



GUIDANCE

for the Straight Path

**Why did
Allah send
the Qur'an to
humanity?**

**By Bapak
Pengajar
Rohani**

Assurance of the Hereafter

This is the Book (Al-Qur'an)
In it is guidance sure,
without doubt,
To those who fear Allah.
Who believe in the Unseen
Are steadfast in prayer,
And spend out of what We
Have provided for them
And who believe in the
Revelation sent to Thee,
And sent before thy time,
And (in their hearts)
Have the assurance of the
Hereafter.

Al Baqarah 2: 2-4

Guidance for the Straight Path

Why did Allah send the Qur'an to humanity?

This book explores what the Qur'an says about itself to find an answer to this important question.

It contains helpful key points, questions and reflections to help the seekers to discover the significance of this revelation.

Bapak Pengajar Rohani

Guidance for the Straight Path – Why did Allah send the Qur'an to humanity?

1st Edition - 2,000; 2020

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Published in Auckland New Zealand by:

The Asia Pacific Discipleship Trust
P.O. Box 99-835, Newmarket,
Auckland, 1149, New Zealand

Scripture quotations are from the Zondervan New American Study Bible published by Zondervan for The Lockman Foundation – copyright 1999. Qur'anic quotations are taken from the extensive list included in the Bibliography of this book.

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Acknowledgements:

The author acknowledges the hundreds of friends and colleagues, both Christians and Muslims, who gave him the time to dialogue, discuss, debate and study the Holy Books. The author particularly wants to thank his Professors at Waikato University in 1975 and 1976 who commenced his exploration into Islam. They were Professor Roy from Kolkata, The Late Dr Ron Kilgour of Hamilton, NZ, and Bapak Ang from Bandung Java Indonesia.

Previous publications:

The Asia Pacific Discipleship Trust has previously published books titled; 'The Right Path – Answers for Christian and Muslims Questions' in 2012. and 'The Right Path - Questions for Seekers' in 2015. Anyone reading this book may find these earlier publications helpful.

Statement of Gratitude and Appreciation:

First to my wife, children and wider family, who have been so patient with my unending conversations about Islam, and their willingness to live in Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Bandung (Indonesia), and visit Malaysia so many times.

Secondly, to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Hon Jacinda Adern, who faced the horror of the March 15th, 2019 massacre in Christchurch with love and courage. Ms Adern changed the world's view of how peace can be made a meaningful reality in the midst of unexplainable violence. This act of kindness brought our two communities in Aotearoa so much closer together.

Thirdly, to my Christian friends, colleagues, and church leaders who have put up with the author's endless stories about Islam and Muslims. I know that some of my friends have heard so many fantastic stories of dreams and visions, and revelations of God, that they seriously doubt whether I am telling the truth. Did this many amazing events happen in one person's life, they ask themselves? How can one person have so many God arranged encounters with Muslims? The author does not find it strange to have so many unarranged encounters. He knows how much God wants our two communities to love each other, understand each other, respect each other, and enjoy talking as much as possible about the Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate, and Most Loving God.

Fourthly, to the countless numbers of Imams, Sheiks, and Mullahs who have welcomed me with open arms when visiting their Masjids, Islamic Centers in New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific Islands, S.E. and South Asia, Central Asia, North and South Africa, and Europe. The hospitality of the 'ummah' of Islam is an outstanding testimony to the love of Allah that lies at the heart of who Muslims are and how they welcome enquiring strangers. The author has received so much kindness, and so many blessings from Muslims that he would need a series of books to write up their stories. Muslims made the author a storyteller, and there is nothing better to pass his time than to tell stories of his Muslim friends, and the journey's they have been on in their lifetime. These stories are nothing like those you read in the news media.

Finally, thank you so much to Matua Haami (Sam) Tutu Chapman, and his wife Thelma and whanau for staying with us on this journey and exploring God's possibilities and horizons. As Sam has said many times. The horizon is coming towards us. Matua Haami has been the untiring Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Discipleship Trust (APDT) since it was founded. Thanks to the Trustees of the APDT for their sacrificial love and support.

Funding:

A huge thankyou to those who have put their hands in their pockets to help fund this publication, and the wider work of the APDT.

Cover design:

The picture derived from an unknown source is a straight path suitable to enhance the idea of the title of the book. Where it is located is unknown. But it surely leads people to a certain destination. The author hopes this book will lead people to a certain destination that will bring them eternal joy.

National Library of New Zealand Cataloguing:

Johnson, Bryan, 1949

Guidance for the Straight Path – 1st Edition

Bapak Pengajar Rohani

Includes Bibliographical references and a Table of Contents and footnotes and Table A - list of common Biblical and Qur'anic names of Prophets and their wives and sons.

ISBN 978-0-473-50987-3

1. Theology 2. Islam – Interpretation of the Qur'an 3. Christianity and other religions – Islam 4. The Mission of Muhammad – The Revelation 5. Prophets – Common ground in Judaism, Christianity and Islam 6. Current trends in Islamic interpretation of the Qur'an

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Foreword

Why did the author of this book embark on such a challenging project? For 42 years the author has been fascinated by the reason the Qur'an was given to the simple young man from Mecca during his personal spiritual crisis related to his identity as an orphan. This very observant young man saw the tragedy of injustice caused by the deception of an idol worshipping race of people who worshipped the creation, and regarded it as having greater power than the Creator.

Identifying with Abram's passion for the liberation of his father Terah, and his 'ummah' from the tyranny of the demands of idols, the young Muhammad was earnestly seeking for a mantle from Allah to liberate his people. That mantle fell on him in the Cave of Hira near Mecca, in 610AD, and dramatically changed his destiny, and the destiny of the Arab nations.

Being illiterate, Muhammad's revelation was delivered orally, and should be interpreted orally, and not a literal interpretation of the text. Muhammad did not compile his text. He transmitted it to his followers orally. This is the view of William Graham¹. Montgomery Watt² emphasized the sociological dimensions of the Qur'an in contrast to Wilfred Cantwell Smith's³ spiritual dimensions.

Farid Esack⁴ created a pictorial representation of how the Muslim 'self' and the Muslim 'ummah' interact with the Qur'an. He stated that the scale of understanding moves through a range of intensity of investigation by the 'Ordinary Muslim', to the 'Confessional scholar', to the 'Critical scholar'. In the mean-time the other world outside of Islam contains the 'Participant

¹ Graham, Wm. 'Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam', 1977, The Hague and Paris,

² Watt, Montgomery. 'Early Discussions about the Qur'an', 1950, Edinburgh

³ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. The True meaning of Scripture, and Empirical Historian's non-Reductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an', 1980 in 'The International Journal of Middle-eastern Studies', 1980.

⁴ Esack, Farid. 'The Qur'an – a user's guide', 2005, One World, Oxford

observer', to the 'Revisionist' (disinterested observers'), to the 'Polemicists'. The 'uncritical lover' of the text is captured by the beauty and presence of the text. Nothing else is needed to satisfy this lover. The 'Scholarly lover' wants to explain to the world why his beloved text is the most sublime. The 'Critical lover' may also be enamored with the text, but will want to pursue questions about her (the beloved text) true nature, origins and language.

Another category of admirer of the Qur'an is the 'friend of the lover' of the text. Observer's ask, 'What's up here'. Surely an outsider should not invade the space of the true lover. But true love always wants to share and include friends on their journey. The author wants to be treated in this treatise as the true friend on the journey with the lovers of the text. No disrespect is intended. Forgiveness is sought if by mistake that is the consequence of the treatise found herein.

Most non-Arab people try to interpret the Qur'an following the common hermeneutical approach⁵ used by theological seminaries. The Arab Mind⁶ has the capacity to hold several opposing ideas⁷, without the pressing need to reconcile them as is common in Western thinking. The rhetoric is entirely different. It is an important feature of the Arab modal personality⁸.

The author previously published a book called 'The Right Path – Answers for Christians and Muslims Questions'⁹, and then a further publication titled, 'The Right Path – Questions for Seekers'¹⁰. In these books' he was seeking to assist Christians and Muslims to understand each other, and build healthy bridges of understanding, so each community could develop a generous respect for each other. The surprising effect of these books, was the number of believers

⁵ Jabbour, Nabeel. 'The Rumbling Volcano'. 1993. Mandate Press, Pasedena, CA.

⁶ Patai, Raphael. 'The Arab Mind'. 1983. Chas Scribner, NY, Preface page xiii

⁷ Nida, Eugene A. 'Customs and Cultures. 1954. Harper, NY, page 217 'a language is not the sum total of individual words....people badly misunderstand idioms'

⁸ Patai, Raphael. 'The Arab Mind'. 1983. Chas Scribner, NY, page 48

⁹ Rohani, Bapak Pengajar, 'The Right Path – Answers to Christians and Muslims Questions', 2012, The Asia Pacific Discipleship Trust, Auckland.

¹⁰ Rohani, Bapak Pengajar, 'The Right Path – Questions for Seekers' Muslims Questions', 2015, The Asia Pacific Discipleship Trust, Auckland.

of each faith who were surprised at how many of their longstanding questions were answered in the texts.

The authors 42 years of interaction with Christian and Muslim communities, has given him a wealth of understanding about the stumbling-blocks that have been used to so easily divide us. Instead of following the teachings of the Prophets to love and respect each other, we have taken the easy way, and put down the sincerely held views of the other community. The author, in his pursuit of understanding the sincerely held views of Muslims has attended many seminars, courses, Masjids, and Islamic centers, to help expand his understanding of Islam. He found that Allah placed in his heart a sincere love and respect for Muslims, from all parts of the globe. He has always been treated with respect, and welcomed with exceptional love and kindness. To convince his friends about the generosity of spirit of the 'ummah', he has taken numerous friends with him on visits to these centers, and marveled at the power to change deep-seated prejudice, when minds are opened to the 'other view' of a person's spiritual quest for a safe place in eternity.

The wisest of Kings, Solomon, recorded his wisdom in Ecclesiastes 3:11-12;

'He (Allah) has made everything appropriate in its time. He has placed eternity in their heart, yet so man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning to the end. I know there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime'.

Maybe you're wondering why pen a book on 'Guidance for the Straight Path', when Solomon concluded that Allah has hidden this truth from mankind? 'Revelation' is fundamental to the discovery of Allah's plans for mankind, the underlying principle of Biblical and Qur'anic study. Without the Holy Spirit's revelation truth cannot be comprehended and grasped. Prayer, before reading this text will help access that much needed revelation.

Guidance for the straight path!

By Bapak Pengajar Rohani

Introduction

Muslims, Christians and Jews all want to be guided to the straight path to heaven, and have assurance of the 'Hereafter'. The Qur'an provides a useful prayer expressing this desire. Surah, Al Fatihah (The Opening), 1:1,6 states:

'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, The Most Merciful, Guide us to the straight path.'

The word Muslim was not originally meant to be a delineator of a new religion, but rather an adjective to describe those who had submitted to the straight-way of the Judeo-Christian tradition as clarified by the Qur'an. Christian commentators on the early Islamic movement also did not think of Muslims as other-than-Christian for more than one hundred years. Muslims, according to the majority of early Christian commentators were a kind of Christian, not unlike Nestorians, Jacobites, and Chalcedonians¹¹. The high view of Isa (Jesus) in the Qur'an confirmed this polemic. Sadly, politically ambitious leaders fighting for control of Islam hijacked Islam into a faith which justified war and killing of opponents, rather than love and forgiveness, 'The Way of Isa', and commended by the Prophet of Islam.

The theological evidence for this view of early Islam is found in the Qur'an itself. Surah 2:136 states: 'Say ye: We believe in Allah (God), and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob,

¹¹ The Qur'an with references to the Bible, 2016, by Safi Kaskas and David Hungerford, by Bridges of Reconciliation, Fairfax, Virginia, USA, Foreword number Two, page v.

and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and to all the prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one another of them.’ In this Surah, Muslims are instructed to believe in the Torah given to Moses, and the Gospel given to Jesus. There is no difference between them. Each contains the Word of God. It is illogical that Allah would command Muslims to follow a corrupted Book. In Surah A-Hijr (The Rocky Place) 15:9 ‘Allah states that He revealed His reminder, and has protected it (the Qur’an) from corruption’.

Surah An-Nisa (The Women) 4:136 goes even further in this vain. It chastises those who disregard any of God’s revelations: *‘O ye who believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to those before him. Any who denieth Allah, His Angels, His Books, His messengers, and the day of Judgement, hath gone far astray.’* This passage affirms the Bible as God’s Word by referring to it as ‘scripture which He sent to those before’ the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. It also states that those who deny the authority of the Torah, Zabur and Injil have gone far astray.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut (The Spider) 29:46 instructs Muslims not to argue with Jews and Christians. After all, the Qur’an claims, both Muslims and ‘The People of the Book’ believe in the same God (Allah), who has given a true revelation to both; *‘And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with better means (than mere disputation), unless it be with those who inflict wrong (injury): but say, ‘We believe in the revelation that has come down to you: Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).’* Muslims are even commanded to say that they believe in the Qur’an and the Bible. In Surah 10:94 it gives a helpful instruction for those who have difficulty understanding the Qur’an; *‘If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book before thee: The Truth has indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise in doubt.’* The Qur’an assumes that the Bible is a revelation from God that Muslims can consult for truth. The Qur’an goes further, and implies that the

Bible was a reliable source of truth even in Muhammad's day, six centuries after the scriptures were completed, and 250 years after they were canonized. In Surah Al-Ma'ida (The Feast) 5:43 the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad says, 'But why do they come to thee for a decision, when they have their own law before them? Therein is the plain command of Allah; yet even after that, they would just turn away. For they are not People of Faith'. Muhammad would not send the Jews to their holy book and their own law, if it were corrupted.

