understanding so that we may be on the right path, and avoid the path that displeases God, it only makes sense that we are then presented with examples and illustrations of how to achieve that right path and be warned as to what leads one away from the right path.

So, the particular conduct exhibited (or the characteristics displayed) by the Israelites as a nation is what is

being addressed; basically an example is being provided of a nation in the past that, despite being blessed with much guidance, still made mistakes. Hence, the verses do not imply that all people of the Israelite nation (and at all times) are misguided persons who lack goodness in them, as some (both Muslim and non-Muslim alike) like to suggest. And the first verse of this section (section 8) clarifies that no nation/race/religion is inherently favored or disfavored by God; rather it is the beliefs and deeds, regardless of which nation/race/religion a person may belong to, that is only relevant.

Chapter 2, Verse 62

Verse 62 states:

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.”

This verse utterly demolishes the view held by some Muslims that the world is divided into believers and infidels, and that the believers (those who profess to be Muslims) will enter heaven while everyone else will burn in the hellfire for eternity. Here we are told that those who believe (i.e. Muslims) and the Jews and the Christians and Sabians (a pseudo-Christian sect at the time) and whoever (that is, anyone else from other faiths as well) will be rewarded if they believe in God and the Last Day, and do good deeds.

The fact that others (in particular, some of the *People of the Book*) believe in Allah and the Last Day is confirmed elsewhere in the Quran. In 3:112-115, it states:

“They are not all alike. Of the People of the Book there is an upright party who recite Allah’s messages in the night-time and they adore (Him). They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin good and forbid evil and vie one with another in good deeds. And those are among the righteous.”

Some suggest that these verses reference those persons from among the *People of the Book* that converted to Islam. This is not a viable interpretation, as Maulana Muhammad Ali explains in his commentary:

“The opinion has been held, very plausibly indeed, that vv. 113–115 speak of the good among the Jews and the Christians, and not of those who became converts to Islam, because the Muslims could not be said to be *a party of the People of the Book*. **It is a fact that the Qur’an does not deny that there is good in others, its own eminence over others lying in the fact that it makes man attain the highest degree of perfection in goodness.** It is for this reason that the description of the

upright party among the followers of the Book concludes with the words, *whatever good they do, they will not be denied it.*”

The question can be posed as to whether Muslims can still consider themselves superior due to belonging to the religion that provides for the attainment of the “highest degree of perfection in goodness”. An analogy that I use to understand the relationship between Islam (as the perfect and complete religion) and other faiths (that are based on some inherent truths but are imperfect and incomplete), in a very simplistic manner, is based on students in school taking a class. The objective is to study the material provided and pass the examination. The examination is a practical test, not simply regurgitating things memorized on a sheet of paper). In this analogy, Islam represents the official textbook that provides one with all of the information to acquire the knowledge and skill to not only pass the examination but to achieve 100%. The other faiths in this analogy represent other material, possibly notes from other students, that may contain some very good information but may have some inaccuracies contained in them and possibly lack a comprehensive overview of the material. Now, the official text book, no matter how perfect and complete, will only benefit the student if he or she studies it. In fact, the student that relies on notes or other incomplete material may even do better in the examination than the one who has access to the official textbook but makes no use of it. And what this verse (verse 62) clarifies for us, is that studying the material, whether the official textbook or other imperfect material, is still not enough unless one applies the lessons from those materials in the examination. Studying and applying the lessons from official textbook can enable the student to achieve the highest grade, just as studying and applying the lessons from the Quran allows man to achieve the “highest degree of perfection in goodness” (as MMAli uses the term). But simply possessing the official book or not truly understanding the lessons therein will not guarantee any such success.

There is a well-known hadith narrated by Abu Hurraira in Sahih Muslim which further helps us understand this concept. It is recorded that the Holy Prophet said:

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honor his guest, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should behave well towards his neighbor, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak goodness or remain silent.”

So, the true assessment of whether one believes in “Allah and the Last Day”, is not by mere lip profession, but rather by looking at one’s conduct and one’s deeds. This is the practical examination that is the very objec-

tive of our lives. And it is only when we manifest this manner of conduct, that we can truly say we believe in Allah and the Last Day, and then only can we reach the spiritual stage of having no fear and not grieving.

Chapter 2, Verses 63, 64 and 65

The next three verses state:

“And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you: Hold fast that which We have given you, and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard against evil.

Then after that you turned back; and had it not been for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, you had certainly been among the losers.

