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- Jamid-as-sani 27/ July 1:
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- Rajab 2 & 3 /July 5 & 6;
4th Annual Muslim Congress Conference, Dallas-TX
- Rajab 3 / July 6:
Martyrdom (Shahdaat):
Imam Al-Naqi (AS)
- Rajab 10/ July 13:
Birthday (Wiladat):
Imam Mohammad Taqi (AS)
- Rajab 13/ July 16:
Birthday (Wiladat):
Imam Ali (AS)
- Rajab 15/ July 18:
Birthday (Wiladat):
Bibi Zainab (SA)
- Rajab 25/ July 28:
Martyrdom (Shahdaat):
Imam Kadhim (AS)
- Rajab 27/ July 30:
Day of Meraj
- Rajab 28/ July 31:
Imam Hussain (AS) leaves Madinah with his family for Karbala

Editor's Message

Assalamu Alaikum Brothers and Sisters in Islam,

The VOW staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Directors of the **Muslim Congress (MC)** would like to present yet another issue of VOW for your reading pleasure and spiritual uplift.

The VOW staff, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Directors of the Muslim Congress (MC) like to thank all of the contributors for this issue of VOW possible. *Alhamdulillah*, we are blessed to present a few informative and stimulating articles in this "OPEN" issue:

- *Hujjat-al-Islam* Syed Abbas Aleya has stolen a few precious minutes from his hectic schedule to answer questions about marriage from a group of young Muslims.
- Once again Br. Hajj Massoud shares his knowledge and expertise with the readers in his thought-provoking series "Hadith for Thought". This is all about self-assessment - a starting point for reflection and improvement for all Muslims who are seeking closeness to Allah (SWT) at a personal level.
- Sr. Samira Rizvi a young journalist has been kind enough to talk to VOW about her profession.
- Br. Syed Hasan Akhtar shows his love for history and justice by writing a brief history of "Fadak".
- Br. Siraj Ali reports on the launch of a new commentary of the **Qur'an** in English by Imam Mohammad Al-Asi.
- Sr. Nessrein reports and shares her experiences of the Youth Camp held in New Jersey during the month of May.
- Dr. Syed Eqbal introduces the field of Psychiatry, and addresses the lack of understanding and treatment of mental health in our community.
- Br. Syed Hadi Abedi introduces the readers to the growing need for Islamic etiquette directly from the Holy Prophet's (SAWA) perspective.
- Br. Syed Mujahid Hussain writes from an Islamic perspective about volunteering your time and services for the growing needs of the Muslim community.

There are two themes for the next newsletter: "The holy month of *Ramadhan*"; all **original** articles related to this Blessed Month or to activities focused on *Ramadhan* are welcome; and, "**The Holy Qur'an**" articles focused on facilitating the study, discussion, and memorization of the **Qur'an** are encouraged. Of course, articles that bring/build the community together, preserving the original message of Islam, are always welcome. Articles about your upcoming experience at the fourth annual Muslim Congress Conference in Dallas in July will also be most welcome. **This issue is due to be published in September 2008.**

Comments on suggested topics or themes for the next annual conference are also gladly accepted.

The deadline to receive articles for the September issue is **August 1, 2008**. Please try to submit your **original / unpublished** articles in Word 6.0 format. Once submitted, these articles become the property of the Muslim Congress, and the Muslim Congress reserves the right to edit these articles before publication.

We ask Allah (SWT) for His support and blessings for all *muslimeen* in these very challenging times. As followers of the Holy Prophet (SAWA) and his *Ahlul-Bait (AS)*, we are blessed with strong role models, but the challenge of living-up to the expectations is upon all of us.

To send ideas and suggestions for the e-newsletters, please email us at newsletter@muslimcongress.org.



Shaaban 1/ Aug. 2:

- Birthday (*Wiladat*):
Bibi Zainab (SA)
- **Shaaban 3/ Aug. 4:**
Birthday(*Wiladat*):
Imam Hussain (AS)
- **Shaaban 5/ Aug. 6:**
Birthday(*Wiladat*):
Hazrat Abbas (AS)
- **Shaaban 6/ Aug. 7:**
Birthday(*Wiladat*):
Imam Zain-ul-Abideen (AS)
- **Shaaban 12/Aug.11:**
Birthday(*Wiladat*):
Ali Akbar (AS)
- **Shaaban 15/Aug.14:**
Birthday(*Wiladat*):
Imam Al-Mehdi (ATF)

- **Ramadhan 1 / Sept 1:**
Iftar Program from 1st till Eid-ul-Fitr (contact Your Islamic Center for details)
- **Ramadhan 8 / Sept 8:**
Death (*Wafat*):
Abu Talib (AS) bin Abdul-Muttalib, 1 year before Hijrah
- **Ramadhan 10 / Sept 10:**
Death (*Wafat*):
Hazrat Khatijah (SA)
- **Ramadhan 14 / Sept 14:**
Martyrdom (*Shaadat*):
Hazrat Hamza (AS) - Battle of Uhud
- **Ramadhan 15 / Sept 15 :**
Birthday (*Wiladat*):
Imam Hassan (AS)
- **Ramadhan 17 / Sept 17:**
Battle of Badar 2 A.H.
- **Ramadhan 18 / Sept 18:**
Shab-e-Zarbat Imam Ali (AS) is fatally struck
- **Ramadhan 19 / Sept 19:**
Amir-ul-Momineen Imam Ali (AS) injured during Fajr Prayers
- **Ramadhan 21 / Sept 21:**
Night of Martyrdom of Imam Ali (AS)
- **Ramadhan 22 / Sept 22:**
Martyrdom (*Shaadat*):
Imam Ali (AS)
- **Ramadhan 23/ Sept 23:**
Lailat-ul-Qadar
- **Ramadhan 26/ Sept 26:**
Last Friday of Ramadhan Day of Quds
- **Shawaal 1/ Sept 30:**
Eid-ul-Fitr

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-



Giving Back

Br. Syed Mujahid Hussain

"If a believer has the means to help his brother but refuses to do so, Allah (SWT) will dishonor him in this world and in the Hereafter."
Imam Sadiq (AS)

As a volunteer, one needs to understand the value of one's efforts and must always be mindful of the right place to apply them. So it is with organizations as well; they should value these efforts and use them wisely for the sake of the community and the volunteer.