His mentor Nawfal Waraqah¹² was a constant source of guidance and verification of his understanding of the ancient holy scriptures. The Reference Qur'an¹³ and its footnotes are testimony to the fact that the majority of the Qur'an is primarily sourced from the Bible. 'The Qur'an with References to the Bible' by Safi Kaskas and David Hungerford¹⁴ details the extensive Biblical origins of the content of the Qur'an. Some Christian commentators have bemoaned that The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad did not have a Bible. The evidence from the text of the Qur'an makes it very clear that the majority of the text of the Qur'an is sourced from the Bible. Nawfal ibn Waraqah was The Prophet's Nestorian Christian source of the content of the Bible.

The Qur'an also assumes that the Gospel is reliable. Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:47 says: *'Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by the light of what Allah hath revealed, they are no better than those who rebel'*. In the next verse, Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:48 it says; *'To thee We sent the scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, guarding it in safety; so*

¹² Nawfal ibn Waraqah was a Christian Haneef who anticipated the coming of an Arabian Prophet, page 95 Revelation, M Mohhiuddin, 2015

¹³ Quoted from The English Reference Qur'an translation by the Common Ground Scholars of The Reference Qur'an Council – version 5, 2018. Contact referencequran@gmail.com.

¹⁴ Kaskas, Safi, Hungerford David, The Qur'an with references to the Bible. 2016. Bridges of Reconciliation, A Contemporary Understanding.com. _____, USA.

judge between them, by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee’. The Qur’an affirms the reliability of the Gospel as late as the 7th century. If the Qur’an taught that the Bible is textually pure then, Muslims can rely on its veracity today. Nothing has changed in 13 centuries since then, apart from translations of the Bible into thousands of languages. Some Muslim scholars have purported that the Bible has been changed, but none of the Islamic scholars have produced the original texts of the Bible to prove these alleged changes.

In 1947 Muhammad Edh Dhib¹⁵, a Bedouin shepherd, born as Muhammad Ahmed al-Hamed in 1931, in Bethlehem, Palestine, made the amazing discovery of the scrolls of almost the entire Old Testament in caves at Qumran¹⁶. All the Old Testament, except the Book of Esther (a Persian book), 38 books in total, were found by this Muslim shepherd boy aged 16 years. They were carbon-dated back to 2,408 – 2,318 years. This was 300-400 years before Jesus Christ, and 300-400 years after the Prophet Isaiah. These scrolls are preserved in the Museum of Antiquities in Israel for everyone to observe, and administered by an International group of scholars. We pay tribute to this young Muslim man for his incredible discovery, the greatest confirmation of the authenticity and accuracy of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. In all, 981 texts of what are now known as the ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ were found written on papyrus, parchment and bronze plates, mostly in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Nabtean-Aramaic, and written in the years 408 BCE to 318 BCE. So, the dispute about changes to the former books, the Tawrah, and the Zabur, and the Injil was laid to rest once and forever. The evidence was now available for everyone to view in a temperature controlled Museum in Israel. Islamic scholars involved in the Dead Sea Scrolls recovery, confirmed the authenticity of the Torah and Zabur given to Moses and David in Surah Al-Baqarah

¹⁵ Refer to www.bedouinshepherd.com for more detailed information about this discovery

¹⁶ Davis, Michael Thomas & Strawn, Brent A. Editors. Qur’an Studies

2:87, and its inability to be altered because of Allah's protection of His words (Surah 6:115). The words of Allah cannot be changed according to Surah Yunus 10:64 and Maryam 18:27. Muhammad Edh Dhib's discovery proved these statements about Allah's eternal words to be true.

Why was The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad writing these corrections, and admonitions to the Jews and Christians in Medina? The Christians in Medina were mostly Maryamites, who venerated the statue of the Virgin Mary, and prayed to her for healing and blessing. The Prophet tried to correct this form of idolatry, similar to what he found among the Meccans who worshipped 354 idols, one for every day of their 354-day annual calendar. The Jews on the other-hand venerated Abraham, Moses and King David in such a manner that The Prophet thought they were worshipping these prophets and attributing powers to them. Muhammad's calling was to cleanse the Meccans of idolatry.

The primary concern of the Qur'an is to correct those who have wasted their life worshipping gods that are not gods, and call them to repentance, and to turn back to the One True Creator God worshipped by Abraham. Muhammad was a warner, and the Qur'an acts as a reminder, a testament to confirm the message of the books of God which came before it (Surah 3:84; 10:94). These included the Torah, Zabur and Injil. Submission to God's will was the clarion call of the Prophet of Islam¹⁷.

Those who reject the Guidance of Allah/God on the straight path ...are in the worst of plights and farthest away from the right path.' (Surah 5:60). In Proverbs 2:13, it states that wicked men have left the straight path to enable them to walk in dark ways. In Noah's day, the wickedness of mankind caused Allah to judge the entire human race

¹⁷ The Qur'an with references to the Bible, 2016, by Safi Kaskas and David Hungerford, by Bridges of Reconciliation, USA. Fairfax, Virginia, Foreword number Two, page vi.

with a catastrophic flood, and all but Noah's family were drowned. But Allah in His Graciousness¹⁸ (unmerited favour) promised through a sign, the rainbow, that never again would He judge mankind with a catastrophic flood. Even though many generations since Noah have been just as wicked, Allah has compassionately withheld His judgement of mankind.

God/Allah has sent the prophets to earth to show us the straight path. In our fallen humanity, we were unable to sustain a vital spirituality, that ensured we stayed in close relationship with God. Allah says that he has made the signs clear for thinking men!¹⁹ (Surah 6:126).

A true Muslim must be a thinker, enquirer and investigator of the sources of truth. Furthermore, Allah has allotted to most of mankind enough years to become wise. *'It is He who has created you...., and lets you reach your age of full strength, lets you become old, though there are some of you who die before, and lets you reach the term appointed, in order that you may learn wisdom.'* (Surah 40:67-68). One of the purposes of our life is to learn wisdom. It is the mercy of God/Allah that we live to an old age²⁰. Our disobedience deserved immediate judgement and death, but Allah extends His mercy towards us and allows many of us to live 70 years or more.

It's the author's prayer that you may gain wisdom, and learn about the straight path through reading this book. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:2-4 states this as the primary purpose for the Qur'an. *'This is the Book; In it is guidance sure, without doubt, in those who fear Allah, Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what we have*

¹⁸ The Most Gracious Surah 1:1,6.

¹⁹ Yusuf Ali's translation interprets 6:126 – 'those who receive admonition'; The Reference Qur'an – 'those who remember'; Kaskas Safi – 'The Quran' – 'to those who take them to heart'. George Sale's translation – 'those people who will consider'

²⁰ The Most Merciful – Surah 1:1,6.

provided for them, and Who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before time, and have assurance in the Hereafter’.

In Romans 3:21, the Apostle Paul states: *‘God has shown us the new way to be made right with Him, not by our works, but by faith in Christ, we are able to walk the Straight Path²¹ (to heaven)’*. He highlights these paths from the Prophets in the writings of Moses long ago. The revelation of the national legal system came to Moses in Genesis chapters 18, 19 and 20. It outlined the social justice constitution for the new nation of Israel before they moved into the promised land. The Children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 hundred years, and Moses was counselling the people from sun up to sun down because they had no understanding of national justice. Jethro, a Priest of the Midianites, and his brave father-in-law, rebuked Moses for interpreting the problems of the people from sun up to sun down every day by himself. God saw that the people needed guidance, and to grow up, and rely on God to show them the solution to their problems. They needed to find the straight path. Moses followed Jethro’s instructions and appointed captains of 10, 50’s, 100’s and 1,000’s to govern the people and guide them using the 10 commandments given by God/Allah to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Like many modern-day followers of the Prophet of Islam, p.b.u.h, there was, and is still a veil over the Children of Israel, that caused them not to see the truth contained in the Holy Books that they had missed. In Isaiah 25:7 it states; *‘On this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over the peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations.’* This mountain is described in Isaiah 2 :2-3; *‘the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established as the chief of the mountains, and it will be raised above the hills; and all nations will stream into it and*

²¹ The Layman’s Parallel Bible: King James, Modern Language, Living Bible, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. Revised Standard versions of Romans 3:21 – the fuller meaning of this verse is explained in these three versions

many people will say, 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths, for the Law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'. So, it is in the Lord's house, and His presence that the veil (blindness) will be removed.

Hebrews 10:19-25 states that the, sacrifice of Jesus Christ removed the veil, and made it possible for people of all nations to enter into the holy place where God's presence resides. In 2 Corinthians 3:13-17 the Apostle Paul explains it this way; *'we are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened, for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Jesus Christ. But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'*

The Qur'an states that some prophets left us signs to guide us on the straight path. This study will highlight the message of those prophets, and the signs Allah gave to them (Surah 7:26). Further on in Surah 7:37a; Allah gives a stern warning: *'Who is more wicked than him who invents a lie about Allah or who rejects his signs.'* It is important that we study, know and understand the signs of Allah with all truthfulness. We all have a personal obligation to become students of God's eternal Word and make our salvation sure and steadfast.

When the field of the unthinkable is expanded, and maintained for centuries in a particular tradition of thought, the intellectual horizons of reason are diminished, and its' critical functions are narrowed, and weakened because the sphere of un-thought becomes more

determinate, and there is little space left for the thinkable. Mohammed Arkoun.²²

Let's start a journey through the Prophets, and find out what Guidance God/Allah will provide for us from the prophets and their signs. Maybe, by the Mercy and Graciousness of Allah/God the unthinkable will be revealed to us by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God/Allah will help us in this pursuit of righteousness, Surah Al-Qadr (The Night of Decree) 97:1-5.

The Qur'an was given by Allah through an Angel to Muhammad. In addition to the major theme of the Qur'an being Tawhid, the Unity of God, there are three additional great themes of the Qur'an²³. They are the compassion, and the mercy, and the graciousness of Allah. All these qualities imply that Allah has unconditional love for his servants. Some critics of the Qur'an have stated that love is not mentioned in the Qur'an. How can a being who is compassionate, merciful and gracious towards His creation (people), not be a being who's core nature is Divine Love?

God is the source of all love, just as He is the source of all other things. 'The Love' attribute of God is confirmed implicitly by numerous Qur'anic verses in which God is said to 'love' something²⁴.

Isa is mentioned specifically more than 33 times in the Qur'an. Isa is the incarnate manifest evidence of this love because of Allah's revelation of the compassion, mercy and grace of Allah. We'll see this love through the study of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. The

²² Arkoun, 2006. p 19

²³ Moucarray, Chawkat, The Prophet and the Messiah, Chapter 6 - 'The Greatness of God, p. 92, 1st Para. *'The Qur'an makes it clear that 'God is One'. God the ever self-sufficing, unbegotten, unbegotten'.*

²⁴ Chittick, Wm. C. The Sufi Path of Love – the Spiritual teachings of Rumi, p. 195, Chapt. 'Love', pt 1. 'God as Love and Beyond Love'.

Qur'an is a revelation of guidance from Allah to the person who has renounced idolatry, and repented of their evil works, called sin (Surah 42 ayah 25; Romans 3:23). Sin is the act of trying to live life independent of God's/Allah's pre-determined will for us. Islam is a religion of submission. A true Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah. It requires a spirit of humility, gentleness and grace to submit to the will of Allah.

The Qur'an shows us the great truth, that Allah's solutions to mankind's problems are always better than mankind's solutions. Allah lives in another dimension, a transcendent spiritual dimension, and is All-Knowing, and All-Wise. His ways are so much higher than our ways. In Isaiah 55:8-9 it states; *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways' declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

If mankind lived in close relationship with Allah, then the earth would be peaceful, and sickness and poverty, would be greatly diminished. While we continue to disobey Allah, and seek our own way of solving the problems we face, our disobedience is a curse. This curse causes racial division, religious bigotry, murder, violence and wars, drunkenness, sexual immorality, dishonesty, corruption and a lust for things. We should continue to live by the compassion, mercy and grace of Allah, being the invocation of Surah 1; *"In the name of God, the Most gracious, The Most Merciful"*. This is prayed many times a day by millions of faithful Muslims.

The ontology of who Allah is makes a difference to how we approach our understanding of Allah, and His potential for relationship, love and communication with us. Love is not a weakness. It's a strength. To love your enemies requires greater strength over the faculties of a human being, than resorting to violence and revenge. The evidence that this was the intention of the revelation given to mankind through the

Qur'an is the unequivocal fact that Isa, the 'Prophet of Unconditional Love', is mentioned 33 times directly and 30 times indirectly. Moses and Isa taught; 'love your neighbor²⁵ as yourself' and Isa, 'love your enemies²⁶'. Allah cannot be a deceiver. One who loves will never deceive. All His attributes are righteous. According to the Qur'an it is Satan who is the deceiver in Al Nisa 4:120, *Satan makes them promises and creates in them false desires, But Satan's promises are nothing but deception.*

The straight path to Allah's kingdom takes us through events in the lives of 10 great prophets. They are; Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Jonah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Muhammad. All of these prophets have signs that Allah wants us to pay careful attention to, and model our lives on.

²⁵ Leviticus 19:18 (Torah); Matt 5:43

²⁶ Gospel of Mathew (Injil) 5:44.

The Signs of 10 Prophets – a study series to engage our understanding of the ontology of Allah

Al Tawbah - Surah 9:122 - 'Nor should the Believers all go forth together; If a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them. That thus they may learn, and guard themselves against evil.'

