



Islamic Center Newsletter

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CALENDAR

MONTHLY GATHERING

April 24, 2004

APRIL 2004

HOST FAMILIES

Tahir & Nabila Shareef
Parwin Arsala

MAY 2004

HOST FAMILIES

Rahim & Alicia Shah

ICNEF BOARD MEETING

April 25, 2004
2:00pm

DEADLINE FOR MAY'S NEWSLETTER

May 7, 2004

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SAFAR

Safar is the second month of the Islamic calendar

ABOUT THE MONTH OF SAFAR:

This time of the year was considered to be cursed, as many catastrophes and calamities took place. However, this belief has been proven to be false and totally without foundation (absurd).

This can also be confirmed by the following hadith: Hadhrat Jaabir (RA) has said that, "I have heard the Prophet (PBUH) saying, the descending of illness and evil superstition befalling in the month of Safar is untrue." (Muslim)

EVENTS OF SAFAR:

- 1) The Battle of Abwaa took place on 12th Safar in the year 2 AH
- 2) The Battle of Khaibar took place in the year 7 AH

MATRIMONIES IN SAFAR:

Hadhrat Ali (RA) married Hadhrat Fatima (R.A.), (the daughter of the Prophet Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in the latter days of Safar 2 AH

HABASHA AND THE NEGUS

It was a Christian king in a predominantly Christian land who gave the small, persecuted community of early Muslims in the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad's mission. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon the Prophet.

The Muslims sought refuge in Habasha, modern day Ethiopia, after suffering starvation and torture at the hands of the polytheistic Makkans. The Prophet Muhammad said about the Negus and Habasha: "a king rules without injustice, a land of truthfulness."

Muslims were welcomed, were protected and lived in peace with the Christians of Habasha. But this did not sit well with the Makkans, who did not want to see them leave Makkah or want the message of Islam to flourish in peace.

They sent special envoys with gifts and lies about the Muslims to convince the Negus to send the Muslims back to Makkah.

They told the Negus that this "new" faith took pride in insulting not just ancestral Makkan beliefs, but the beliefs of Christians as well.

Another king may have simply taken their word and automatically kicked the Muslims out. The Negus did not. He ordered that the leader of the Muslim community come to his court and explain Islam's position.

Enter Jafar ibn Abu Talib, early Muslim refugee to Habasha, and cousin of the Prophet.

Not only did he eloquently explain the message of Islam and the persecution of those who accepted this truthful message, he also recited the opening verses of Surah 19 of the Quran, Surah Maryam or Mary, after the Negus asked him to recite part of Quran.

King Negus listened to the recitation of the Quran in focused attention. He cried as he listened, so much so that his beard got wet. When Jafar completed the recitation, Negus said, "Surely this Revelation and the Revelation of Jesus were from the same Source." Then to the two Makkan ambassadors, he said, "By God, I will not hand over these persons to you."

But the story does not end here. The Makkans would not give up so easily. They asked the king to find out what the Muslims' view of Jesus and his Divinity were, knowing of course, the difference in Christian and Muslim position regarding Jesus.

Again, Jafar responded, with no compromise of principles, just the simple, clear Truth: 'He (Jesus) is God's servant and Messenger; a spirit and a word from God that He bestowed on the Virgin Mary.'

Upon hearing this, Negus picked up a straw from the ground and said:

'By God, Jesus was not even as much as one straw more than what you have said about him.'

He returned the gifts of the Quraysh and told them he was not used to taking bribes and the Muslims would remain under his protection.

This was an early victory for positive Muslim-Christian relations.

RABIA AL-ADAWIYYA OF BASRA

By Homa Mojadidi

Consider the state of the God-fearing women and say [to your own soul]. "O my soul, be not content to be less than a woman, for a man is contemptible if he comes short of a woman, in respect of her religion, and [her relation] to this world." (p 133)

Nowhere in Islam do we see better evidence of women's spiritual equality with men than in Sufism, where the only criteria for achieving one's goal is annihilation of the ego and striving towards complete union with the Beloved, and no woman better embodied these qualities than Rabia Al-Adawiyya of Basra. Rabia not only achieved one of the highest spiritual states achieved only by a select few of God's friends (Awliya ullah), but she also surpassed her contemporary fellow sufis in her quest for eradicating all thought of self in her unselfish and infinite love for God.