Volunteerism is a *sadaqah* in Islamic terms - a gift given by choice by an individual for the betterment of the community or humanity at large. Since it is given by one's own free will, the rewards are much higher than the obligatory actions required in Islam. Islamic scholars have noted that the rewards for actions of one's own free will are 70 times higher than for obligatory actions in Islam. The building of a masjid, school, hospital or a simple water well may qualify for infinite merits (*thawab-e-jaria*) from the Creator.

There are many verses (*ayat*) in the **Holy Qur'an** that instruct Muslims to help others voluntarily. In fact, there are more *ayat* dealing with voluntary *sadaqah* than the obligatory actions or *zakaah*.

The Islamic Centers, *Masajid* as we know them or the Muslim Congress (MC) simply couldn't function without volunteers. Volunteers run not only the MC and the local Islamic Centers but also the Islamic schools (Sunday), Islamic conferences, workshops, be it *Ramadhan* or *Muharram* Programs, and clinics, that define the Muslim community.

Most people volunteer for the sake of Allah (*SWT*) (*fi-Sabeelillah*), also because the personal rewards are so great. Most people also enjoy the sense of fulfillment or personal satisfaction. Certainly one benefit you gain when you volunteer is learning about your Muslim community. Whether it's organizing a special program, or a dinner on your favorite *Eid Program*, or a *majlis* during the holy months of *Muharram* and *Safar*, getting out of your comfort zone and learning about the rest of the community, their beliefs, and their perspectives is not only valuable, it's also fascinating.

Volunteering certainly forces you to develop leadership skills. Leadership has been defined as an individual's ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to work toward a common goal. As you'd expect, the people you'll be working with will probably be volunteers as well. So, unlike a boss at work, you don't have any of the typical carrots and sticks to get people to do what you want them to do - you can't fire anyone, dole out raises, or assign offices. Basically the only way to get people on board is by exercising leadership. In my opinion, a year of working effectively in a responsible role with other volunteers is worth a half-dozen years of managing paid employees. As one volunteer once told me, "At work, I'll do any crazy kind of thing they ask me to do as long as they keep paying me, but when I'm volunteering my time, I've got to want to do it." Often a volunteer's job is to get other volunteers to want to do the work. In spite of titles and organizational charts, volunteers don't really have bosses.

Another benefit of volunteering is the change of pace that we all need once in a while. For many Muslims, the day job sometimes becomes monotonous and repetitive. Volunteering lets you take on new challenges and exercise skills that your job doesn't utilize. It also helps you grow, professionally, spiritually and personally, as well as get a break from thinking about your "real" job. While some people use hobbies to "get away from it all," most confirmed workaholics (including me) find volunteering a more satisfying way to disengage from work stress and still meet their need for purpose.

You interact with the same people day in and day out. Contrary to what you might think, volunteerism is as much about social interaction as it is about "doing stuff". Volunteer activities expand the circle of people with whom you interact. I met many of my closest friends through my volunteer activities. In most cases, I would have never come into contact with these folks otherwise.

Clearly, a significant volunteer experience will often improve your marketability. Not only does volunteering give you a documented opportunity to develop skills you might never have a chance to try at work, but it also increases your visibility and expands your professional network. If you're enthusiastic about something, volunteering gives you an opportunity to become a change agent, whether this deals with work, your profession, or the community at large. Few things in life are more satisfying than knowing you had a hand in shaping organizational or community policies and the perspectives of others.

Well! Anyone with a little time and motivation can volunteer. All you high school/college students and home

Yadollah Hooshmand

□ Arif Raza

makers can also take advantage of the opportunities for personal growth that volunteering affords, and make a huge difference in your own lives as well as the communities. Don't pass up different types of opportunities to learn skills that will add value and meaning to your lives.

If you're interested in embarking on the volunteer journey, a good way to start is with your Islamic Center, the local *masjid* or MC. Many organizations, including MC, work at least two levels: local and global. For instance, MC is in the process of setting up local chapters, from Ace City to Zen City. For someone who hasn't volunteered before, this is a great place to start. You can learn about your community, exercise leadership skills, develop professional networks, and enjoy a change of pace just as easily locally as globally. In fact, many volunteers find the rewards of volunteering locally are greater than working at the national or international level. If there isn't a MC local chapter nearby, you and 11 other colleagues can form one by contacting the MC office.

Of course, you can volunteer for plenty of other worthy causes. In fact, as society becomes increasingly computerized, people who can find their way around a computer system or write software become ever more valuable as volunteers. Although donating your time is certainly rewarding, it can be even more rewarding to donate both your time and your expertise. To quote from Marian Wright Edelman: "*Service is the rent we pay for living on this planet. It's the very purpose of life, not something you do in your spare time*".

I've also had the absolute pleasure and honor to serve with many wonderful brothers and sisters. I thank each one of these volunteers for giving their time, effort, and expertise to the organizations. They've all made unique and significant contributions to the growth, development and prosperity of Islam in this country. I would also like to thank all these volunteers for contributing to my spiritual growth and affirming my faith in the goodness of human beings.

"Allah (SWT) has servants among His creatures on Earth that people rely on for their worldly as well as spiritual needs. These are the true believers and they are the ones who receive the protection of Allah on the Day of Judgment."
Imam Sadiq (AS)

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Hadith for Thought ¹ : Self - Assessment

Br. Hajj Massoud Nashatizadeh

Once again Br. Hajj Massoud shares his knowledge and thoughts in his own unique style, which is refreshing and thought provoking.

Imam Musa Al Kadhim (AS) has stated:

إِنَّ التَّوَّاضِعَ لَا يَزِيدُ الْعَبْدَ إِلَّا رَفْعَةً
فَتَوَاضَعُوا يَرْفَعَكُمُ اللَّهُ .