We study to guard ourselves against evil, and to receive a greater revelation of the righteous attributes of the Creator God/Allah who made us to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. The Qur'an gives us some encouraging promises in this endeavor. In Surah Al An'am (Livestock) 6:122 we are encouraged to receive light from Allah so we can walk among men who have no faith and are in darkness. In Surah Al Nur (Light) 24:35 it states that Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.....Allah doth guide whom he will to His Light. Surah Al Nahl (The Bee) 16:102 states;

Say the Holy Spirit has brought this revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe and as a Guide and Glad tidings to Muslims.

1. Prophet Adam – the garments of righteousness are the best – Surah 7:26

The story of Adam and Eve²⁷ is known to most followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The story of Adam in the Torah is found in Genesis 3:1-21, and in the Qur'an in Surah 7:11-27. Read both passages together. For further insight into the story read: Surah 20:115-123; 2:30-39.

Surah 7 Al-Aaraf ayah 26 states that *the garments of righteousness that Allah gave Adam and Eve are one of Allah's signs*. This is the earliest sign Allah gave the human race. Shame is covered by clothing (leather clothes)²⁸, Allah made as a result of the shedding of the blood (of an animal), and righteousness is imputed to mankind by the grace²⁹, compassion, and mercy of Allah.

Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat fruit from just one tree in the Garden of Eden. It's strange how the human race is continually disobedient. We love to do those things which are forbidden when tempted by Shaitan/Iblis. The forbidden tree was called the tree of 'the knowledge of good and evil'. 'Shaitan' used his persuasive, and seductive temptations to lie to Eve and deceive her. Adam also believed these lies. 'Shaitan' was a deceiver who deceived Eve and Adam into disobeying God's command. They both disobeyed Allah, the Supreme Creator. Disobedience is sin³⁰. Every time we do something independent of Allah's will for us we sin! 'All of us have fallen short of God's glorious standard and plan for our lives.' Romans 3:23.

²⁷ Surah 7:19; 2:35; 20:117

²⁸ Genesis 3:21

²⁹ Grace is not only Allah's 'unmerited favor, but it's also His enabling power.' Romans 3:24

³⁰ Moucarry, Chawkat, The Prophet and the Messiah, page 95, chapter 7, The Problem of Sin, paragraph 1.

According to the Qur'an Allah commanded Shaitan/Iblis to bow down to Adam, but because of His pride³¹, and disobedience He refused to do so. Pride is the root of all sorts of rebellion (sin) against authority³². Sin is an act of rebellion, and an offense to God³³.

According to the Torah, Eve offered Adam the forbidden fruit, so the curse of this fruit spread to Adam, and both of them became ashamed of their nakedness. Quickly, they realized that they were naked, and the shame of their disobedience caused them to find a covering for their nakedness. They made fig leaves into clothes for their private parts because they were now ashamed of themselves.

How long do you think fig leaves would last as clothing?

Write your answer?

Surah 7: 22-23 states; 'So he ('Shaitan') guided them in temptation, and when they tasted the tree, their shame became apparent to them, and they began to sew leaves of the heavenly garden upon themselves. Their Lord called to them, 'Did I not forbid you from that tree, and tell you, 'Shaitan' is a clear enemy to you.' They said, 'Our Lord we have wronged ourselves, and if you do not forgive us, and have mercy on us, we will certainly be lost.'

Adam and Eve asked God for forgiveness. His mercy was manifest in His response. He forgave them and helped them by covering their shame with leather garments³⁴. He showed that He intended to save

³¹ The Qur'an, Al Baqarah 2:34 – 'Shaitan was proud, and refused to bow down to Adam'.

³² Moucarry, Chawkat, The Prophet and the Messiah, page 99, chapter 7, Why sin matters, paragraph 1.

³³ Sin is an offense against God's Word. Ps 54:1; Luke 15:18, 21

³⁴ Genesis 3:21

them from their own sinful actions. They were the first to experience the grace of God/Allah – his unmerited favor. Allah had no reason to help them other than His sacrificial love for His creation. This unmerited act of kindness revealed Allah’s grace and kindness.

Question: What did Adam and Eve need Allah to do for them?

Then in Surah 7:26 we read: *‘Children of Adam, we have sent down upon you clothing to hide your shame. **The clothing of godliness is the best.** This is one of Allah’s signs.’* In the same Surah 7:36 it states: *‘Those who reject Allah’s signs, and are proud against them will go to hell-fire, where they will be forever.’*

Every few days, Adam and Eve had to avoid shaming themselves again, by making new clothes from leaves. Adam, seeing his hopeless predicament, humbled himself, and cried out to Allah for mercy and forgiveness. Even though Allah had banned them from the Garden of Eden, Allah was so moved with compassion for their shameful condition, that he slew an animal and made them leather garments³⁵.

How long do you think leather garments would last?

Although Allah had banned them from eating the forbidden fruit, he also helped them in their hour of need. Allah’s covering for their shame was the best remedy. Allah showed Adam and Eve that the sacrifice of the life of an animal was essential to provide a remedy for their sin, and shame. Surely, Allah is the one who strengthens the weak

³⁵ Genesis 3:21

and comforts those who are afflicted. Allah is slow to judge and quick to show mercy, and help the needy. Allah shows us in the Qur'an that He expects us to follow His example, and give alms to the poor, lend to the needy, comfort those in conflict, and forgive our enemies and practice unmerited love and favor on those who do not deserve it. This is redeeming love.

Allah's solution for mankind's need indicates that he was in close relationship with them, and He was not a distant force without any feelings. He was moved with compassion and mercy. *Oh Lord our Lord how majestic are your ways in all the earth!*³⁶

Allah indicates that He is a loving God through the grace, mercy and compassion He showed towards Adam and Eve, his disobedient and rebellious creations.

Key points:

- a) Shaitan/Iblis is mankind's avowed enemy. He refused to serve and obey mankind. He is rebellious, and those who submit to him will become rebellious also
- b) Adam could not cover his own shame, it required an animal sacrifice, and the shedding of blood to cover his shame. This is how Allah saved Adam and Eve
- c) Adam humbled himself, and cried out for Allah's mercy and forgiveness and received His grace – unmerited favor
- d) Allah provides guidance for mankind to follow, and that guidance came at the cost of the sacrifice of the life of an innocent animal
- e) Allah always says that *'the garments of righteousness'* he provides are the best. They impute righteousness, and remove

³⁶ Psalm 8:9

shame and guilt, by His grace and favor bestowed on those who repent, and submit to Him.

Key questions

- i) What did we learn about mankind from the oldest story of Allah and man?

- ii) What did we learn about Shaitan/Iblis?

- iii) What does Allah say is the best?

- iv) What was the cost of Allah's solution for mankind's problem?

Personal reflections

Name the ways has Allah shown His compassion, mercy and grace to you?

What shameful things have you done, and what did Allah do to help you in this difficulty?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer: *‘Oh All praise be to Allah/God. Thank you for your love and kindness. When I did a shameful thing, you were slow to be angry with me, and showed me your love and grace. When I repented, and asked for forgiveness, you forgave me. How wonderful is your mercy! I love you so much for your kindness rather than judgement. You are the greatest, compassionate, merciful, and gracious God.’*

If you have never repented of the evil things you have done please prepare your heart now to do so. Repentance is the action of a person who is humble, and it prepares your heart to take the pilgrimage³⁷ on the straight path - refer to Surah 42 ayah 25. 'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins and He knows all that we do.'

Prayer of repentance:

Almighty God please forgive me of my sin and cleanse me from all the evil things I have done, so, I may be guided by your Spirit on the right path and follow the teaching of the Word of God during my pilgrimage on earth.'

It is good to repent every time we pray, because we don't know at what hour Allah will take us home. Repentance keeps our soul humble before Allah. We rely on Allah for his solution to our needs by asking for His forgiveness, and mercy every time we pray. In 1 John 1:9-10 it states: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.'

Once we have cleansed our heart we can submit ourselves to Allah/God and His Word and be guided by His Spirit on the straight path to the Holy City. His joy will fill your heart.

³⁷ Refer to www.thepilgrimage.net.nz

2. Prophet Noah - ‘We bore their race on an ark’..... Surah Ya Sin (Hereafter) 36:41

In Noah’s time the people of the earth were doing many very evil things. God was so upset, and disappointed at their wickedness, He regretted that He ever made mankind.

Let’s read the story of Noah (Nuh). Surah Hud 11:25-49; Surah Ash-Shu’Ara 26:119-121; Surah Al-‘Ankabut 29:14,15; Surah Ya Sin 36:41; Surah As-Saffat 37:75-82; Surah Al-Qamar 54:9-15.

In the Torah we read the story in Genesis chapter 6:5-11,20: chapter 9:1, chapter 8-17.

In Surah Ya Sin 36:41 it states: ‘Another sign for them (mankind) is that we carried their descendants in a loaded ship’. Noah is a prophet who reveals a sign of Allah to mankind.

In the Qur’an, we read that one of Noah’s sons (not named) did not enter the ark – Surah Hud 11: 41-43. He boasted that he could save himself by climbing to the top of a mountain.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and from the example of Noah’s rebellious son, it is not certain that the son of a righteous person will be righteous. We must all choose the way of righteousness. Allah invites us to receive His righteousness, by humbling ourselves and worshipping him. We do this by asking for forgiveness, and mercy through repentance (see the section on repentance in lesson 1).

We must all choose to enter the ark, a symbol of the Kingdom of God. It was where the righteous lived in safety after the rain started falling. The very heavy rain, and fountains that gushed out of the earth, were indicative of God’s judgement on the rest of mankind.

In the Torah – Genesis 6:5-11: ‘Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every thought and intent of their heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in His heart. The Lord said; ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals, to creeping things and to birds of the sky, for I am sorry that I made them.’ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Allah provided a solution for Noah’s problem. He instructed Noah to build an ark as a way of escape from the judgement he would bring on the earth and its wicked inhabitants.

These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time, Noah walked with God.’ The Torah records that ‘Thus Noah did: according to all that God had commanded him, so He did.’ Genesis 6:22. Building a huge ship a long way from the sea would have appeared to be a foolish enterprise. But faithful Noah, obeyed God’s specific instructions to him down to every detail. What a faithful man of God he was!

It’s interesting that Allah was still walking with humans, as he did in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8). Noah became the father of three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. He was obedient, and faithful even though he faced many scoffers during his 120 years, building the Ark far away from an ocean. Allah made a covenant sign with Noah as a promise for his faithfulness. The sign was a rainbow. Allah covenanted, that never again would He flood the earth. This is a significant sign of Allah’s compassion for mankind. There’s never been another global flood like there was in Noah’s time.

Allah invited people to get into the Ark and be saved from the flood. Obeying the message of the messenger (Noah), and accepting Allah’s

way of deliverance from destruction provides us with a way of escape from the coming doom and destruction in hell-fire. The choice was:

- **be a sailor** in the Ark with the other righteous people, and be saved or

- **be a swimmer** in the ocean with the wicked who perished by drowning – their own strength was insufficient to swim for the whole time of the flood – around 150 days. These foolish people rejected Allah’s message through Noah, and the safety of the Ark, a ship of safety and salvation.

In Surah Al Ankabut (The Spider) 29:14-15 it states: ‘We sent Nuh (Noah) to his people, and he remained with them fifty years short of a thousand years. The flood overtook them while they were wicked, but we rescued him and the others on the ship. We made it a sign for mankind.’

God made a covenant with mankind after the flood in response to Noah’s sacrifice. Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the soothing aroma, and the Lord said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth, and I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done. While earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease’. Genesis 8:20-22.

By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence, prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of righteousness which is according to faith (Hebrews 11:7). We learn that righteousness is not imputed to mankind by works, as important as they are, but by faith and trust in God’s grace, mercy and favor.

Key points:

- a) Most of mankind are on a broad pathway away from Allah
- b) Mankind's wicked ways grieve Allah (make Him very sorrowful)
- c) God's mercy provides deliverance if we obey Him
- d) One of Noah's sons rejected Allah's means of deliverance and perished in the flood
- e) People had to embrace Allah's provision of deliverance to experience it. If they did not get into the ark they lost their lives.
- f) The modern application of this story is Allah's invitation to enter the Kingdom of God. If we refuse to enter Allah's kingdom we will perish in hell-fire.
- g) Noah's sacrifice of clean animals and birds, invoked Allah's favor on mankind and He promised (in a covenant – a rainbow), never to destroy mankind again.
- h) Noah became the first heir of righteousness by faith (and not by works, even though they were impressive – building a giant Ark).

Key Questions

- i) What do we learn about mankind from this lesson?
- ii) What do we learn about man's attempts to save himself – Noah's son who did not enter the Ark and tried to save himself?
- iii) How were Noah and the obedient believers delivered from the flood?

- iv) What was the blessing Noah received from his sacrifice?

- v) What was the sign that Allah gave through Noah?

- vi) How did Noah become an heir of righteousness?

Personal Reflections

Have you ever delayed obeying Allah when He spoke to you about someone or something?

Do you think delayed obedience is still obedience?

Have you taken steps to ensure you are living in God's kingdom? (Are you in the Ark of the righteous?)

What 'clean' sacrifice have you offered to Allah that invoked his blessing on your life and family?

How can you inherit righteousness by faith?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

Allah, you are compassionate and merciful. Sometimes I have been disobedient, and rebellious. I heard your word, and I disobeyed you. I don't want to follow the pathway of 'Shaitan'. Please guide me to your straight path so I can live in your kingdom? Thank you Lord for showing me through this lesson that I must take action to be set free from 'Shaitan's' deceitful ways. I want to receive your righteousness and enter your Kingdom by faith. Thank you for hearing my prayer and delivering me from wrong doing.