And indeed you know those among you who violated the Sabbath, so We said to them: Be (as) apes, despised and hated.” (2:63, 64, 65)

So, after being given guidance (and this is what the “covenant” represents, the divine message containing commandments that is delivered to the people through prophets), we are told, the Israelites turned away from it. And the commandment to the Israelites regarding the Sabbath, in particular, is pointed out as being an example of one that was repeatedly broken. The last part of Verse 65 (which states: “*We said to them: Be (as) apes, despised and hated*”) is another illustration of how a strict literal reading of the Quran can result in some absurd interpretations. Some have misunderstood this to mean that the Israelites were physically transformed into apes as divine punishment for their violations. In his commentary, Maulana Muhammad Ali provides many references showing that past scholars have explained the reference as depicting a *moral condition*, not a physical existence. There is also a well-known hadith in which it is related that the Holy Prophet said that in the latter days his people will go to their *ulema* (i.e. scholars) for answers and will find them as apes and swine. And this is quite applicable to our times – it is the moral condition of the mullahs, having strayed from the true spirit of the faith as emphasized in the Quran, that have made them resembling “apes” and “swine”, not that they have physically transformed into these animals.

There may be another, more subtle, significance as well. And it provides insight into the concept of evolution of the human race. The section deals with the “degeneration of the Israelites”. That, after being raised to a high state of eminence, through material and spiritual blessings, and they, through their own conduct of rejecting the guidance provided to them, reduced themselves to a lower level. The reference to “apes” may be an insight into the lower stages of human evolution. That man, who is made to excel all other creation and is placed as God’s vicegerent on earth, when he rejects the guidance provid-

ed to it, it is as if he degenerates into the lower stage of evolution, losing the quality that truly makes him “human” and separate from his prehistoric ancestors.

Chapter 2, Verse 66

The next verse further puts into context the purpose for which the stories and lessons about the Israelite nation is included here. It states:

“So we made them (that is the Israelites) an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it and an admonition to those who guard against evil.” (2:66)

The Quran again clarifies that it is not to condemn all persons of the Israelite nation or have its followers despise them, but rather to learn from history and be aware of the *qualities* and *characteristics* that can make future generations make the same mistakes.

Chapter 2, Verses 67, 68, 69, 70 and 71

The next 5 verses all related to a cow that the Israelites were commanded to slaughter. The Israelites had a special reverence for this cow and, as we already learned from previous sections, actually engaged in worshipping the cow. The verses state:

“And when Moses said to his people: Surely Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow. They said: Dost thou ridicule us? He said: I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant.

They said: Call on thy Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is. (Moses) said: He says, surely she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between these (two); so do what you are commanded.

They said: Call on thy Lord for our sake to make it clear to us what her color is. (Moses) said: He says, She is a yellow cow; her color is intensely yellow delighting to the beholders.

They said: Call on thy Lord for our sake to make it clear to us what she is, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright.

(Moses) said: He says: She is a cow not made submissive to plough the land, nor does she water the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her. They said: Now thou hast brought the truth. So they slaughtered her, though they had not the mind to do (it).” (2:67, 68, 69, 70, 71)

This back and forth between Moses and the Israelites appears to reveal an aspect of human nature – when we want to continue doing something, knowing that it may not be right, we tend to make excuses. We try to find loopholes, in an attempt to avoid doing what is com-

manded. We see Muslims doing this by saying “Well, the Quran doesn’t *specifically* say this, or the Quran doesn’t *specifically* say that”. But we also learned from a previous section that in response to the wrongdoing of engaging in worship of the calf, the Israelites were asked to “kill their passions”. Hence, the calf symbolized their worldly passions. And this discourse in these verses seems to be based on that underlying theme. Being of ripe age (neither too young nor too old), having skin that is pleasing to the eyes of others, and not looking tired or overworked (but rather without a blemish), are all passions that take control over people in all nations. If one were to assess the most pressing medical needs of people today based on commercials we see on television, we would think that simple aging, skin care and inability to sleep are epidemics. How many anti-aging products, skin care formulas and sleep aids are routinely marketed to us on a daily basis? Certainly, it is because what is being sold is in demand. The lesson to be learned from these verses, then, seems to be that we need to assess what sacred cows (or worldly passions) control us (consciously or unconsciously) and then determine whether we are willing to sacrifice them.

May Almighty Allah help all of us in this difficult striving. ■

No Claim to Prophethood (Part 1)

Twenty arguments proving Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never claimed prophethood

From “The Ahmadiyya Case”

[Reproduced here is Section 11 of the “Evidence” segment of the book “The Ahmadiyya Case”. “The Ahmadiyya Case” deals with the famous court case in South Africa concerning whether members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are Muslims. In addition to the case history and judgment, a compilation of the evidence presented during the trial is presented in the book. The particular section reproduced here summarizes the evidence presented in the previous sections which clearly rebut the common allegation that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement) claimed prophethood. It was the innovation of this belief after Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had already died that caused the split in the Ahmadiyya Movement and the creation of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The entire book “The Ahmadiyya Case” is available online at: www.muslim.org/sa-case/intro.htm] The first seven arguments are presented this issue, and the remaining 13 will be featured next issue.