*"He is not from us who does not make inquiry of his own self (nafs) each day."
Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (AS)*

Scholars of Islamic ethics consider the self-assessment of one's own deficiencies as one of the highest fundamental principles of struggle, and they have acknowledged it among the most sensible and effective norms of ethical conduct. Preoccupation with one's own weaknesses is a practical means of restraint from becoming engrossed in the weaknesses of others, considering that it is highly impractical for one person to concentrate on two different concerns concurrently. Those who are busy with a constant self-assessment and survey of their own character seldom scrutinize others and, consequently, will remain safe from the perils of prying in this world and the Hereafter. Furthermore, one who investigates the deficiencies of other people will overlook his own weaknesses; he may conceivably conclude that he is free from all blemishes and become immersed in the more destructive vice of conceit (*ujoob*).

It is reported that when Allah (SWT) is pleased with someone, He will make him mindful of his own deficiencies. Accordingly, the heedfulness about one's behavior and understanding of personal shortcomings is a divine blessing. In order to prepare the Muslims for the formidable task of self-purification, Islam has expressly forbidden apathy and prying into the affairs of others, and encourages contemplation and amendment of one's own defects. Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (AS) stated, "*It is the duty of every Muslim to review his deeds once every day and night to attain consciousness of his spiritual and moral deficiencies and attempt to correct them.*" The Holy Prophet (SAWA) said:

"Make assessment of yourselves (your own deeds) before others make assessment of you and examine yourselves before others attempt to

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Publication Dates:

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September, November

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عَلَيْكَ بِالتَّوَاضُّعِ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الْعِبَادَةِ

investigate you."
The Holy Prophet (SAWA)

Islam, in its well-defined scheme of human development, explicitly encourages self-assessment to the extent that it characterizes a true believer as one who regards others as superior in merits and more pious than himself, without losing self-respect and confidence in his own personality. Conversely, Islam emphatically prohibits investigation of others for the purpose of criticism, malice or hostility. Allah (SWT) tell us in the Holy Qur'an that seeking to gain information on the deficiencies of others is a sin and a reprehensible act. The Holy Prophet (SAWA) stated:

مَنْ تَوَاضَّعَ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِإِخْوَانِهِ فَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ. (الامام الحسن المسكوي رحمه الله)

"O you assembly of people who have proclaimed Islam merely with your tongues and have not surrendered with your hearts, do not engage in the pursuit of discovering the shortcomings of Muslims. For those who pursue Muslims to find faults in them, Allah will expose their deficiencies and He will disgrace them."
The Holy Prophet (SAWA)

قَالَ مِنَ التَّوَاضُّعِ أَنْ يَرْضَى الرَّجُلُ بِالْمَجْلِسِ دُونَ الْمَجْلِسِ وَأَنْ يُسَلِّمَ عَلَى مَنْ يَلْقَى وَأَنْ يَتْرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًّا وَلَا يَحِبُّ أَنْ يُحَمَدَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى.

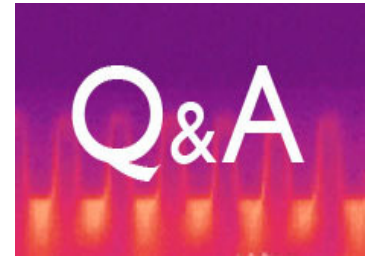
"It is a sufficient disgrace for a man who would see in others the very same thing that he remains blind in regard to himself."
Imam Baqir (AS)

Islam, as an ultimate source of enlightenment and the only impeccable, divine manifesto, explicitly forbids the deprecation of others and exposing their faults. However, it considers inviting constructive criticism from others as an invaluable component of self-purification and an effective means to identify the imperfections present in one's own soul.

1 The pronouns "he, him, and his" or the word 'brother' that are frequently used in this series of "Hadith for Thought" do not pertain to gender. They signify mankind, both male and female.

Ask-The- A'alim

Hujjat-al- Islam, Syed Abbas Aylea answers questions from a group of youth



The Holy Prophet (SAWA) said:

"*Khayrukum khayrukum Leahlihi, wa ana khayrukum Leahlihi*" or

"The best among you is the best towards his family, and I am the best among you towards my family."

The Holy Prophet (SAWA) has said:

"*Iza jaakum man tardhauna Khulqahu wa deenahu fazawwijoohu*"

(*Wasaail ush-shi'ah*, 14, 5)

If a person whose morals and religion (is abiding by the religious teachings) you are pleased with, then marry (your daughter/ son) with him.

Q: 1. What is the primary purpose of marriage in Islam?

A: The primary purpose of marriage, like all other acts, is to obey Allah in His commands and collectively strive to lead a life with your partner in righteousness/faith (*taqwa*). For example, the Holy Prophet (SAWA) asked Imam Ali (AS) on the day after his wedding day, "*kayfa wajadta Fatimah?*" (How did you find Fatimah?) He replied, "*Ne'mal-aun 'ala ta'atillah*" (The best helper in the obedience of Allah).

Q: 2. What is the role of dowry (*mahr*) in an Islamic marriage?

It's an obligatory gift from a husband. Apart from being a Divine obligation, it shows his respect and love for his wife.

Q: 3. What should you look for in a man apart from piety (*taqwa*)?

His Islamic morals, such as respecting his parents, helping the neighbors and the poor, overcoming his anger and lust, controlling his eyes and tongue,

and being polite in his manners and behavior. His efforts in implementing the Divine Values - obedience to Allah (SWT) and His commands, and never forgetting that as a human being he is to glorify Islam in his thoughts and actions.

Q: 4. What should you look for in woman apart from piety (*taqwa*)?

Her Islamic morals, such as mercy, forgiveness, chastity, nobility, morality, amicable attitude, love, respect for parents, dignity and her obedience towards Allah. Her efforts in implementing the Divine values - protecting herself by not becoming the cause of others sin and disobedience to Allah (SWT) "*hayaa*", standing firm for Allah's commands and ignoring the worldly obstacles.

Q: 5. What are some of the rights of a woman in an Islamic marriage?

1. Sustenance from her husband; i.e., food, shelter, medical treatment and other necessities of life, as per her social status.
2. Good moral, respectful, loving behaviour towards her.
3. Being in bed with her at least once in four nights, and a relationship with her at least once in four months, according to the Shariah rules.

Q: 6. What are some of the rights of a man in an Islamic marriage?