3. Prophet Abraham – Ibrahim ‘we ransomed him with a great sacrifice’ – Surah As-Saffat (The Ranks) 37:107

Abraham (Ibrahim) the prophet who is well known for his great faith and trust in Allah. The story of Abraham’s life is contained in the Qur’an in Surah 19:41-50; 15:51-56; 11:69-73; 14:39-41 and 37:83-113. In the Torah, we read Abram’s story in Genesis 15:6; 12-1-4, Genesis 17; Genesis 22 especially vs8-14. New Testament writers wrote about Abraham in Romans 4:1-22; Galatians 3:8,9.

The sign of Abraham was that he would have a miraculous son, a boy ready to suffer and forebear. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, because He reckoned that Allah was capable to raise his son from the dead³⁸. He would become the father of many nations. It is fascinating to consider that the place of the sacrifice was Mount Moriah, the same place that Isa would be sacrificed 1,500 years later. Allah raised Isa from the dead³⁹. Abraham had a vision of this subsequent sacrifice.

Abraham’s story must have been a great inspiration to Prophet Muhammad. Abram, as he was known, when he lived in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, was deeply grieved at the worship of idols. In his father’s house, there were idols. Every day he was confronted with idol worship. Having a revelation of the Supreme Creator God made Abram frustrated with the idol-worshippers’ who worshipped gods made with their own hands who are no gods at all. He preached to his father and the people of his city, how the Supreme Creator God would one day judge and punish all idol worshippers. God showed his mercy and compassion to Abram and called him on a pilgrimage to a new land where he could start a new nation of people who would only worship

³⁸ Hebrews 11:19

³⁹ Matthew 20:19; John 2:19; Acts 2:52; Surah 3:55, 4:157-159

YHWH (Elohim), (Allah), and not worship idols. Abram persuaded his father and family to follow him.

Abraham and Sarah were given the miracle of a gentle son who was willing to suffer and forebear. They were both past the age of bearing children. Surah Hud 11:69-75. This was after Abraham had procreated Ishmael his first- born son from his maid Hagar. Surah Ibrahim 14:39-40.

The great test of Abraham's life came when Allah asked him to sacrifice his son. According to the Qur'an Maryam 19:49-50. 'When Abraham isolated himself from the idol worshippers, Allah gave him Ishaq and Yaqoob and made them prophets. His descendants were the fruit of his obedience to follow the ways of Allah. The Qur'an describes the miracle son (Ishaq) of Abraham as the gentle son – Surah 37:100--113. He was announced by Allah as good news to Abraham and Sarah. But Sarah laughed at the idea of having a gentle, patient and willing son in her old age (Surah 11:70-73). Ishaq is described in Surah 37:107 as the one who was ransomed with a great sacrifice. For Abraham, it was clearly 'a grave trial, to be willing to sacrifice his son⁴⁰.' Ishmael is described in the Torah as a hunter, and man of the wilderness, and obviously a violent man, who was against everyone (Genesis 17).

Just at the point in time that Abram was about to thrust his knife into his gentle miracle son on the altar of sacrifice, Allah called out to Abram and stopped him, and provided a sacrificial ram for Abram to sacrifice rather than his son. Abram passed the test of obedience to Allah. Allah's revelation to Abram was: 'the Lord God who provides'.

In the Book of Hebrews, Abraham is described as a Prophet of faith. 'By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive an inheritance: and he went out not knowing

⁴⁰ Surah As-Saffat 37:106

where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise, for he was looking for the city which has a foundation, whose architect and builder is Allah⁴¹.

Key points:

- a) Abraham worshipped only one God
- b) Abraham prayed and God answered him
- c) Abraham submitted his will to God's will and God honored him greatly
- d) Abraham loved Allah so much he was even prepared to sacrifice his own gentle miracle son believing that Allah would raise him up to life again
- e) God ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice
- f) Abraham was on a pilgrimage to a Holy City designed by God.
- g) Abraham inherited the promised land by faith
- h) Abraham trusted God for a heavenly City, who's design was designed by God.

Key Questions

- i) Abraham was called by Allah to create a new nation – what was Allah's intention in creating this new nation?

- ii) How do we know if one is righteous?

⁴¹ Hebrews 11:8-10

iii) What are the steps we can take to become righteous?

iv) Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son?

v) How were Abraham and his son ransomed?

vi) What was the ultimate vision Abraham held in his heart?

Personal Reflections

Have you ever been asked by Allah to sacrifice the thing dearest to you heart for His glory?

Why do you think Allah provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice rather than His miracle son?

When Allah did not answer your prayer did you ever try to go and 'make it happen' some other way?

How can we enter the promised Kingdom by faith?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

Allah, please stop me from making my own solutions to my difficulties, and show me the path of righteousness. Grant me the faith to obey you, and a willingness to sacrifice whatever you make ask of me for the glory of your Kingdom.

4. Prophet Joseph – Yusuf – the son ‘left for dead’ became the means of salvation for a whole nation through the son’s offer of unmerited favor

Joseph (Yusuf) grew up as the youngest of 11 brothers, and the youngest son of Jacob. Jacob greatly favored his youngest son, and kept him around his home. However, one day when Joseph was a teenager, his father sent him on an errand to bring fresh provisions to his brothers who were tending their father’s sheep. The older brothers were jealous of Joseph because his father had given him a bright cloak of many colors. At a distance, the brothers saw Joseph coming towards their camp, and they impulsively decided to sell him to Arab camel traders who passed that way on their way to Egypt. They seized Joseph, and placed him in a deep pit until the Arab traders arrived at their camp. Once they had negotiated a price with the traders, and they had left on their way to Egypt, the brothers hatched a scheme to tell their father, Jacob, about why Joseph had disappeared. They killed an animal, and spilled its blood on Joseph’s brightly colored coat. On their return to their father’s tent they explained that they had found Joseph’s blood-stained cloak on their journey home. Jacob was distraught at the loss of his youngest and most favored son. Joseph’s brothers had planned an evil outcome for Joseph, but Allah/God had a great plan for Joseph.

In Egypt, Joseph spent many years in prison on false charges, even though he had successfully interpreted the puzzling dreams of Pharaoh, (Fir’awn) the Emperor of Egypt. When Pharaoh had more disturbing dreams he was reminded by his servants that Joseph had a special divine ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh called for Joseph from the prison. The dreams were interpreted accurately. Egypt would experience seven years of great fertility and abundance, before the whole world would experience seven years of famine. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of a plan to store up the surplus grain from the seven

years of plenty so the nation would be prepared for the seven years of famine. As the Governor of Egypt, Joseph was able to implement this plan, and save the people of Egypt.

Strangely this dream that Allah/God gave to Pharaoh became the means of saving Joseph's father and his brothers. The seven-year famine spread to Canaan, and Joseph's family were desperate for food. Jacob sent his sons, all except the youngest son, to Egypt to buy food. They did not know that the Governor of Egypt, to whom they had to ask for food, was their youngest brother Joseph, whom they sold into slavery many years ago.

Joseph did not disclose his identity, but requested that they come again with their youngest brother if they wanted sufficient food to last through the famine. Joseph arranged for his servants to put some treasures from Egypt in their sacks of grain. On their way home, the brothers discovered the treasures, and they became very afraid. They thought they would die when this theft was discovered. In the end, the whole family migrated to Egypt, and were saved through the abundance of food in Egypt. Joseph disclosed his identity to his father and his brothers. He did not seek revenge but forgave⁴² them. They told the truth about the treasures in their sacks of grain. Joseph could see that they had become trustworthy men. His famous statement to his brothers is often quoted. 'You sold me into slavery for evil, but Allah/God meant it for good.'

Jacob and his sons experienced the unmerited grace/forgiveness and favor of Joseph. Joseph forgave his brothers. The story of Joseph is a remarkable revelation of what unmerited grace and favor means. It helps us understand what Allah is offering us: his unmerited grace and favor. Joseph was 'left for dead' for many years by his father Jacob. But

⁴² Pilch, John. 'The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible', 1999. The Liturgical Press. Collegeville, MI. page 59

Allah/God had another plan. In the intervening years Allah/God worked in Joseph's life to raise him up to a place of power and authority in Egypt so he could save his family in their time of great need. Joseph did not seek revenge. He blessed and favored his father and brothers, and saved them from a terrible death by famine.

Key Points:

1. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son
2. Jacob gave Joseph an expensive and colorful cloak fit for a King for no deserved reason
3. Joseph's brothers were jealous of their father's favoritism towards Joseph – they worked hard shepherding the sheep for Jacob, but they did not get colorful and expensive coats?
4. Joseph received great wisdom from Allah to interpret Pharaoh's dreams
5. Joseph's wise plan was recognized by Pharaoh and he made him the Governor of Egypt
6. Joseph's position of power saved Jacob and his sons (Joseph's brothers) from death by starvation during the seven years of drought.
7. Joseph who was 'deemed to be dead', was the source of salvation for Israel.

Key Questions

- i) Joseph was called by Allah to save the nation of Israel from seven years of famine? Why did Joseph not seek revenge?

- ii) Jacob thought his youngest son was dead for many years?
What false evidence did his older brother's use to convince Jacob that Joseph was dead?

- iii) Why do you think 'a great sacrifice' has a significant place in these early stories of Allah's interaction with mankind?

Personal Reflections

Have you ever been jealous of the favor someone else has received?

How did you overcome the thoughts and feelings of jealousy you contended with?

Are you aware of an event in your life where Iblis (Satan) intended it for evil, but Allah/God turned it to good? What was the good outcome

How do you think Allah wants to save us from our spiritual hunger?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

Allah, please make me very grateful for your unmerited favor, forgiveness, and grace that I have experienced in my life. Please help me to overcome my evil desires for revenge by your grace and power, so I can be free from slavery to evil thoughts. Thank you for showing me how you want to save me through someone 'who was deemed to be dead.'

6. Prophet Moses – Musa, the deliverer: ‘So he show him a great sign....’ Surah 79:20

In Moses’ (Musa’s) time the Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They had migrated to Egypt during the time of a great famine in their land. Joseph (Yusuf), who had been sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, was the reason why Jacob and his sons had migrated to Egypt. His wise obedience to Allah had caused him to put aside a great surplus of food in 7 years of bountiful crops, so there would be food in the following 7 years of famine. Gradually the Egyptians ensnared the Israelites, and made them slaves for four hundred years. The descendants of Jacob became a totally broken and shamed race, as a result of 400 years of slavery. Despite their poverty the Israelites had multiplied greatly.

Pharaoh decreed that all first born sons of the Israelites should be put to death because the Israelites were becoming too numerous in the land.

When Moses was just a new born baby, his mother, risked the life of her son by putting him in a basket in the river Nile. When baby Moses was found, she cleverly arranged for him to be adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter, and he was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh. Pharaoh was unaware that Moses was an Israelite.

Moses observed the oppression and slavery of his people who were the descendants of Israel, and the descendants of the brothers of Joseph. Through his powerful position in Egypt, Moses decided to ask Pharaoh ‘to let his people go’, so they could return to Israel. Pharaoh refused, but after a series of seven plagues upon Pharaoh, and his people, Israel left Egypt. Moses led the Children of Israel to repentance, and they believed in the signs of the Allah (Surah 7:125-141).

It was the final plague that made Pharaoh agree to let Israel go from the land of Egypt (Surah 7:130-135). This plague involved the angel of death passing over every house in Egypt, and killing the first-born son in each household – Surah 7:141. ‘This was an awesome sign from your Lord’.

Moses instructed the Children of Israel to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, and brush its blood over the door lintel and door posts of their houses. This festival of deliverance from death became known as ‘passover’ to the Israelites, and they still practice it until now. When the angel of death visited Egypt, all the children were saved by the protection of the blood of the perfect lamb brushed on the lintel and door posts. The children of Israel escaped from Egypt through the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. Allah parted the Red Sea so all the Israelites got safely to the other side, and then He closed the Red Sea on the Egyptian Army who were in hot pursuit: (Surah 20:78-80). The children of Israel learned a valuable lesson: obedience to Allah will deliver them from death and destruction. Their faith in Allah’s precise command saved them from the death of their first-born son. They were also saved from the Egyptian Army, as the Red Sea opened up to them, but swallowed up the Egyptians.

Pharaoh is an example of a proud leader who disobeyed Allah, even after he saw the great Sign⁴³ (the passing over of the angel of death) at the hand and decree of Moses (Musa), (Surah 79:15-26). Pharaoh is an example of the punishment of Allah reserved for those who disobey Him.

These Surahs, Ta Ha (Taha) 20:12, An-Nazi’at (The Forceful Chargers) 79:16, state that Allah called Moses to the sacred valley of Tuwa, to inform him of the plan to deliver the Hebrews from Egypt⁴⁴. This

⁴³ Surah An-Nazi’at 79:20

⁴⁴ Exodus 33:22

sacred place is described as ‘the cleft in the rock’ and Allah covered Moses with His hand until He had passed by. Allah only permitted Moses to see His back. Allah said to Moses, my face shall not be seen. The brilliance of the glory shining from Allah’s face would have blinded Moses.

Key points:

- a) Moses was saved as a baby from drowning in the Nile River by Allah’s mercy
- b) Moses was prepared by Allah to be a great leader for Israel even though he was raised in Egypt
- c) Moses submitted his will to Allah’s will and Allah honored him greatly
- d) Allah showed Israel and Egypt a great sign through the final miracle Allah performed to release Israel from slavery and bondage with a momentous sacrifice
- e) Moses was a man of faith who saw Allah do many amazing miracles to save Israel and lead them back to the promised land
- f) Moses had an encounter with Allah in a sacred cave (cleft in a rock)

Key Questions

- i) Moses was called by Allah to return the nation of Israel back to the land promised to them by an earlier prophet. What was his name?