Her contemporary sufi friend, Hasan of Basra, says this of her: "I passed one whole night and day with Rabia, speaking of the Way and the Truth, and it never passed through my mind that I was a man nor did it occur to her that she was a woman, and at the end when I looked at her, I saw myself a bankrupt (i.e., spiritually worth nothing), and Rabia as truly sincere." (p 14)

Rabia's love for God was so consuming that she did not want to be distracted from it for even a moment by such worldly concerns as marriage. Refusing numerous lucrative offers of marriage, her response to one of her suitors was:

"The contract of marriage is for those who have a phenomenal existence (i.e. who are concerned with the affairs of this material world). Here (i.e. in my case) existence has ceased, since I have ceased to exist and have passed out of Self. My existence is in Him, and I am altogether His. I am in the shadow of His command. The marriage contract must be asked for from Him, not from me" (p 13).

The degree of Rabia's reliance (tawakkul) on God was such that she repeatedly rejected offers of worldly comfort from her friends. One of her friends, after having "once found her lying on an old rush mat, with a brick under her head to serve as a pillow and drinking and making her ablution from a cracked jar," said to her, "I have rich friends and if you wish, I will take something from them for you." But Rabia refused this and other such offers because she once heard a voice saying:

“Have a care, if you desire it, I will endow you with all the pleasures of this world, but I shall take concern for Me out of your heart, for such concern and the pleasures of this world cannot dwell together in one heart. O Rabia, you have a desire and I have a desire, I cannot combine my desire and your desire in one heart” (p 22).

Rabia’s response to this voice was:

“When I heard this warning, then I separated my heart from worldly things and so cut off my worldly hopes that for thirty years every prayer which I have performed, I have prayed as if it were my last, and I have cut myself off from the creatures so that when day broke, from fear lest anyone should distract me from Him, I have said, “O Lord, make me occupied with myself, lest they should distract me from Thee” (p 22).

When Rabia’s friends offered to purchase a servant for her she said, “Verily, I should be ashamed to ask for worldly things from Him to Whom the world belongs, and how should I ask for them from those to whom it does not belong?” (p 21)

Her degree of perseverance, even in the face of physical suffering, was such that when Sufyan Thawri visited her when she was sick and said that if she would utter a prayer, God would relieve her of her suffering, Rabia said, “O Sufyan, do you not know who it is that wills this suffering for me, is it not God Who wills it?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “When you know this, why do you bid me ask for what is contrary to His will? It is not well to oppose one’s Beloved” (p 24).

Once when due to illness, she briefly neglected her night prayers, she saw a woman in her dream who said:

“Your prayers were light and your worship rest,
Your sleep was ever a foe to prayer,
Your life was an opportunity which you neglected, and a preparation
It passed on and vanished slowly and perished.” (p27)

It is reported that after this vision, Rabia never slept at night. She used to go up on her roof and pray, “O my Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed, and kings have shut their doors and every lover is alone with his beloved, and here am I alone with Thee” (p27)

In her book, *Rabia Basri: The Mystic and her Fellow Saints in Islam*, Margaret Smith says this about Rabia’s station among her fellow mystics, “Rabia was greatly revered by the Sufis and practically all the great Sufi writers speak of her teaching, and quote her saying, as being one of the highest authority” (p 46). “Attar says of her, “Rabia was unique, because in her relations (with God) and her

knowledge (of things Divine) she had no equal; she was highly respected by all the great (mystics) of her time and she was a decisive proof, i.e. an unquestioned authority, to her contemporaries” (p 46).

Margaret Smith says that “[Rabia] was one of the first to teach the doctrine of disinterested love to God, a new conception to many of fellow Sufis, who for the most part served God in hope of eternal reward or in fear of eternal punishment” (p 94). One of her famous prayers exemplifies her concept of disinterested love to God, “O my Lord, whatever share of this world Thou does bestow on my, bestow it on Thine enemies, and whatever share of the next world Thou dost give me, give it to Thy friends. Thou art enough for me” (p30).