1. Wife does not leave the home without his permission or consent.
2. Accommodate him fully in their relationship as long as it does not cause harm to her health or well-being.
3. Does not give Islamic charity (*sadaqah*) from the husbands earning without his permission.

Q: 7. What are some of the obligations of a woman in an Islamic marriage?

Obedience (in the affairs of family life, as long as there is no *haram* demanded, no violation of the *shari'ah*, or it does not cause harm to her and her health), good ethics, an accommodating attitude

Q: 8. What are some of the obligations of a man in an Islamic marriage?

Respect, good ethics, caring behaviour, fulfilling all her Islamically-legitimate needs like dignified housing, food, dress as per her social status (if he can afford) and all her medical expenses etc.

Q: 9. Can a woman set-up conditions before the marriage?

Yes, at the time of the marriage, she can put all the Islamically-permissible conditions (*mubah and jaaiz*), with his agreement and consent, into the Arabic contract of marriage (*seeghat ul-aqd*).

Q: 10. Can the man set-up conditions before the marriage?

Yes, he can also put in all the Islamically-permissible (*mubah and jaaiz*) conditions as mentioned above, with her consent and agreement, at the time of marriage. These can be part of the Arabic contract of marriage to be binding.

Q: 11. What is 'ijbar'?

"*Ijbar*" means to force someone to do anything. This should be avoided.

Q: 12. What are some of the things that are prohibited in an Islamic marriage?

Doing an act or asking the partner to do an act that is considered *haram* in Islam.

Q: 13. Who is responsible for the Islamic education of the children in an Islamic marriage?

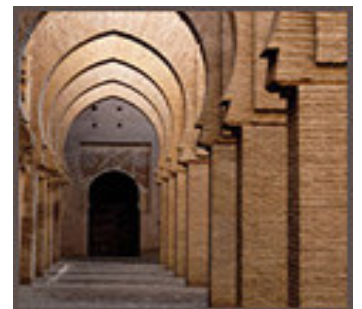
Islamic education is the responsibility of the father in the first place, as he is the sole guardian/custodian '*waleyy*' of the children. Secondly, it is the responsibility of the mother, too.

Q: 14. Please shed some light on the extravagance in a wedding.

Extravagance (*israaf*), and over-spending of any blessing of Allah, including money, in any matter of life is not permissible. In marriage, it sets a bad precedent, and possibly affects the middle or the low economic classes in the society negatively, and may cause embarrassment. The practical life of the Holy Prophet (SAWA) and the *Ahlu'l-Bait* (AS) is the best example.

Muslim Youth Unite for a Weekend of Islamic Fun

Sr. Nessrin



Report of the Youth Camp held in the New Jersey / New York Area

A true example of unity, a collaborative effort by the Muslim Congress and four Islamic Youth Groups in NJ/NY, was witnessed at a successful Youth Camp on the weekend of May 17-18, 2008 in Freehold, NJ. The host of the event, *Bayt Wali al Asr*, along with the Hyderi Youth Group, Mohammadia Youth Group, and Shah-e-Najaf Center of Long Island, came together for the first time and presented an exceptional weekend of Islamic educational activities, interactive discussion, food-for-thought, outdoor activities, and more. With approximately 125 attendees ranging in age and ethnicity, the event was marked in its diversity and enthusiasm.

In an effort to present to the youth an informative program that provided insight and guidance in their everyday life, the theme of the camp was "*Amr bil Ma'roof and Nahi anil Munkar*" or "Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil", one of the most important obligations in Islam. The program featured engaging lectures and interactive workshops by four distinguished speakers: Hujjat-al-Islam Syed Abbas Aleya from Seattle, Hujjat-al-Islam Mohammad Baig from Tampa, Sister Syeda Z. Naqvi from Detroit and Hujjat-al-Islam Abdul-Jaleel from Maryland. The practical application and implementation of

enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, its importance, as well as its impact was discussed.

The feedback from the camp attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many found the information presented to be useful and walked away with a better idea of their obligations to become a productive member of the Muslim society. For example, Sister Nichole Burruss, who came all the way from Kentucky expressed, "The conference materials were presented in a professional and organized manner. I really appreciated having the PowerPoint presentations of the speakers in order to more efficiently take notes and pay attention to the speaker, instead of trying to write everything down. Hujjat-al-Islam Syed Abbas Aleya, thoroughly introduced the theme of the camp and supported it with Qur'anic and Islamic anecdotes. I was sad that I didn't have the opportunity to hear from Hujjat-al-Islam Abdul-Jaleel but Hujjat-al-Islam Mohammad Baig and Sister Syeda Zahida Naqvi were very engaging as well. I appreciated how both days of the camp had opportunities for people to ask questions of the scholars. The ability to interact with scholars at these functions in addition to learning from them are the two most important elements. I appreciated that both men and women were in the same room and that proper hijab was observed. Often times other functions segregate the group and seeing the speaker or hearing the speaker can become difficult, but *Alhamdulillah* this was not the case. The theme of the camp - enjoining the good and forbidding the evil - is rarely addressed in a practical sense for youth to learn from and actually apply to their lives, and I feel that this camp offered many tools and lessons to take back to our communities and use in our everyday lives. I met many wonderful youth who were also seeking to improve their *deen*, and this camp with its workshops, lectures, Q & A sessions, and activities did a lot to help with that endeavor. May Allah (*SWT*) grant us many more opportunities like this."

Another attendee and volunteer, Shabeer Wali from NJ, who is actively involved with the Mohammadia Youth Group, reported afterwards, "I was amazed. *Mashallah* this past weekend was a one of a kind experience. I met a lot of new people and was able to make new bonds and friendships. Not to mention, I learned a great deal about *amr bil maroof and nahy anil munkar*, and how to carry-out these actions in accordance with the *sharia*."

The participation and enthusiasm throughout the program was remarkable as Sister Sophia Spadavecchia from NJ witnessed and commented, "The turnout was fantastic and the lectures were superb. It was a jam-packed one and a half days, and I personally am so happy that I was able to participate in the event. *Enshallah* we can continue to work all together and have more events of this kind and different ones too."