- ii) Why did blood need to be shed to cancel the power of the Angel of death?

- iii) How can we escape slavery to the sinful disobedience of Allah, and it's resultant bondage and death?

- iv) What is your 'cleft in the rock?' Read Isaiah 26:4-8

Personal Reflections

Are you aware that you are a slave to something that you would like to be delivered from?

The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea protected by Allah, but in the same sea the Egyptians were drowned. Why was one nation saved and the other drowned?

Are you aware of a story of Allah's deliverance in your life from something or someone that required a great sacrifice to set you free?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

Allah, please make me very grateful for all the times you have delivered me from slavery, and bondage to evil things, by a great sacrifice. Please be my 'cleft in the rock', a secure hiding place. I freely submit my life to you afresh today, as a sacrifice for your great mercy and unconditional love you have shown to me.

7. Prophet David, Dawud - sign - Allah will forgive even the murderer and adulterer who truly repents and asks Allah for forgiveness

David (Dawud) the shepherd, was a young man of strong faith in Allah from an early age. He expressed his love for Allah through poems and psalms (songs of praise). The Qur'an states that Allah gave David the Psalms. Surah 4:163, 17:55. Singing praise to Allah was ordained by Him. The Psalms came after the Torah. Surah 21:105,106. Allah gave David Psalm 51:1-19. It starts like Surah 1 of the Qur'an, 'Be gracious to me, O God, according to your lovingkindness, according to the greatness of your compassion, blot out my transgressions...'

David had grace (unmerited favor) bestowed on him by Allah. The Qur'an says in Surah Saba (Sheba) 34:9-10 'There is a sign for every worshipper who turns back to God in repentance. We gave David great favours from Us, repeat Our praises with him (David).

Grace is not only the unmerited favor, but it is also Allah's enabling power and strength. When David was a young man, he received amazing guidance and strength from Allah to slay the giant Jalut (Goliath) of the Philistines, who mocked Israel and their God. With five carefully chosen stones and his sling, David approached the mocker, and slew him with one stone placed in the center of his forehead. Jalut fell down dead, and David removed his head. Israel rejoiced in the victory. The Philistines fled for their lives and suffered the shame of defeat.

David sang great songs of praise to God. The People of Israel rejoiced with him. He gained strength from his worship of God. In Psalm 150 David praised God in the sanctuary, under the stars, and the heavens. David praised God's excellent greatness, and praised Him with a trumpet, harp, timbrel, dancing, stringed instruments, pipe, cymbals, and with his voice. No wonder David brought so much joy to the heart

of God. The Book of Psalms (Zabur) contains 150 songs of praise and lament most of which were authored by King David.

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin and ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn created the Psalms of Islam in 1987 to help Muslims worship Allah through the Arabic language. The Psalms start with 4 Psalms of Praise and blessings. Towards the end of the Book, there are fifteen ‘Prayers of the Repenters’, ‘Prayers of the Obedient toward Allah’, ‘Prayers for the utterly Poor’ and ‘Prayers for the Knowers’. Most of the other 83 Psalms are supplications⁴⁵.

David faced a bear and a lion when shepherding his sheep, (1 Samuel 17:33-37), and removed a lamb from the jaws of these animals. What amazing strength he was given by Allah! Later in his life when David went to battle he was the mightiest of warriors. The women of Israel sang and danced a song that annoyed King Saul; ‘Saul has killed his thousands, but David has slain his tens of thousands’.

King Saul, Israel’s first King anointed by Samuel, lost his kingdom because he consulted a witch, and could no longer converse with Allah. He disobeyed Allah so many times, that he became distant from Allah, and he lost his relationship with Allah. How sad. Saul would have known the clear instructions of the Torah, Genesis chapters 18 and 19⁴⁶. In these two chapters every servant of God is clearly instructed not to seek counsel from mediums, witches or practice any occult practices. King Saul disobeyed these commands. King David was anointed by Samuel to rule in Saul’s place. The Kingdom of Israel was divided. David pleased Allah so much that Allah called him ‘a man after his own heart’⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Al-Sahifat, Al-Sajjadiyya. The Psalms of Islam. 1987, Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Qum, Iran.

⁴⁶ Deuteronomy chapters 18 and 19.

⁴⁷ Acts 13:22

Sadly, a lust for power deceived King David for a short-time in his life. It had devastating consequences. One day when looking from the palace window, David's eyes were attracted to the naked body of Bathsheba who was bathing in her private pool. David's army general was the husband of Bathsheba. His name was Uriah. He was away at the battle field. Bathsheba became pregnant as a result of David's lust. David then arranged for Uriah to be killed on the battle field to try to cover over his sinful deeds.

David's sinful actions did not go unnoticed. Nathan the prophet came to David and told him a story about a rich man. The rich man had many flocks of sheep, but when he had to entertain a stranger he took a poor man's sole ewe and slew it for food. David was angry with the rich man in Nathan's story. David demanded the death of the rich man for his greed. The Prophet announced to David that he was the rich man in the story, who stole Uriah's wife and killed Uriah. The Prophet Nathan announced to David that his first-just-born son to Bathsheba would die of a childhood sickness because of his sin. And as the Prophet said, tragically he died. David's second son to Bathsheba was Solomon who became the great King of Israel who built a temple for the worship of the Lord God of Israel.

David passed through this dark period in his life by sincerely repenting of these sins. Psalm 51 records the events surrounding his acts of repentance. David's repentance was so deep that his tears wet the bed he was laying on⁴⁸. Allah loves repentance and those who turn away from evil. Read Surah 42 ayah 25. 'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins, and He knows all that we do.'

David's relationship with Allah was fully restored. Allah gave King David an eternal blessing. In 2 Samuel 7:8-15 we read that Allah made this

⁴⁸ Psalm 6:6

covenant with King David: 'I will raise up from your seed (a descendant) after you....and I will establish his kingdom forever.'

And again in 1 Chronicles 17: 3-10,14-15,25-27...'I will set up one of your seed (a descendant) after you...who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom ... I will be his Father and he will be My son.....and His throne shall be established forever. This was a prophecy concerning Isa the son of Maryam. (Al Imran (the family of Imran) 3:45-58).

Only proud and arrogant people resist the opportunity to repent of their sins. This is the contrast between King Saul, and King David. The proud King Saul would not humble himself and repent. He lost his kingdom. King David sinned and displeased Allah, but he was quick to repent, and ask Allah for forgiveness. He not only remained King, but he received the promise of an everlasting King, and an everlasting Kingdom, from his seed. We are sinful people, but by Allah's grace (unmerited favor) we can repent, and be forgiven if we humble ourselves and pray requesting forgiveness for our stubborn and unfaithful heart.

Surah 1 of the Qur'an teaches us that Allah is the most merciful, gracious, and compassionate. Allah shows his mercy for mankind through the story of Noah (Nuh). Although mankind has been 'wicked' since Noah's time, because Allah promised not to flood the earth again the human race is still alive today. Allah has been faithful to us when we have been unfaithful to Him. What an amazing love He has for humanity. The Injil teaches us that sin deserves judgement and the penalty of that judgement is death. Most of mankind who have sinned, live for seventy years or more. This is the mercy, grace and compassion of Allah. He does not immediately act in judgement when we sin. He gives us a period of grace to repent and ask for forgiveness. Every day, we should repent of our sins in prayer, and rely on the faithfulness of

Allah to keep His promises, and to forgive us, and grant us his unmerited favor.

Key Points:

- a) David had a strong faith in Allah from a very early age
- b) David was a shepherd who became a King
- c) David received great courage when he faced Jalut (Goliath)
- d) Goliath mocked the God of Israel, and lost his battle with a young shepherd boy who had no training in warfare
- e) David only had to use one of the five stones he selected to kill Jalut (Goliath)?
- f) David saved a lamb from the mouth of a lion and a bear
- g) David was anointed King by the Prophet Samuel
- h) David committed the sin of adultery and murder and was forgiven by Allah
- i) David betrayed his best friend (Uriah) to carry out his wicked plan
- j) Nathan the Prophet was asked by Allah to explain the seriousness of David's sin to David.
- k) David's first-born son died as a result of David's sin
- l) David repented quickly and was forgiven by Allah, and enjoyed God's presence again
- m) Although David had many mockers and enemies Allah made him victorious
- n) David was a continually thankful Prophet who loved praising God through poetry, singing and music.

Key Questions

- i) Why do you think the young shepherd boy David was favored by Allah from such a young age?

- ii) Why did King Saul lose his Kingdom?

- iii) Why did King David retain his Kingdom even after he sinned?

- v) What was the purpose of the Prophet Nathan's story about a rich man and a poor man's only ewe?

- vi) What promise from Allah did the Prophet Samuel give to David at his anointing to be King?

Personal reflections

Have you experienced supernatural strength from Allah to accomplish something important in your life? Describe the context?

What promises do you know in the holy scriptures that indicate Allah's faithfulness to keep His promises?

What are the consequences of sin?

Is Allah trustworthy? Can we rely on him to keep His promises?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

O Allah, help me to trust in your Word, and keep your promises. Make me a person of strong faith and great courage to stop the mouths of mockers of Allah. Keep me and save me from sinning. Help me overcome temptation. Please grant me your supernatural power when it is needed to glorify your name.

7. Prophet Jonah – the reluctant prophet, who spent three days in the belly of a big fish

Jonah 1:1 *“Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai”*. This statement about Jonah’s prophet-hood is confirmed in 2 Kings 14:25 *“He (King Jeroboam - 786-746 BC) restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath-Hepher.”* This town was 3km from Sepphoris, and 9km from Nazareth where Jesus of Nazareth (Isa, the son of Maryam) worked as a carpenter for his father Joseph.

The book of Jonah is an incredible book, for though it only contains 4 chapters it is full of amazing supernatural miracles.

Reference to the story of Jonah appears in the Qur’an in many Surahs - Surah 6; 10; 21; 37; 68. A Surah is named after him - Yunus - Jonah in Arabic. Jonah is also called ‘Dhun-Nun’ which in Arabic means ‘The One of the Whale’. The Qur’an confirms that Jonah is the *son of Amittai* from the tribe of Benjamin. The accounts in the Bible and the Qur’an are almost the same except that the Qur’an adds that if Jonah had not repented in the belly of the whale he would almost certainly have remained there until the day of resurrection (Surah 37 (As-Saaffat ayat 139-144). A point of difference between the Qur’an and the Bible, is that the Bible mentions that the population of Nineveh was 120,000 but the Qur’an in Surah 37 ayat 145-148 says that Jonah was sent on a mission to 100,000 men. Both texts confirm the repentance of the people of Nineveh, and the joy that it brought them when they repented and turned to Allah/God for deliverance from impending doom.

It is recorded in Jonah, that he tried to run away from the presence of the Lord. In Psalm 139:7-10 the Psalmist says;

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven You are there, If I make my bed in Hell

You are there, If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell in the remotest part of the sea even there Your hand will lay hold of me."

The Psalmist states that it is futile to try to run away from the presence of the Lord. If you know the true loving, gracious, and merciful God, and His greatness, you would not try to run away or hide from Him. Jonah received the command to go to Nineveh and call the rich, wicked, proud people of this idol-worshipping city to repent and turn to worship Allah/God. Jonah was afraid, and not interested in helping a pagan, foreign people to repent, and be spared from impending doom. Jonah went to the port city of Joppa, the port nearest to Gath-Hepher, and paid for a fare on a ship to Tarshish in Spain - the opposite direction from his assignment. The voyage suffered a great storm and all the cargo was thrown overboard while Jonah slept in the ship. Finally, after all the crew and passengers searched their hearts as to what they may have done to anger their gods, the captain woke up Jonah, and asked him what he had done to anger his God. It is interesting that the men on the ship knew Jonah was a Hebrew who was fleeing from his God. How did they know this? Perhaps Jonah had preached to them before they hit the storm. Jonah's solution was to request them to throw him overboard because he declared that once they did this the sea would become calm.

The crew were reluctant to throw Jonah overboard because their job was to save passengers at the risk of their own life. They took their job seriously. Finally, after throwing all the cargo overboard, and when they could see that the storm would not subside, they threw Jonah overboard.

The cost of Jonah's disobedience was three-fold; and the boat nearly sank:

- i) the shipping company lost all its cargo
- ii) the crew nearly perished
- iii) Jonah hardened his heart towards the plight of the crew and passengers of the ship

The men on the ship feared the Lord, and made a sacrifice and vows to

God after they threw Jonah overboard.

Jonah was swallowed by a great fish - probably a whale - and in the belly of the great fish Jonah repented of his disobedience. After three days the fish vomited Jonah up on a beach.

There was one benefit as a result of Jonah's disobedience. The crew on the ship repented, turned to the True Creator God, and made a sacrifice to His name. They saw that their gods had no power over the wind and sea, but Jonah's God did. Perhaps there are things we can learn from our disobedience.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time:

"Arise and go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." Jonah 3:2.

Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh. When Jonah reached Nineveh, he proclaimed to the King of Nineveh *"Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown"*. The King arose, put on sackcloth, covered himself in ashes, and led all the people in repentance of their sins. They fasted and prayed. God heard their sincere prayers, and saw their acts of repentance, and changed his mind, and did not allow the calamity to fall upon Nineveh.