Rabia’s closeness to God was such that once when “overcome by a dread of judgment, she prayed, “O my God, will Thou burn in Hell a heart that loves Thee?” and she heard an unseen voice speaking to her inner consciousness, “O Rabia, We shall not do this. Do not think of Us an Evil thought” (p 30).

Rabia’s biographer gives the following account of her death. He says:

At her last moments many pious folk were sitting around her and she bade them, “Rise and go out; for a moment leave the way free for the messengers of God Most High”. All rose and went out and when they had closed the door, they heard the voice of Rabia making her profession of faith and they heard a voice saying, “O soul at rest, return to thy Lord, satisfied with Him, giving satisfaction to Him. So enter among My servants and enter into My Paradise”(p 44).

(Source used: *Rabia Basri: The Mystic and her Fellow Saints in Islam* by Margaret Smith)

Weeping when alone is singled out because being alone is a time when the heart tends to become harder and there is a stronger motive to commit sin, and it is farthest removed from the possibility of showing off. So if a person strives to do this, and makes himself feel the greatness and might of Allah, and his eyes flow with tears, then he deserves to be beneath the shade of the Throne of the Most Merciful on the Day when there will be no shade but His shade.

DO NOT MISS UNDERSTANDING ISLAM • Television Program

Every Saturday and Sunday, 5:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M.

Comcast Cable TV - Jacksonville Florida - Channel 24 or 29

Also watch 'Faith To Faith' Program of Discussion

Among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Scholars at 5:30 and 9:30 pm.

Check Local Listings

www.understandingislam.org

KNOWING THE QUR'AN

Marwan Shaikh

This article is the second in a multiple part series summarizing the book, How to Approach and Understand the Qur'an by Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo. To recall, our last discussion involved understanding what Allah (SWT) says about the Qur'an and then to understand our obligation towards it. Today, we will focus on the results of correctly approaching and understanding the Qur'an.

To see the effects of the Qur'an on people, we must analyze the lives of those who knew it best: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his Companions (RA). Pre-Islamic Arabs, much like the rest of the world, were in a state of loss. Drinking, arrogance, and lack of respect for women were among the many problems existing in that society. Islam came to change all that. It brought morals and corrected their distorted values. It brought them from the depths of darkness to the light of day.

What brought about this change? Was the Prophet (PBUH) the key? "There is no question that the Prophet (PBUH) and the example that he set had a great influence on his followers. However, that does not necessarily imply that his actual presence among the people is required for the Qur'an to have its intended effect" (p. 43). The difference between the days of old and today is that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is physically not present. If his physical presence had been absolutely essential,



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Allah (SWT) would not have taken him from this life and would not have made Islam a universal message. To this effect, Allah (SWT) has preserved the Qur'an because it aids in establishing Islam and in benefiting humankind. Although Muhammad (PBUH) is not here, his words and actions still live on for us to understand the correct methodology of approaching the Qur'an.

Knowing the guidance of the Qur'an, why does it not have the same effect today? Many enemies of Islam know that to destroy Muslims does not necessarily involve physically removing the Qur'an. They only need to take it from being a central part of their lives. Although we hold the Qur'an in our hands, we do not fulfill our obligations towards it. We, as individuals and as an Ummah are weak. Through the years, the nature of the Qur'an has not changed; it is our mindset that has been distorted to the point that we see and read the Book, but are blind to its meaning. As a result, we emphasize secondary aspects of the Qur'an while ignoring primary ones and misinterpret it; therefore, losing its blessings.

To conclude, we all know that the message of the Qur'an carries eternal consequences. These consequences are summed up in the following hadith recorded by ibn Hibbaan and al-Baihaqi on the authority of Jaabir and recorded by al-Tabaraani and al-Baihaqi on the authority of ibn Masood. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The Qur'an is an intercessor whose intercession is accepted and a litigant who is believed. For the one who places it in front of him [being guided by it], it will lead him to Paradise. And for the one who places it behind him [ignoring its guidance], it will drive him to the Hell-Fire."

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The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Verily, God does not take away knowledge from the hands of Divine servants, but takes it by taking away the learned, so that when no learned people remain, the ignorant will be placed at the head of affairs. Causes will be submitted to their decision, and they will pass sentence without knowledge, and they will err themselves, and lead others into error.”