The camp also presented the opportunity for new friendships and bonding between brothers and sisters through recreational activities and the overnight stay at host houses for sisters and the center for brothers. This was an economical incentive for the youth while providing them a "camp" environment and a great way to know each other.

The success of this spiritual journey was not possible without the efforts of the organizers and volunteers, the participation of the attendees, the presence of the distinguished scholars, and more importantly, the blessings of Allah (*SWT*). Many inquired about future events of similar caliber. Much to their delight, the camp marked the beginning of future programs to come - so keep your eyes and ears open and we will keep you posted as we look forward with your ideas and participation!

Historic Launch:

A Contemporary Tafsir of the Noble Qur'an

Br. Siraj Ali



On May 24, 2008, a contemporary *tafsir* or book of interpretation and commentary on the **Noble Qur'an** was launched by the Islamic Society of York Region. This new commentary on the **Qur'an** is entitled "**The Ascendant Qur'an - Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture**", and it is written by Imam Mohammad al-Asi.

Perhaps the immediate question that comes to mind is, "Do we really need another *tafsir* of the **Qur'an**? Don't we already have so many books of *tafsir* written in so many thick volumes, collecting dust on the book shelves?" True, there are many books of *tafsir*; however, this *tafsir* was written during different times, in a different environment and in response to different challenges faced by the Muslim *Ummah* (community).

Muslim scholars in the past have sought inspiration from the **Qur'an** to guide them in their struggles. The early **Qur'anic** interpreters (*mufassirin*) focused on the spiritual aspects because that was the greatest challenge facing the Muslim *Ummah* in their time. Later generations adopted a philosophical approach to the study of the **Qur'an**, while others highlighted the historical background and the context in which certain verses were revealed. All of these intellectual books of *tafsir* served to solve the evolving needs and requirements of the Muslim *Ummah*.

At this time, the Muslim *Ummah* is struggling against occupation and injustice under the guise of freedom and democracy. Many of the Muslims are still unable to make a connection to the oft-repeated descriptions of the Pharaohs and Nimrods of the **Qur'an** with the present day oppressors. Many are still fumbling to recognize the present day hypocrites among Muslims that are offering their mudslinging services against Islam and Muslims in order to make quick bucks and to get into the lime light, despite the fact that the noble **Qur'an** contains one complete chapter with the title "The Hypocrite" (*Al-Munafiqoon*). There are many books of *tafsir* written by many intellectual *mufassirin* in the past, but very few specifically address our current struggles and challenges.

In this current era, the Muslim *Ummah* is struggling to deconstruct the language hitherto at the core of the so-called international political debate. For example: "collateral damage" is a term used for wholesale destruction of life, property and civilian infrastructure of an unfortunate Muslim country; "bringing democracy" is a code for occupation and pillage; "targeted killing" is unmitigated assassination of political opponents; "security wall" is an apartheid wall designed to unilaterally occupy Muslim's land, and divide and truncate communities and families; "clash of civilizations" is a tool to dehumanize Muslims and create ideological grounds for occupation and pillage of their lands and economies; "Islamofascism" is a neo-fascist label that is affixed to any political party, individual, or society which could be dehumanized, brutalized, pauperized, jailed, killed, executed, tortured, conquered, occupied, or pillaged with impunity; "United Nations" is an extension of the imperial foreign policy of the US, a clean-up crew that would inevitably show up after the terror unleashed by the regular forces and the 'Security Contractors' of the 'Empire', a kind of postmortem engagement that may lead to dismembering the victim. The list goes on and on... Although a contrary persuasion would likely be acquiescent of the actions that ought to be condemned, one of the primary duties of an intellectual writing the *tafsir* (*mufassir*) in this challenging time is to state the obvious. The recently

launched *tafsir* by Imam Mohammad al-Asi is serving this lofty purpose. It is written without any fear and without any favour; the only fear and favor anticipated is from the Almighty. This great commentary is published by the Crescent International Newspapers Inc. for The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT). ICIT has always stood up against injustice and oppression, and is one among the few shining lights standing on its own against US administration's / zionist aggression.

This great work by Imam Mohammed al-Asi should serve our *Ummah* as a means to understand the current problems and to address them in earnest. It should help us to make a connection to the present day Pharaohs and Nimrods, and identify those Muslim scholars, who, blinded by money, do not see anything other than the 'Empire' way. It should serve to identify those "Muslims of convenience", busy advancing the neocon / zionist agenda. It should help our *Ummah* to revolutionize our thinking toward changing our society, where changing our society will lead to changing our governments such that we will genuinely begin seeking resolutions through dialogue as opposed to thuggery, and we will work for the greater good as opposed to working for morally bankrupted multinational neocon / zionist corporations.

While the cover price is \$60 (it is 500 pages in hardback and beautifully bound), we are offering it to Muslims for \$30 plus shipping (Shipping costs: Canada: \$6.40/copy; US: \$9.60/copy). Copies can be ordered directly from:
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Fadak: The Property of Fatimah (SA)

Br. Syed H. Akhtar



Introduction

Fadak was a piece of property situated in the valley of Madinah that had seven villages and included fertile areas and oases. After the downfall of the fort at Khaibar, the nobles of the area made a peace treaty with the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) and gave the land of Fadak as a gift to the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*). Half of it was for the *Ummah* and half for the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*). On divine instructions, Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) gave it as a gift to his daughter Fatimah (*SA*).

At the time that Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) died, the property was in the possession of Fatimah (*SA*). However, the property was taken away from Fatimah (*SA*) by the Caliph of the time, citing a disputed hadith that "*Holy Prophets do not leave inheritance.*" She and her family were deprived of the property; Fadak was designated as public property.

Fatimah contested the ruling with the argument from the **Qur'an**. The testimony of Imam Ali (*AS*) and Umm Ayman was considered "not sufficient." Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (*AS*) were considered minors and their testimony was not admissible. Furthermore, even if it were considered an inheritance, Fatimah (*SA*) proved that the "inheritance hadith" was false from evidence in the **Qur'an**, where it states that Holy Prophet Solomon inherited Holy Prophet David's estate, and Holy Prophet Zakariya had prayed for an heir and was granted a son (**Qur'an** 27:16 and 19:5-6). These arguments were not accepted by the authorities.