From historical records of the City of Nineveh, we know that Nineveh was a city without a wall. It was spread over an area the size of New York. It was indefensible. The people of the City were so proud of it, and the sophistication of their culture, that they never expected anyone to want to destroy it. However, at the time Jonah prophesied, God had gathered a 100,000 man Ugaritic army north of the city ready to invade it. Before the army invaded the city an even larger Russian army of 250,000 came, and wiped out the Ugaritic army, and Nineveh was spared. The Ugarites were Baal worshippers, and although they distinguished themselves from the Canaanites they worshipped the

same gods and occupied the seaward lands of modern day Syria.

Jonah became very upset that God changed his mind and spared Nineveh after they repented. His was an honour and shame culture. In his opinion, his honour and reputation as a prophet had been harmed. He cared more about his reputation than he did about the people of Nineveh - after all they were pagan foreigners. Jonah was a man who seemed to lack a heart of compassion for people.

Allah is compassionate, gracious and merciful. These are the greatest truths about Allah in the Qur'an. Jesus is the evidence of these truths in the Qur'an. He is mentioned 33 times in the Qur'an and his actions were compassionate, gracious and merciful. Jesus' name means Saviour. The compassion and mercy of Allah is reflected in the provision of a Saviour (the name Isa means saviour of all peoples – He is the son of Maryam, the beloved of Allah, and one of the nearest to Allah).

Jonah was the servant of Allah, and he was obliged to act like Allah. We worship Allah because he is the best of beings. We worship him to honour him by our obedience. Those who obey the commands of Allah are elevated from slaves of Allah to friends of Allah. A master loves a slave who always obeys him. Our actions should reflect the nature, and character of the God we worship. We become like the being we worship. That's how Allah made us.

"Jonah sat on a hill to the east of the city and God made a plant to quickly grow up and shelter him from the hot sun. Jonah was very happy about the plant. The next day at dawn a worm came up and devoured the plant. Jonah suffered so much from the heat that he asked God to take his life" (Jonah 4:8). God spoke to Jonah and said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. And should you not have had compassion on

Nineveh the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people who do not know the difference between their left hand, and their right hand as well as many animals?”

The Ninevites were regarded by the Hebrews (Jonah's race), and the Ugarites, as less sophisticated and less intellectual than the Hebrews, or Ugarites, and this was probably the basis of this comment about them not knowing what their left-hand and right-hand was doing. It may also reflect Jonah's attitude towards them as well. Perhaps he held a racial prejudice towards the Ninevites. Certainly, their lack of attention to building a defensive wall around their city was a serious oversight in this period in history.

Key points:

- a) Our disobedience affects others
- b) We can never run away from Allah and his presence
- c) Repentance is the key to receiving the favour and protection of Allah
- d) Jealousy makes us unhappy when other people are blessed
- e) Why did Allah change his mind about his plans for the people of Nineveh
- f) Allah even helps foolish people when they call on Him for help
- g) Caring for people should be a priority in our life, regardless of their race

Key questions

- i) Why do you think Jonah wanted to run away from his call to go to Nineveh with the word of the Lord?

- ii) What can we learn about Jonah's heart of concern and compassion for other people?

- iii) Do you have a heart of compassion for others or a proud heart that thinks of yourself first?

- iv) Have you ever tried to run away from God's presence, or forsake following the Lord?

- v) If your answer for iv) was 'Yes' what were the circumstances that made you want to run away from the Lord's presence?

Personal Reflections

Do you have any racial prejudices towards a certain group of people, and you try to avoid them?

Why do you think Allah loves and forgives people who repent?

When did you repent of something evil you had done?

How do you know that Allah forgave you?

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

O Allah, the most merciful and the most gracious; help me to always obey your Word. Give me the wisdom to obey your instructions, even when I don't like them. Make me a person who thinks and acts like you. Help me love all people like you do, regardless of their race. Make me grateful for all your blessings both great and small. Lead me by your Holy Spirit on the straight path towards your Kingdom.

8. Prophet John the Baptist – the prophet that prepared the way of the Messiah

John the Baptist (known as Yahya – the Arab word for John) is a prophet in Islam, and he is mentioned 5 times in the Qur'an in the following four surahs:

1. 3:39-41 – *'confirming a word from Allah, a master, chaste (unmarried), and righteous prophet.'* Zachariyyah asked for a sign that his son's miraculous birth to his aged wife would happen. Allah gave him a sign that he would not speak until the boy was born. The birth was a miraculous birth.
2. 6:85 – *Yahya the righteous prophet. Both his father Zachariyya, and Yahya are listed in this surah as prophets given to those 'Believers who do not cloak their faith with wickedness are securely guided'. Those who love righteousness will love the message of the prophet Yahya and be rightly guided.*
3. 19:5-15 – *Zachariyyah, Yahya's father received a sign, he was unable to speak until the birth of his son Yahya, because he doubted Allah's promise of a son. He was humble and reverent. Peace was upon Yahya from the day he was born until he died and the day he was resurrected alive. In this surah Yahya was told 'to take the book with power'.*

At this point in history, the holy books in existence were the Torah, Zabur and all of the Old Testament that we have in today's Holy Bible. An ancient copy was discovered in 1947 in Qumran by the Bedouin shepherd, Muhammad Ed Dib. The reference to the book with power would most likely be the Torah, because the Qur'an mentions it, and highly regards to the acts of prophets like Musa (Moses) who wrought many powerful miracles during the challenge to Pharaoh to let his enslaved people go on their sojourn through the wilderness to the promised land. These miracles are recorded in the Torah.

4. 21:90 Yahya was given by Allah to Elizabeth⁴⁹ and Zachariyyah in answer to Zachariyyah's prayer, and Zachariyyah, Elizabeth, and Yahya tried to outdo each other in good deeds.

John the Baptist preceded Jesus (Isa – son of Maryam), and called the people of Israel to 'repentance' to prepare their hearts for the coming of the promised Messiah –Sura 3:45-47. The Angel instructed Maryam to call her son Isa the Messiah. He is both the Saviour and Messiah given by Allah. The title Saviour means the One who will save us from our sins. Messiah means the anointed One and the returning One on the day of Judgement.

This was predicted in Malachi 4:5-6; *'Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. So that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.'*

Jesus confirmed that this prophecy was about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:12-19;

'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children playing in the market calling out to other children and saying, we played the flute for you and you did not dance, we played the dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say he has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking,

⁴⁹ See Table 'A'

and they say; behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors, and sinners. Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds’.

John the Baptist said; *‘As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove his sandals: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand and He will thoroughly clear the threshing floor, and He will gather His wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire’.* Matthew 3:11-12

Mark 1:4, *‘John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.’*

His prophetic purpose was to prepare the way of the Lord, the hearts of the people, and to make a highway (a straight path) for the Lord. Matthew 3:1;

‘Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea saying, Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ Repentance pleases Allah, Surah 42:25.

The people of Israel were hard-hearted, their ears were deaf, and their eyes were shut. They had been colonized by the cruel Romans. Many of their young men had been conscripted into the Roman army as slaves. They felt weak and helpless. They had prayed for deliverance, but no military or political deliverer had come. They were disillusioned by the spiritual and political chaos of their day. They had hoped that another prophet like Moses would come.

John’s ministry was to call the people to humble themselves by being baptized in the river Jordan, and open their spiritual ears and eyes for the coming Messiah. Those from Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the

district around Jordan went out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan as they repented and confessed their sins.

In Acts 18:25 we read about Appollos:

'This man being instructed in the way of the Lord, being fervent in Spirit, was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John, and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to Him the way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public demonstrating by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.'

The baptism of John came before Jesus' death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit brought the promise of the Messiah, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus' disciples were transformed from weak, feeble and scared followers of Jesus into bold powerful preachers with signs (miracles) following their ministry, after the promised Spirit's power came at Pentecost. This was the comparison Priscilla and Acquila noticed in the ministry of Apollos. After teaching and the laying on of hands, Apollos was empowered with the pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit.

This is the same response we need to make today. We are all sinful people who have done evil things. We need to ask Allah to forgive us, and cleanse us. We need to obey the call of Allah to repent, and to ask Allah to forgive us according to Surah 42:25: *'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from his servants and forgives sins and He knows all that we do.'*

The cost of repentance is sometimes a hurdle for us to trust God to overcome. A Pashtu brother M S Khan was disillusioned with the inability of the practice of Islam in his region in Pakistan, and its inability to bring peace. As a child he had witnessed the paralyzing blood feuds between tribes and even within his own tribe. Honour had to be avenged. Scores had to be settled and fugitives were on the run. He wanted out and he approached a leader to be baptized in front of his family and friends as a testimony of his obedience to God's Word and the way of peace. He asked a highly respected doctor in the local hospital to baptize him. No one took action against the doctor because he had saved so many lives. But M S's father beat him mercilessly. God gave him the strength to overcome fear and to love those who persecuted him. He pleaded for his life because of his identity as a son of the village, and a member of the Pashtun tribe. On the third night, his mother secretly brought him food. On the seventh day his father beat him again. After six weeks, his father broke and said: You are my son. I cannot change you. I cannot kill you. His father went and got him a job in another town. M S had won. He brought the power of the love and power of 'Isa' to his village. He risked death, but God saved Him and made his story a testimony to those who repent of disobeying God's words⁵⁰: *'Love your neighbor as yourself; Love your enemies'*.⁵¹ The Qur'an contains a similar injunction to love your opponents in Surah Al Mumtahinah (She who is interviewed) 60:7-8. 'It just maybe that God will create love between you and your opponents for God is capable enough, and God is forgiving and merciful'.

In the 'Taste and See' story⁵² there is a repentance prayer to pray to ask Allah for forgiveness for the things we have done that are evil or wrong. It states: *'Almighty God, please forgive me of my sin and*

⁵⁰ Mc Curry, Don. Tales that Teach, 'I want to be baptised in my village'. Page 153.

⁵¹ Matt 5:43; 44. Surah 60:7-8.

⁵² Go to www.thepilgrimage.net.nz for this story. It can be accessed on the internet.

cleanse me from all the evil things I have done, so I may be guided by your Spirit on the right path to following the teaching of the Word of God during my pilgrimage on earth.'

This prayer opens the door for the Holy Spirit to enter our heart and spirit, and guide us on the right path. Once we pray this prayer, the Holy Spirit does his work in a beautiful and gentle way and reveals to us the truth about Allah/God, and Isa/Jesus.

Once we can hear Allah's voice speaking to us through His Word and by His Spirit's empowerment, we can experience the promise found in Psalms 37:23-24: 'the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in his way (path)'.

Then we can ask Allah for the power of the Holy Spirit. We will receive his boldness and power to do miracles. Signs and wonders will follow our preaching of the Word of the God – the Truth of Allah/God.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in the Qur'an. It states in Surah 3:47 that 'Isa' was strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Other references to the Holy Spirit in the Qur'an can be found in the surahs' in the footnote below.⁵³

⁵³ References to the Holy Spirit in the Qur'an are found in the following surahs: the phrase ruh al-qudus, commonly translated as the "**holy spirit**" or the "**spirit** of holiness", occurs four times in the **Qur'an**:

Surah 2 (Al-Baqara) ayat 87 – Isa was strengthened by the Holy Spirit

Surah 2 (Al-Baqara) ayat 253 – Isa was aided by the Holy Spirit (Allah preferred some prophets over others)

Surah 5 (Al-Ma'ida) ayat 110 – Isa was aided by the Holy Spirit

Surah 16 (An-Nahl) ayat 102 – Allah truly revealed the Qur'an by the Holy Spirit as guidance and good news to those who submit.

Key Points:

- a) The Prophet John the Baptist came to prepare the way for One who was greater than Him
- b) Isa (Jesus) was the One greater than John the Baptist
- c) John's message was a message of repentance –baptism was an act of repentance
- d) Allah sent John to the colonized Nation of Israel to prepare their hearts through repentance, and baptism through the ministry of John the Baptist
- e) Even Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist – 'to fulfil all righteousness'
- f) Jesus never sinned, (in the Quran Isa is described as sinless)⁵⁴, so his need for baptism by John was not an act of repentance but an act of obedience
- g) Those who obeyed John, and were baptized, experienced a change of heart, and they could understand the spiritual meaning of the parables Jesus taught. Their spiritual eyes were opened to the Truth of God's Word

Key Questions

Have you repented of your sins and experienced a change in your heart?

Have you been able to read the parables of Jesus (Isa in the Injil), and understand the true spiritual meaning of these parables?

⁵⁴ Sura 3:45-58 – Isa is sinless

Are you conscious of the presence of Allah/God and the power of His Spirit in your heart/spirit after repentance?

Has your ability to trust God with your future being enhanced through a new revelation of His plans for you from His Word?

Personal Reflections

Have you ever repented of your evil deeds and asked for Allah's forgiveness?

Why do you think Allah changes our heart after we repent, so we can understand the spiritual meaning of the parables?

Once we can understand Allah's voice speaking to us through His Word, what new steps will you be able to take in obeying Allah's divine guidance?

How do you know that Allah wants to communicate His plans for your life with you? (Psalms 37:23-24)

Share this story with a friend during this next week

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week?

Your friends name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

O Allah, the most merciful and the most gracious. Make me sensitive to the times I commit sin and do things that are displeasing to you. Make me ready to repent and turn to you and ask for forgiveness. Cleanse my soul of anything that is not pleasing to you! Open my ears to hear your Word speaking to me and guiding me on the straight path.

9. Prophet Jesus the Messiah – Isa, Al Masih, the beloved sinless prophet of Allah/God

The Qur'an talks a great amount about Jesus. In Surah Ali 'Imran 3 ayah 45 his miraculous birth is recorded. It states:

'When the angels said: Oh Maryam, surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him (of one) whose name is the Messiah, Isa son of Maryam, worthy of esteem in this world and the hereafter, and one of those Nearest to Allah.'