1. First Argument

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad always denied the allegation levelled against him that he claimed to be a prophet (*nabi*). Had he been a claimant to prophethood (*nubuwwat*), he could not have made denials such as those quoted below:

- i. “There is no claim of prophethood; on the contrary, the claim is of sainthood (*muhaddasiyyat*) which has been advanced by the command of God.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 421)
- ii. “In conclusion, there is no claim of prophethood on my part either. The claim is only of being a saint (*wali*) and a Reformer (*mujaddid*).” (*Majmu‘a Ishtiharat*, vol. ii, p. 298)
- iii. “By way of a fabrication, they slander me by saying that I have made a claim to prophethood. ... But it should be remembered that all this is a fabrication. Our belief is that our master and leader Hazrat Muhammad mustafa, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is the Last of the Prophets. We believe in angels, miracles, and all the doctrines held by the Ahl-i Sunna.” (*Kitab al-Barriyya*, footnote, p. 182)
- iv. “In confronting the present Ulama, this humble one has ... sworn many times by God that I am not a claimant to any prophethood. But these people still do not desist from declaring me as *kafir*.” (Letter to Maulavi Ahmad-ullah of Amritsar, 27 January 1904)

2. Second Argument

If Hazrat Mirza had been a claimant to prophethood, he could not have given the following interpretation of the title *Khatam an-nabiyyin* (Seal or Last of the prophets) applied to the Holy Prophet Muhammad in a famous verse (33:40) of the Holy Quran:

- i. “*Ma Kana Muhammad-un Aba ahad-in min rijalikum wa lakin rasul-Allahi wa Khatam an-nabiyyin* [Quran, 33:40]. That is to say, Muhammad, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is not the father of any man from among you, but he is the Messenger of God and the one to end the prophets. This verse too clearly argues that, after our Holy Prophet, no messenger (*rasul*) shall come into the world.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 614)
- ii. “The Holy Quran, every word of which is absolute, confirms in its verse *wa lakin rasul-Allahi wa Khatam an-nabiyyin* that, as a matter of fact, prophethood has ended with our Prophet, peace and the blessings of God be upon him.” (*Kitab al-Barriyya*, pp. 184 – 185, footnote)
- iii. “Allah is that Being Who is *Rabb-ul-‘alameen* [Lord of the worlds], *Rahmaan* [Beneficent], and *Raheem* [Merciful], Who created the earth and the heavens in six days, made Adam, sent Messengers, sent

Scriptures, and last of all made Hazrat Muhammad *mustafa*, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, who is the Last of the Prophets and Best of the Messengers.” (*Haqiqat al-Wahy*, p. 141)

3. Third Argument

Those Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in which occur the words *la nabiyya ba'di* (There is to be no prophet after me), have been mentioned by Hazrat Mirza in a number of places. If he had claimed to be a prophet, he could not have referred to these words as follows:

- i. “The Holy Prophet, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, had said repeatedly that no prophet would come after him, and the Saying *la nabiyya ba'di* was so well-known that no one had any doubt regarding its authenticity.” (*Kitab al-Barriyya*, footnote, p. 184)
- ii. “Similarly, by saying *la nabiyya ba'di*, he closed the door absolutely to any new prophet or a returning prophet.” (*Ayyam as-Sulh*, p. 152)

4. Fourth Argument

If Hazrat Mirza had claimed to be a prophet, he could not have written that the ‘revelation of prophets’ (*wahy nubuwwat* or *wahy risalat*) terminated with the Holy Prophet Muhammad. This, however, was exactly what he wrote:

- i. “It is my belief that the ‘revelation of prophets’ (*wahy risalat*) began with Adam and ended with Muhammad *mustafa*, peace and the blessings of God be upon him.” (*Majmu'a Ishtiharat*, vol. ii, p. 230)
- ii. “We believe in the finality of prophethood of the Holy Prophet, peace and the blessings of God be upon him. And it is not the ‘revelation of prophets’ (*wahy nubuwwat*), but the ‘revelation of saints’ (*wahy wilayat*) which is received by the saints under the shadow of the prophethood of Muhammad by perfect obedience to him, peace be upon him. In this we do believe. Any person who accuses us of going further than this, departs from honesty and fear of God.” (*Majmu'a Ishtiharat*, vol. ii, no. 151, p. 297)

5. Fifth Argument

If Hazrat Mirza had claimed to be a prophet, he could never have written that, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the revelation-bearing angel Gabriel cannot ever bring further ‘revelation of prophets’:

“Every sensible person can understand that if God is true to His promise, and the promise given in the *Khatam an-nabiyyin* verse, which has been explicitly mentioned in the Hadith, that now, after the death of the Prophet of God, peace and the blessings of God be upon him, Gabriel has been

forbidden forever from bringing ‘revelation of prophets’ (*wahy nubuwwat*) — if all these things are true and correct, then no person at all can come as a messenger (*rasul*) after our Prophet, peace be upon him.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 577)

6. Sixth Argument

If Hazrat Mirza had claimed to be a prophet, he could not have written that he was a recipient of ‘revelation of saints’ (*wahy wilayat* or *wahy muhaddasiyyat*). This, however, was exactly what he wrote:

- i. “Has it ever happened in the world that God should have so helped an imposter that he could be speaking a lie against God for eleven years, to the effect that His *wahy wilayat* and *wahy muhaddasiyyat* [revelation as granted to saints] comes to him, and God would not cut off his jugular vein.” (*Ainah Kamalat Islam*, p. 323)
- ii. “I have noticed that at the time of revelation, which descends on me in the form of *wahy wilayat*, I feel myself in the hands of an extremely strong external force.” (*Barakat-ud-Dua*, p. 21)

7. Seventh Argument

If Hazrat Mirza had claimed to be a prophet, he would never have tested his revelation by the Holy Quran. In actual fact, he never accepted any revelation of his unless it agreed with the Holy Quran, because while *wahy nubuwwat* (the revelation granted to a prophet) is absolute and does not require verification, *wahy wilayat* (the revelation to a saint) is subordinate to the revelation of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and must be verified from the Holy Quran. Hazrat Mirza wrote:

- i. “I do not confirm any of my revelations but only after testing it by the Holy Quran, for I know that anything opposed to the Quran is falsehood and heresy.” (*Hamamat al-Bushra*, p. 79; new edition pp. 282 – 283)
- ii. “It was not until I had tested my revelations by the Holy Quran and authentic Sayings of the Holy Prophet, and had supplicated humbly and tearfully at the door of the Almighty Lord of the worlds, that I brought this matter on my tongue.” (*ibid.*, p. 13; new edition p. 55)
- iii. “I have made it an essential rule that I do not rest content with my visions or revelations unless the Quran, the Holy Prophet’s example, and his authentic Sayings support them.” (*Malfuzat*, part iv, p. 203)
- iv. “A revelation of a saint, or revelation of believers generally, is not an argument unless it accords and agrees with the Holy Quran.” (*Izala Auham*, p. 629)

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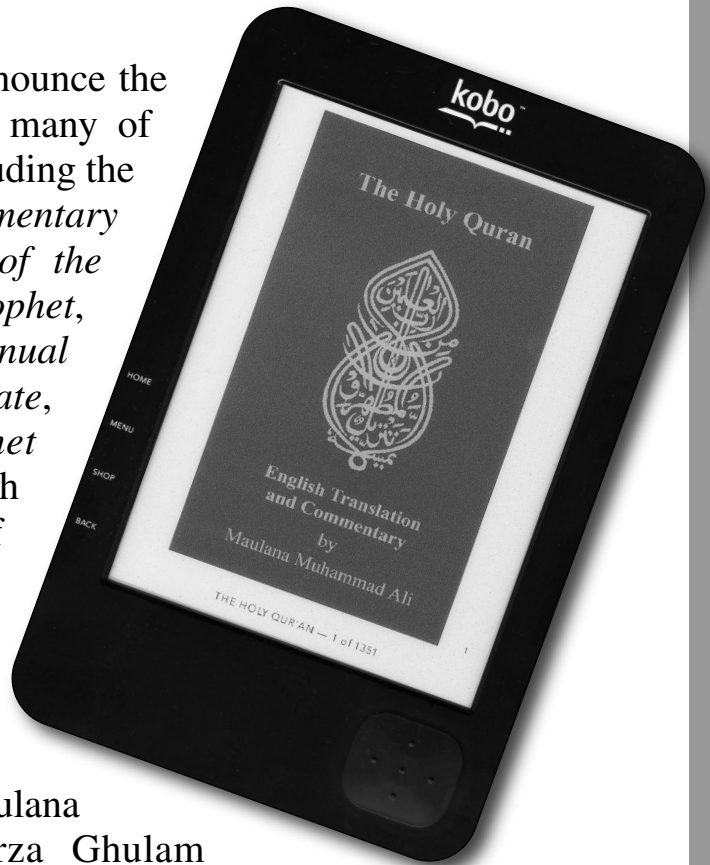
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