Afterwards, the Caliph, in light of Fatimah's anger and extreme displeasure, issued a document to return Fadak to her. However, for economic and political reasons, the order was never implemented during his Caliphate. Fadak was not returned to Fatimah (*SA*) in her lifetime, subjecting her to extreme pain, in addition to political, social isolation, and financial hardship. Fatimah (*SA*) was so hurt that she resolved never to speak to the rulers involved in this injustice. She also executed a will stating that those responsible for denying her Fadak should not be allowed to attend her funeral services. Imam Ali (*AS*) carried out this instruction.

A short history of Fadak after Fatimah (SA)

The second Caliph and the third Caliph continued to occupy the property. The third Caliph gave it to his own cousin, Marwan ibn Al-Hakam. Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan took the property away from Marwan and split it into three parts. One part remained with Marwan ibn Al-Hakam, and he split the other two parts between Amr ibn Uthman bin Affan and his own son Yazid.

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, when he became Caliph (99 AH), declared that the original owners of Fadak were the family of Fatimah (*SA*), and ordered his governor in Madinah to **give back** Fadak to the children of Fatimah (*SA*). However, when Yazid ibn Al-Malik succeeded his father, he seized Fadak once again from the children of Imam Ali (*AS*). It then came into the possession of Banu-Umayyah, and remained with the Umayyads until Bani Abbas came to power.

Abul-Abbas Abdullah As-Saffah, when he became the first Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty (AH 132), ordered that Fadak be **given back** to the children of Fatimah (*SA*). Yet again, when Mohammad Abu Jafar Abdullah al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi became Caliph (136 AH), seized Fadak from the descendants of Fatimah (*SA*). Mohammad Al-Mahdi ibn Al-Mansur, when he became Caliph, **returned** Fadak to the descendants of Fatimah (*SA*). Musa Al-Hadi ibn Al-Mahdi, when he succeeded to the Caliphate (169 AH), seized Fadak from the descendants of Fatimah (*SA*), once again, and his brother Harun Al-Rashid acquired it thereafter.

Al-Mamun Al-Abbasi, when he became Caliph (210 AH), he was showing his readiness to return Fadak to the descendants of Fatimah (SA), and publicly acknowledged that Fadak legitimately belonged to Fatimah (SA). Jafar Al-Mutawakkil, when he came to power (232 AH), enforced the orders to keep Fadak from the descendants of Fatimah (SA).

Al-Muntasir succeeded Al-Mutawakkil (247 AH) and gave orders to **restore** Fadak to the descendants of Fatimah (SA). Subsequently, they lost it after the death of Al-Muntasir.

Al-Mutadid (279 AH) **restored** Fadak to the descendants of Fatimah (SA); however, it was again **seized** by Al-Muqtafi (289 AH).

Although Al-Muqtadir in 295 AH **restored** Fadak to the children of Fatimah (SA), subsequently, Fadak fell again into the hands of usurpers. No further history of Fadak is available.

Epilogue

Thus, we learn that the Fadak property changed ownership more than 16 times over a period of about 300 years. Given how easily Fadak was taken away from the lawful owners at any given time, the usurpers were in control of Fadak throughout history. Presently, Fadak is under the control of despotic Saudi monarchy and unfortunately, is in an extremely run-down condition.

The prime reason that Fadak was not returned to Fatimah (SA) was the exact opposite of the reason why Holy Prophet (SAWA) did give it to her. The Holy Prophet (SAWA) gave it to her upon the command of Allah **"And render to the kindred their due rights.."** (Qur'an 17:26) ("*wa aati zal-qurba haqqahu*"), so as to strengthen the *Walayah, Khilafat* and Government of Imam Ali (AS). That means this major source of income was meant to be the economic backbone of Imam Ali's (AS) future government, providing jobs to the locals in Madinah and earning good revenue. The balance of financial power would have been thus tipped in his favour, which in turn would have helped his political power. Politics and economics always go hand-in-hand.

This underlying financial rationale for denying Fatimah (SA) and her descendants their right to the land of Fadak is also revealed in the interaction of Mamoon ar-Rasheed and Imam al-Kadhim (AS). When Mamoon ar-Rasheed offered Fadak back to Imam al-Kadhim (AS), the Imam refused as he knew his intention. When Mamoon asked him to define the boundaries of Fadak, Imam al-Kadhim (AS) gave the boundaries of Mamoon's entire government. When Mamoon heard that, he remarked that what the Imam actually wanted was the government, not just the Fadak gardens. He was right in this conclusion, because Fadak was given by the Holy Prophet (SAWA) upon the command of Allah (SWT) for the purpose of strengthening the Imam and Government of Imam Ali (AS) and the Imam.

So as a matter of fact, Fadak was never truly returned. *Ensha'Allah*, Fadak will be returned to the control of *Ahlul-Bait* (AS) in the time of our *Waleyy ul-Asr's* (AS) rule *Ensha'Allah*.

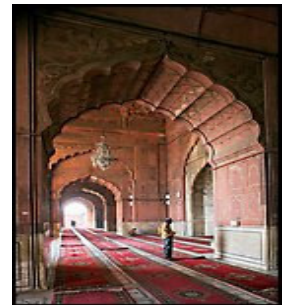
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2. **Nahjul Balagha, Peak of Eloquence, sermons, letters and sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib**, translated by Sayed Ali Reza, published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, inc., Elmhurst, NY. 1996 edition. Letter #45, Misconception #1: Allah is "God of the Muslims"

The Holy Prophet's Etiquette

Br. Syed Hadi Abedi



Since the dawn of civilization, mankind has seen personalities that have changed societies and thus changed the course of history. Such personalities generally fall under two main categories: 'Divine personalities' and 'people who rose from the society'.

People, on basis of their own thinking or under the influence of another's teachings, have propagated the ideas that they thought would bring a positive change in the society. At times these propagations were slow and sometimes revolutionary. Many of these people drowned in their own revolution, and many suffered due to their theories.

Some of them, after a short while, totally changed their views and turned away from their own teachings and beliefs, while others surrendered themselves to the group against which they were working. No doubt history counts many who initially succeeded; their teachings led to good results and were adopted by societies but were forgotten or were not useful or applicable after some time. Sometimes, good teachings were corrupted by foolish followers or wise enemies.