Isa means 'Saviour of all peoples' - One who saves us from the punishment of our sins. Sin is the act of disobeying God/Allah. Sins are the things we do wrong, things that displease Allah. We sin when we disobey Allah's Word (Kalimat'ullah). In the Gospel of John 1 v 1, Jesus is revealed as the Word of God (Kalimat'ullah) who is eternal, from the beginning, and He was with God, and He was God. He is One with God/Allah, and God/Allah is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Isa is eternal.

If we ask Allah to forgive us, He will forgive us our sins, Surah Ash-Shura 42 ayah 25 "Allah is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins and He knows all that we do."

Isa taught the way of forgiveness, and he can pardon all our sins. Isa and Allah are One.

'Messiah', the second title given to Jesus in Surah 3, means 'anointed One,' the One filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Isa was filled with the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb⁵⁵. He was righteous, holy, clean and pure. Full of light and love. Isa is not only the One who can cleanse us from sin, but He can also give us the power of the Holy Spirit of God⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Matthew 1:18-20

⁵⁶ Acts 1:1-5

so we do not keep on sinning. His power sets us free from the curse of sin. 'Messiah' also means the One who will come back to judge all mankind.

Allah would not have made a mistake in calling the Son of Maryam, Isa or Saviour, and Messiah, the anointed One. Allah sent Isa into the world to save mankind and to give mankind access to the power of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Helper. The Holy Spirit is not a Man and has never been a man. He is the Supreme Spirit of God, and His Christ, and the three are One.

In Acts chapter 1 vs 7-8, "He said to them, 'it's not for you to know the times and epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth'". After 50 days, the disciples received this mighty power. The miracles the apostles did, are evidence of the impartation of this divine power upon them.

No human agent was involved in the birth of Isa. Surah Ali 'Imran 3:59 states, 'With Allah, Isa is like Adam, who was created from soil: then he told him 'Be' and he was!' Isa came from Mary's womb by the decree of Allah. His conception was made possible by the miraculous decree of Allah.

What is the good news contained in the Gospel or Injil. The good news is that we no longer have to earn God's favour by our good works, although Allah is pleased when we do good. God offers us the gift of forgiveness, and cleansing from our sins through His Saviour that he sent to earth through Maryam!

This is the good news? In the Injil, Surah Al Zumar 39 ayat 53-63, Allah says, that those who will be counted as righteous and saved from Hell-fire are those who obeyed His Signs. Righteousness is imputed to us

by Allah as a free gift when we repent. We cannot make ourselves righteous.

These ayah in Surah 39 teach us some very important truths. Ayat 53 states that we have transgressed. Ayat 54 invites us to repent to avoid the penalty before it comes. Ayat 57 states that Allah is the One who guides us to avoid the penalty and be among the righteous. Ayat 59 clearly warns us that if we neglect the Signs of Allah we will be among the proud who reject faith. If we repent Allah will deliver us to the place of salvation, and no evil will touch us. Allah has always had a plan of salvation for mankind. For salvation to be realised there must be a Saviour. Ayat 63 gives us the clue about the Saviour. It says that to Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth, and those who reject the Signs of Allah will be at a loss. Isa, Jesus, is the Sign of Allah for salvation. Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 16:19 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...'

The Qur'an reveals to us that Allah is Gracious and Merciful. He has not wiped us off the face of the earth for our wickedness; Merciful because he observes us continually disobeying his commands, and yet He forgives those who humble themselves and ask him for forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the evidence that Allah is both gracious (bestowing unmerited favour), and merciful. Allah has sent us a Saviour. Isa means Saviour of all peoples. Allah would not make a mistake in giving this name to Isa. He plans to rescue us from our sinful state. He knows that no matter how many good works we do we cannot wipe away the penalty of our sins. Christ will return and receive into heaven all who have repented, and asked Him to save them. In John 14:6 Jesus said; 'I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to that Father except through Me'. Sheik Anwar at the Masjid in Grayson Avenue, Papatoetoe, Auckland, New Zealand, includes in most of his Friday sermons this statement: 'All the Words of Jesus are true and correct, and a Muslim who denies any of His words is not a true Muslim, including John 14:6'. Every true Muslim believes, and accepts all the

words of Jesus as the Word of God. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said; 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.'

Jesus Christ is the most controversial prophet in Islam. In the Qur'an, Jesus is referred to in over ninety verses/ayat in fifteen Surahs. Islam corroborates that Jesus was born of a virgin, was sinless, performed miracles, and was greater in His teaching, character, relationship with Allah, and miraculous signs, more than the other prophets.

Many Islamic teachers try their best to propound that Jesus was no more than a prophet. This is not consistent with the meaning of the Qur'an. It denies the central message of the Gospel (Injil) taught by Jesus while He was on earth. The Qur'an endorses the validity of the Injil. Polemicist scholars try to deny the divinity of Jesus. Even some Islamic scholars try to misuse the Arabic word 'tawaffa', and say that Jesus did not die a violent death to enhance their cause. They say he was just taken up to heaven like Enoch or Elijah. Neither Enoch or Elijah suffered violent deaths. According to every accurate source of history Jesus of Nazareth the son of Maryam was crucified. The Arabic word 'tawaffa'⁵⁷ used in the Qur'an means to die a violent death. On the cross Jesus asked the Apostle John to take care of Maryam the mother of Jesus, and the historic evidence that he faithfully did so is located in Ephesus in modern day Turkey. Millions of visitors make a pilgrimage to the house of Mary in Kusadasi every year.

The paradox of the attempt to deny the divinity of Jesus in the Qur'an is that the Qur'an teaches at least 13 attributes of Jesus most of which are divine. Divine means 'of God, like God, or godly or godlike'. At the end of this section about Jesus, there is a summary of these 13 attributes of Jesus, or Isa, as he is named in the Qur'an.

⁵⁷ Al Nisa Surah 4:157; Ali 'Imran Surah 3:55-58; Maryam Surah 19:33

Many Islamic scholars deny that Isa (Jesus) is the Son of God. They freely acknowledge that He is the son of Maryam. How did Maryam become pregnant? By the decree of Allah.

It is blasphemous to suggest that Maryam became pregnant because Allah impregnated her. The late Ahmed Deedat once stated on Australian National Radio on Good Friday the 5th April, 1996, a blasphemy about Jesus' birth. He was speaking at the Sydney Town Hall on the topic – 'Easter – a Muslim viewpoint'. Not long after that, he had a stroke, and was unable to speak until his death on Trevennen Road, Verulam, KwaZulu, Natal, South Africa in August, 2005.

Joseph the fiancé of Mary was not the father of Jesus. Mary never had relations with any other man. Prior to Jesus birth, Maryam was a virgin. The Qur'an calls Maryam the virtuous and most pure virgin. Allah proclaimed the formation of the embryo in Maryam's womb by His Word. Isa was the Word of God, the Kalimat'ullah. Therefore, Allah is responsible for the birth of Jesus by His powerful decree. Throughout the Injil, Jesus addresses Allah as His Father. When Jesus was lost, he told his parents that he went to his Father's house, the temple in Jerusalem. It is unreasonable, not historically accurate, unscientific, and illogical to deny that Jesus is the Son of God. The difficulty we experience in understanding this concept, without seeming to blaspheme, is our understanding of 'The Incarnation'⁵⁸ of God in human form. The word incarnation in the Biblical sense means that Jesus is the non-created⁵⁹ second person of the triune God who took on a human body, and everything that is human, and became both man and God. An incarnate being in this sense, is a being or form embodying deity or spirit, and the adoption of human form or nature. The source of the being is God himself, and such a being is therefore

⁵⁸ Strong E.L. 'The Incarnation of God', 1917– Biblical scriptural passages for the Incarnation of God are found in – Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 1: 26-38

⁵⁹ John 1:1 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the only human who lived on earth who had this unblemished divine incarnate nature. The question arises: 'Why would God limit himself to human form?' The principle Biblical reason God took this unusual action in the incarnation of His beloved Son, is to demonstrate to mankind what mankind would have been like had Adam not sinned. His motive was His divine unconditional love for the desperate plight of the human race.

Many sincere seekers, wanting to find the truth about Jesus have also asked a very pertinent question that arises from the incarnation of Christ. They claim it has not been answered by many highly esteemed Christians scholars, professors, and Christian leaders. The question is this:

When Jesus was on earth was Allah (God the Father) a two-thirds God in heaven?

No, he wasn't. God is Spirit. As the Supreme Creator God/Spirit, he is able to be everywhere at all times. The Qur'an teaches that Allah sees what all men do all the time. He is omnipresent and omniscient. This can only be achieved if He is omnipotent (All powerful). Allah has to be omniscient, all knowing, if he knows what we all do all the time. In his incarnation as the Son of God, or God in human form, Jesus is the God man. He is the example of what man would have been like had Adam and Eve not sinned. The Spirit of God fully indwelt Jesus. Jesus was inextricably connected to His Father while he was on earth, except for the earth-shattering moment he was forsaken by His Father on the cross when He cried out 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me?' Disconnection from perfect union with God is sin. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the sin of mankind involved momentary separation from the Father. Jesus cried out to His Father; 'Into your hands I commit my Spirit.' The Spirit of Jesus, and God/Allah were One. God was not limited in any way while Jesus was on earth. Jesus was limited in his human body as the man Christ Jesus, and carpenter of Nazareth. He

voluntarily chose the act of incarnation in that form for an ultimate glorious redemptive purpose. There was no separation between them, except for this brief moment of sacrificial atonement. The blood sacrifice had to be made to enable Jesus to be Our Saviour. Redemption was only possible if there was a perfect sinless life given. Jesus was the only perfect sinless life that could adequately atone for a sinful human race. The mountain of human sinfulness, needed the greatest sacrifice available to make atonement, and cancel the penalty of sin. Jesus, the Son of God, was only person in history to make that sacrifice. All the prophets' stories point to this act of God's mercy, grace, and love for mankind being necessary. The Prophet stories from Adam to John the Baptist mostly involve the sacrifice of a life for the power to overcome death, sin, the penalty of sin, and the curse of sin. The Qur'an substantially confirms this conclusion in its Prophet stories, and the confirmation of the revelation of Isa.

Adam and Eve were covered from their shame by the shedding of blood of an animal that God provided

Noah a righteous man was saved by the loss of life of all humanity except for his family

Abraham was going to sacrifice his son but Allah provided a ram instead

Joseph was sacrificed by his brothers, but became the saviour of Israel in the famine

Moses and Israel were delivered from Egypt by the sacrifice of the blood of an unblemished lamb, and when this was not obeyed by the Egyptians, all their first-born sons died

King David sacrificed the blood of his best friend and Army General to cover his sin with Bathsheba

Jonah was willing to sacrifice his life to save the seamen on his boat, and Allah sent a big fish to deliver him

John the Baptist was sacrificed (with his head on a plate) to be the fore-runner of Jesus (Isa)

Jesus, (Isa) the righteous servant was sacrificed to be the Saviour of all mankind

Muhammad gave his life to save the Arab people from idolatry. The Qur'an given to mankind by Allah, through his servant Muhammad, elevates Jesus (Isa) to the highest place among all of the prophets and confirms His redemptive names, Jesus (Isa) Saviour and Messiah (Al Masih).

Another question that serious seekers frequently ask is this:

Don't Christians believe in three gods? God the Father, Mary the Mother, and Jesus the Son?

The answer is 'no' they don't. The Trinity, Christians believe in, is God the Father, Jesus the Son and The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is often described as the third person of the Trinity, Jesus being the second. However, Christians do not believe in three gods. They believe in One God. When Christians worship Jesus Christ they are not intending to worship a god-man but the Supreme Creator God. The proof of this is in Deuteronomy 6 :4 where it is stated in the Torah that God is One (He is God alone). If Christians believed that God is three they would have changed the Torah, but God would not allow them to do it. Jews, Christians and Muslims all believe in One God. The Trinity is a trinity in perfect Unity. They are One. Many Muslims find this concept hard to understand because they understand God as a singular One, not a compound unity as Christians do. Even in the Torah, Yahweh is referred to by the Hebrew word 'Yachad' which is a compound unity, rather than the Hebrew word for a singular One. 'Echad' is undivided

Oneness. A holy, perfect, sinless being has to be undivided. Division is sinful. The Hebrew revelation in the Torah did not use 'Echad' but 'Yachad' implying that God is a compound UNITY. But for the essence of God to be 'LOVE', love has to have an object on which to bestow its graciousness. Consequently, Biblical teaching about the essence of God teaches that the Father, Son and Spirit are One and each has the proof of their communal essence in the way they unconditionally love one another.

Athanasius and the early Church fathers, resolved this dispute over the Trinity in 356 AD, and the Council of Church Fathers defined the Trinity in what is now known as the Athanasius Creed. This creed can be found in the Book 'The Right Path' at www.mapthawt.com question 24.

Question: Why is it so important to elevate Jesus in the minds and hearts of all mankind?

His name means Saviour of all peoples! Jesus Christ the Messiah is inclusive. His true followers are inclusive. They are led by the Holy Spirit to express the unconditional love of God /Allah to all people regardless of their religion. They love people, and are not fearful. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, and courage dwells in them. The elevation of Jesus in the hearts and minds of Muslims using these references in the Book, the Qur'an, they accept as authoritative, could lead all seeking Muslims to the conclusion that Jesus is both Saviour and Lord, and the Son of God. This 'Book' is intended to encourage all Seekers to read the Torah, Zabur, and Injil as is written therein in Surah Yunus 10:94.