Divine personalities or Messengers have based all their teachings in the same single source, and guided human societies. All their teachings were similar and were as their societies needed. Although their teachings were challenged, they were never defeated or altered. The success of their teachings is because:

1. the teachings, commands, orders and decisions were from the All-wise, the All-knowing Allah (SWT);
2. these teachings were meant to change the existing societies and were to fulfill the requirements of the time;
3. the teachings and commands took into account human nature and temperament; and
4. the teachings and commands of those Divine Messengers are being practiced without any alteration or corruption, where true followers had the ability and

qualifications to protect them from alteration and corruption by wise enemies and or blind followers.

The Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) belongs to the group whose true followers had the vision, faith, qualifications and ability to protect the teachings and commands from the corruption and alteration during the last 1400 years.

Muslims and non-Muslims all admit openly that the revolution and change that the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) brought and implemented in a short span of 23 years, changed the world forever. On close scrutiny, one finds that all of this was possible because of the way he approached people, teaching, and etiquette.

Hazrat Uday ibn Hatam at-Taaie is considered to be a great companion of the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*), Imam Ali (*AS*) and Imams Hasan and Hussain (*AS*). During the reign of Imam Ali (*AS*), Uday lived in Kufa and fought bravely in the battles of Jamal, Siffeen and Nahravan. Uday lost an eye in the battle of Jamal. His two sons were martyred in the battle of Siffeen. Uday remained faithful to the Ahlul-Bait (*AS*) and their cause during his life and he died in 68 A.H. at the age of 120.

Uday ibn Hatam at-Taaie's conversion to Islam

After the conquest of Makkah in 8 A.H., the Holy Ka'ba was purified of all idols, i.e., they were removed from it. The Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*) sent small groups of Muslims to destroy other idols around Makkah. The Taie tribe had a big idol. To destroy it, a group of 150 armed Muslims were sent. Uday was alerted about this fact and escaped safely with his family and belongings to Syria, which was the center of Christian activities. Uday's sister Safana was left behind, and was captured as a prisoner and brought to Madinah. Safana along with the other prisoners were kept in a house near the Holy Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid e Nabi*). According to Safana, one day as the Messenger was passing by the prisoner's house to perform his daily prayers in the Mosque, she saw an opportunity and stood in front of him and said, *"O, Messenger of God, my father has died and my guardian has disappeared, please be kind to me, God will be kind to you."*

The Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*) enquired as to the identity of her guardian? She replied that it was her brother Uday son of Hatam. The Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) asked, *"The same person who turned his back on Allah and his Messenger and took shelter in Syria?"* Then the Holy Prophet proceeded to the Mosque. This was repeated on the second day without any result.

Safana has mentioned that she was disappointed and had lost all hope to get any help from the Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*). So she made up her mind not to talk any more. But the next day, when the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) was passing on the way to the Mosque, a young man who was following the Holy Prophet gave her a sign to stand up and repeat the request. Safana says the young man's sign gave her new hope and strength. She stood up and repeated the request for the third time.

This time the Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) said, *"Be patient, I have decided to send you back to your birth place with a trustworthy person, but for the time being it is not possible."* Safana recalled later that the young man who was following him was Imam Ali (*AS*).

After a few days, Safana came to know that a caravan was leaving from Madinah toward Syria in which some people from her tribe were also present. She sought permission from the Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*) to undertake the journey. She was provided by the Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*) with money to cover her journey's expenses, one camel to travel, and clothes to wear. She reached Syria and joined her brother Uday and his family.

Uday son of Hatam at-Taaie asked his sister Safana's opinion about the Holy Prophet of Islam (*SAWA*). She said, *"I have seen in him many excellent virtues, good qualities and habits, and would suggest that you develop a relationship with him without further delay, because if he is the Messenger of God, then the virtue will be for one who develops a relationship with him sooner, and if he is only a ruler, then also you will be benefited from his friendship."*

Uday was moved by his sister's suggestion and traveled to Madinah to meet the Holy Prophet of Islam. On reaching Madinah he went directly to the Mosque. The Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) was present in the Mosque, so Uday took the liberty of introducing himself. Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) then invited Uday to his house. On the way, an old lady stopped him and talked for a while. Uday says, *"I saw him listening to the old lady with full attention and replying with full humbleness and respect. I was impressed by his great etiquette and was sure that he can not be a normal ruler."*

On entering the Holy Prophet's house, Uday saw his humble and simple living quarters, and was deeply impressed. Uday saw that there was only one mat of palm leaves on the floor. Uday was invited to sit on this simple mat, and Holy Prophet (*SAWA*) made himself comfortable sitting on the bare floor. Here was the most powerful ruler of the land, sitting in front of Uday on the bare floor. Uday was astonished at his simplicity and humbleness. *"From his high manners and etiquette I realized he is not an ordinary person or ruler,"* says Uday.

"Holy Prophet (SAWA) started talking to me about my life's private and secret matters and mentioned each and every thing correctly," Uday says. He continues, *"He was completely satisfied that he is the Messenger of Allah."* Uday accepted Islam before he returned to Syria.

Dear Believers - Politeness and courtesy, compassion and tenderness, simplicity and humility, sympathy and sincerity, generosity and nobility, dignity and greatness, responsibility and patience, honesty and chastity, sociability and modesty, bravery and forgiveness, bonds of relationship, and to fulfill one's promise are just some of the teachings of our great Holy Prophet (*SAWA*).

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5. Seare Halbiya, Vol. 3
6. Kamel Ibn Aseer, Vol. 2
7. Maghazi Waqdi, Vol.3

Career Guidance:
Journalist

VOW has started a new column to highlight the professions available to Muslims in

this country. VOW hopes and prays that this series will help and guide young members of our community in selecting a profession and serving the Muslim Community.



Sr. Samira B. Rizvi is a journalist currently working as an online community editor for the Houston Chronicle. We are thankful that Sr. Samira took the time to answer some questions about her profession.

What attracted you to this profession?

I love learning about everything and I enjoy writing; journalism is a combination of having general knowledge and the skills to explain what is happening.

How long have you been in this profession?

5 years

Any special training needed for this profession?

A few internships for experience

How much schooling after high school is needed for this career?

A bachelor's degree is mandatory.

What subjects should one be taking in high school for this career?

Being involved with the high school newspaper or yearbook is good, plus a strong English background and interest in history, politics and/or the sciences. A journalist does not just have to know about politics. There is a great need for journalists with strengths in every subject, like medicine or science.

How much schooling after college / university is needed for this career?

A bachelor's degree is the only degree you need to get an internship or an entry-level job. A master's degree will help if you want to pursue a higher editor position in management.

What subjects should one be taking in college / university for this career?

Communication courses, such as theory and statistics, history, political courses, a foreign language is good, too.

Did someone influence you to enter this career?

No

Was one of the faculty members a mentor to you? If so, how did you find your mentor? How did this person influence you throughout your education?

Yes. I had a very good professor who mentored me on what I needed to achieve success in my field. He always gave me good advice.

What is an average work week like for you with your responsibilities?

I work days and often I have to finish work from home, because there is no break from the news. Things are always happening and a journalist has to be willing to work actively. Now that I work online, I have to talk to reporters about stories and blogs, and making sure we keep our websites updated.

What are the challenges and rewards of being in this profession?

I enjoy getting news out to the community and having local readers feel involved in their local news product. It is nice to see readers reach out and want to be a part of the process. On the other hand, it is hard sometimes to see stories about Muslims or Islam in a negative light.

Why should students consider a career in this field today?

Muslims are few and far between in the media. If Muslims are in the news, we need Muslims to cover, edit and produce those stories. Otherwise they will come out wrong. And if this happens, we will be held responsible.

What keeps you interested in staying in this field?

I know I can contribute given my Islamic background and my strengths in writing and editing. If Allah has blessed me with this talent, I need to use it for Islam. I also truly enjoy the work in covering the ever-changing world. No day is the same as the next. I never get bored at my job.

What advice would you give to the student who is considering a career in this field?

Make sure you get your parents' support because you will almost always run into a night shift or having to travel for a story or a job.

How can you serve Islam or the Muslim Community in your chosen career?

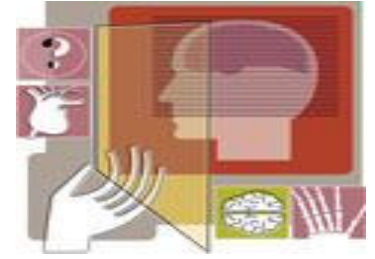
I can make sure that stories dealing with Muslims or Islam are accurate and edited correctly. It is my job to make sure that stories that people read about Muslims or Islam do not have twisted information. I can also be a positive role model in this regard.

Are you willing to mentor or provide some counseling to students who looking for a career in this field?

Yes, *Ensha'Allah*.

Health: Psychiatry

Dr. Syed Eqbal DPM; MRCPsych UK



Psychiatry is a field of medicine that deals with diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. It integrates the biological, social, and psychological aspects of mental health to provide medical care for a wide range of conditions.

Common psychiatric conditions include depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Research shows that occurrence rates of mental illness are generally consistent throughout the world. Yet it is known that people of from Middle Eastern countries, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, or China, are less likely to seek care for their mental health needs. A strong stigma related to mental disorders still exists. Other barriers include access to health care and awareness of needs. Often needs are ignored and care is delayed until conditions are quite advanced, sometimes requiring hospital admission. Delay in seeking care for mental health conditions often takes a heavy toll on individuals and families. An individual may not reach his or her full potential while struggling with conditions like depression or anxiety. Academic achievement, work productivity, and relationships often suffer. Many conditions can be quite easily managed by mental health professionals, thus allowing individuals to achieve their full potential.

Immigrants from the countries mentioned above in America often go through significant stress while struggling to establish their lives in this country. Cultural differences and differences in family values can be challenging to accept and adjust to. Parents often struggle with allowing their children to integrate into the Western societies while trying to preserve their own ethnic identity. Mental health issues such as domestic violence and addictions although fairly common are often minimized and ignored in families from the countries mentioned above. Memory problems such as Alzheimer's dementia are prevalent amongst the ageing population. Frequently a family member gets blamed and beliefs in black magic and evil spirits, etc. prevail. People often take their mental health issues to so-called spiritual healers who charge large sums of money and run TV ads claiming to have curing powers over the telephone.

Depression is a condition that is two times more common in women than in men throughout the world. Immigrant women from the countries mentioned above in America have special needs that often go unnoticed: Lower literacy rates and social isolation pose unique barriers; and many women have the "family first" attitude and conceal mental health issues for fear of bringing shame on their families in the US and back home. They are expected to be tough and cope with issues on their own. Domestic abuse and neglect are denied, sometimes even when questioned by protective agencies.

The lower level of mental health care being sought by the Asian population is quite unfortunate as many conditions can be improved, allowing the group to do well as a whole. There are many Asian psychiatrists in America who are familiar with cultural issues, and language need not be a barrier. Several Asian psychiatrists are specialists in areas of mental health such as childhood and adolescence, addictions, women's health and geriatrics. There is a movement to raise awareness and organizations such as the Indo American Psychiatric Association are promoting access to care. Treatment usually consists of medication and therapy. Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT or "shock treatment") is also used. Treatments used in psychiatry today are based on research, and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration authority) holds a strict standard for approving medications. Other governing bodies such as the APA (American Psychiatric Association) and AACAP (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) exist. NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) helps educate family members of those with mental illness.

Feedback Solicitation

If you would like to contribute towards future issues of **VOW**, the bi-monthly Muslim Congress newsletter, please send an email with your content, write-up or suggestions to newsletter@musimcongress.org. You can also email questions to be answered by an *A'alim* in our 'Ask-the-*A'alim*' section. Thank you.

**"Islam is founded on five pillars: *Salat, Zakat, Hajj, Sawm (fasting), and Walayah; People took the first four, and left this (Walayah).*
I swear to Allah, they cannot complete/perfect the four, unless they complete them through the fifth one (Walayah)"**
Hadith of Imam al-Baqir (AS) narrated in al-Kaafi, by Zurarah ibn Aayan.