A true follower of Jesus should never be fearful of sharing the truth about Jesus Christ with their friends. The Reformation was needed to lift the veil of unbiblical teaching by Catholic and Orthodox Priests in the 1400's, and men of God risked their lives to print Bibles in English and German, so the masses could read the Bible for themselves. They discovered that a lot of what they were being taught was inaccurate according to Scripture, the source. The practices and form of worship of Christians changed as a result. In a similar manner, when Muslims realise the differences in teaching they have received about Jesus for centuries, there will be a major shift in how Islam is practiced by Muslims. The loving form of Islam, that the Prophet of Islam originally intended will be revived. This Reformation of Islam is being experienced across the globe in the 21st Century. Islamic revisionist scholars are writing about the need to restore Jesus to His rightful place in the Salvation story. Imam Muhammed Tawhidi of Sydney, Australia is a fine example of this new way of thinking about Islam and the message of the Qur'an. Enquiring minds cannot be silenced even when threatened with death or exclusion from the 'ummah'. We hope and pray, that the reformation of Islam will be much less tragic than the Christian reformation.

Heaven will be occupied by people from every nation, race and tongue. The believers in Jesus Christ will be greater than the believers in any other faith (Surah Ali 'Imran 3:55; Isaiah 2:1-5). What a glorious vision. In the Qur'an, and the Holy Bible, Jesus is the just judge. He will judge all people, but those who have made Him Lord and Saviour on earth are exempt from this judgement. He will pardon all who have repented, and believe on His name, and His saving and atoning work of His crucifixion. For these believers, He (Jesus) has put their sins as far as the East is from the West⁶⁰ and He remembers them no more. In 1 John 1: 9 we read: 'If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. The Qur'an

⁶⁰ Psalms 103:12

confirms the saving grace/mercy of repentance in Ali 'Imran, Surah 3:89 and in Surah Ash-Shura 42:25, 'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins and He knows all that we do.' The Qur'an also includes the ministry of John the Baptist (Surah 3:39-41; 6:85; 19:5-15; 21:89-9). He was the prophet who called Israel to repentance and baptism to prepare their hearts for the coming of Isa. To help us to pray a prayer of repentance we use the 'Taste and See' leaflet on The Pilgrimage' website – www.thepilgrimage.net.nz There is a prayer of repentance contained in this leaflet.

Extracts in this section on Isa in the Qur'an were taken from the Yusuf Ali⁶¹ translation.

Please also read the extract (at the end of this list of references) from Imam Muhammad Tawhidi's book the 'Tragedy of Islam' to understand the significance of Isa/Jesus in Islam.

References where Jesus, Isa or Christ (meaning the Messiah, the anointed One) is mentioned by name in the Qur'an are below;

SURAH REFERENCES:

2:87 We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.

2:136 We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them . . .

⁶¹ Ali, Yusuf. The Holy Qur'an. 1989, The Amana Corporation, Washington DC.

2:253 . . . To Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs), and strengthened him with the holy spirit.

3:45 O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah.

3:52 When Jesus found Unbelief on their part He said: "Who will be My helpers to (the work of) Allah?"

3:55 Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take thee⁶², and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection.'⁶³ Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute." (the statement here that Jesus' followers will be superior to those who reject Jesus – like many Muslims who are sadly taught incorrect things about Jesus). This agrees with both Isaiah 2:1-5 and Revelation 5:9-10. The followers of Jesus will be triumphant.

3:59 The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam . . . He told him, 'Be' and it (he) was!"

3:84 . . . and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord.

⁶² This translation is inaccurate and tries to cover up the Arabic word 'tawaffa' used here, that means violent death. Islam tries to deny the death of Jesus and say his life on earth ended by being taken up to heaven. It denies the evidence of Roman and Jewish historical sources that Jesus was crucified on a cross on Golgotha after false charges and an illegal trial.

⁶³ Quoted from The English Reference Qur'an translation by the Common Ground Scholars of The Reference Qur'an Council – version 5, 2018. Contact referencequran@gmail.com for further information.

4:157 That they (referring to the Jews) said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. (*The Romans under Pontius Pilate were responsible for his death by crucifixion*).

4:163 We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.

4:171 O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. (*This seems to be a contradiction of surah 3:59 where Allah decreed that Jesus would be born of Mary by His Word*). To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth.

4:172 Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the Angels and those nearest to Allah . . .

5:17 In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary, say then who hath the least power against Allah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all – everyone that is on earth? For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is in between. He createth what He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things.

5:46 And in their footsteps, We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

5:72 They do blaspheme who say: "Allah is Christ the son of Mary." But said Christ: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah, - Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode.

5:75 Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food.

5:78 Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected Faith, by the tongue of David, and of Jesus the son of Mary: because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses.

5:110 O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic.'

5:112 Behold! the disciples, said: "O Jesus the son of Mary! can thy Lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven?" Said Jesus: "Fear Allah, if ye have faith."

5:114 Said Jesus the son of Mary: "O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a table set (with viands), that there may be for us - for the first and the last of us - a solemn festival and a sign from thee; and provide for our sustenance, for thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)."

5:116 Allah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah'?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart . . ."

6:85 And Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the righteous.

9:30 The Jews call 'Uzair (Ezra) a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah.

9:31 They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).

19:34 Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.

33:7 And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant.

42:13 The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah-the which We have sent by inspiration to thee-and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to

which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him).

43:63 When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: "Now have I come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute: therefore, fear Allah and obey me."

57:27 We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.

61:6 And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, "this is evident sorcery!"

61:14 O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?" Said the disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!" then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.

Note: Jesus is mentioned 25 times, and as Christ or Christ Jesus 8 times = 33 times in total.

References where Jesus is mentioned by reference to his name in the context of an earlier surah:

3:46 "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous."

3:48 And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.

3:49 And (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): "I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe."

3:50 (I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So, fear Allah, and obey me. (Many Imams say in light of this ayat (verse) that all true Muslims must obey the teachings of Jesus. The problem they have is that they think the Gospel of Jesus has been lost, and the disciples who lost it wrote 4 replacements. However, a counter to this proposition is that the 4 gospels have highlighted in them the direct words of Jesus, so if a Muslim studies these words alone in the 4 gospels they will know the teaching of Jesus so they can obey Him and obey the instruction of the Qur'an).

19:19 He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son." (the Reference Qur'an translates this phrase 'a sinless boy.')

19:20 She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" (the Reference Qur'an translates this 'I have never been a prostitute'.) The Yusuf Ali translation in English seems to have made a mistake in calling Marian the mother of Jesus unchaste – meaning the opposite of chaste.)

19:21 He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It is a matter (so) decreed."

19:22 So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

19:27 At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!"

19:30 He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet."

19:31 "And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live."

19:32 "(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable."

19:33 "So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!"

19:88 They say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!"

19:91 That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious.

19:92 For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son.

21:91 And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.

23:50 And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign: We gave them both shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.

43:57 When (Jesus) the son of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamour thereat (in ridicule)!

43:61 And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore, have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye

Me: this is a Straight Way.

Note: In these Surah, Jesus is indirectly referred to 44 times

Research completed by N. S. R. K. Ravi of the North American Mission Board, and the comments in brackets and italics and the re-arrangement of the surah to show direct references, and indirect references and other notes were completed by the author of the book *The Right Path – Questions for Seekers*. Read this book in English or Russian at www.map4thawt.com

A comment by Imam Muhammad Tawhidi – an extract from his book ‘The Tragedy of Islam’. This extract is taken from the second to last chapter headed ‘The Touch of Jesus’.

Perhaps the answer to our problem is: Jesus the Son of Mary. I am not asking Muslims to convert to Christianity but, since we claim to love Jesus, why are we not learning from Him? The heart and centre of the Qur’an includes an entire chapter dedicated to Jesus and his mother Mary, yet our mosques and educational institutions fail to inform us about them out of fear that Muslims might convert to Christianity. Gone are the days where beneficial information is ignored in order to preserve a particular religious agenda, yet we still deprive ourselves of the example of a man such as Jesus, while spending our valuable hours listening to the repetitive and incompetent speeches of paid scholars. The Qur’an teaches that Muslims must love all men sent by God, and not to differentiate between any of them. Thus, I ask my co-religionists: How much do you know about Jesus, the one you claim to love? The

values taught by Christianity are part of the building block of western society and, in order for us to peacefully and successfully live together, it is essential that all migrants understand the values and foundations of western civilization. Armah, the Christian King of the Kingdom of Axum (now Ethiopia) was the first to welcome Muslim refugees in the year 615, after Mohammad ordered his family and followers to flee the persecution of Meccans, and to seek refuge in his kingdom. When King Armah asked the first Muslims why their Prophet sent them to his kingdom, they responded, saying, "Our Prophet told us to seek refuge in your kingdom, because it is ruled by a king who oppresses nobody." Mohammad could have sent the first Muslims to China, or any other country to seek refuge therein, but he knew that a true Christian kingdom is based upon values that put humanity before politics, and religious differences; an essential factor to achieving peace. This is not to say that western values are not the values of our constitutions, rather, the fundamental values of today's western societies come from both Judaism and Christianity, and they have become the universal principles that formed the basis of modern civilization. It is important for us Muslims to accept this reality, and find a common ground with the greater Christian community. This will not end all conflicts, but will surely, and gradually eliminate the tribal mentality of wanting to conquer every Christian country we set foot in. If Christians and Muslims were to achieve peace, then Jesus is the best and only possible uniting figure who is common to both religions; especially since most Muslims believe in the second coming of Jesus and consider him a Saviour.

The 13 attributes of Jesus in the Qur'an are:

1. Isa is the Word of God – Surah 3:45
2. Isa is the Saviour of all mankind – that's what the name 'Isa means

3. Isa is the Messiah or anointed One. Surah 3:45. Both John the Baptist and Isa (Jesus) were filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb of their respective mothers, Elizabeth and Maryam
4. The teacher of the Law of God (Torah), the books of wisdom, and the Gospel – Surah 3:48,50
5. A Messenger to the Children of Israel – Surah 3:49
6. A sign from the Lord – Surah 3:49,50
7. The giver of life (He raised two dead people), and in the Qur'an he made a clay bird come to life – Surah 3:49
8. He healed the blind and the lepers – Surah 3:49
9. The one who raises the dead – Surah 3:49
10. He made disciples – people submitted to God and His Kingdom – Surah 3:52
11. Isa is the One who was raised up to Allah after his violent death – Surah 3:55
12. Isa is the One who shows the way to heaven – Surah 43:61
13. Isa is the one to be obeyed – Surah 3:50

For further help in sharing Biblical truths from the Bible and the Qur'an please use the website: www.thepilgrimage.net.nz

For evidence of the authenticity and originality of the Old Testament scriptures, please go to the website: www.bedouinshepherd.com

Key Points:

- a) Jesus was born of the virgin Mary by the decree of Allah. No other human agent was involved
- b) Jesus is the Son of Allah by His decree only
- c) Jesus was sinless
- d) Jesus is the Messiah – the anointed returning Judge
- e) Jesus was raised up by Allah after his violent death
- f) Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower His disciples to do miracles – John the Baptist predicted this empowerment

- g) Jesus loves all mankind and wants everyone to enter His Kingdom
- h) Jesus has made a way of escape from the day of Judgement and our inability to save ourselves by good works as they are inadequate to redeem us
- i) Jesus is capable of giving life – he raised the dead and breathed life into a clay bird and it flew away
- j) Jesus is the most elevated Prophet in the Qur'an
- k) The Qur'an confirms the Injil (good news), and it records John 14:6 as the true words of Jesus – Surah 5:46
- l) The Qur'an states that the followers of Jesus will be the most numerous when Jesus returns – Maryam Surah 3:45-49

Key Questions

Who do you think Jesus is?

What is your source for your statement about Jesus?

What do Jesus' titles 'Saviour and Messiah' mean to you?

Personal reflections

In what way do you relate to Jesus the Messiah?

What do you think Jesus will say to you on the Judgement day?

Are you concerned that many people may have a wrong idea about who Jesus is?

Who do you know who will benefit from hearing this story in the next week

Your friend's name: _____

When will you do this? _____

Prayer:

'Oh Allah, forgive me for the things I have said about Isa (Jesus) that are not true. I acknowledge that Isa is the most exalted prophet in Islam. The Bible teaches that Isa is both Prophet, Priest and King. I accept his prophethood. I accept Him as my Savior, and therefore my

Priest who has purchased my soul by the sacrifice of His blood, and He will guide my soul on the straight path to heaven. I understand now that Isa is the King of the Kingdom of God. Isa said that He has made the way to the Father (Allah) through Himself, the Son of God (John 14:6).

10. Prophet of Islam – Muhammed – the Oneness of Allah

This an extract from the lecture by Imam Dr Afroz Ali from the Al Ghazali Centre in Sydney, Australia, delivered at the Hawera Masjid on 1st - 2nd April 2017

Dr Afroz Ali was lecturing from The Sirah - based on the Life of Muhammad p.b.u.h. The Sirah teaches us the principles of Living Right or a Godly life that will be pleasing to Allah.

Following this lecture, a Muslim woman who attended the lecture, Waseema and her family, gave the author a copy of the book 'Revelation – The Story of Muhammad – *peace and blessing be upon Him*'.⁶⁴ This is the most excellent text on the Life of the Prophet and anyone seeking to understand his life and mission should study it. By this act of kindness and generosity, Waseema and her family practiced the teachings of the Qur'an. In page 101 of 'Revelation' it quotes from the Qur'an Surah Al Muddathir (Enwrapped) 74:1-7;

O Prophet wrapped up in a blanket! Arise and warn! Magnify your Lord! Keep your clothes clean and shun idols. Don't give in charity, with the expectation of receiving anything back. For Your Lord's sake, be patient.

⁶⁴ Mohiuddin, Meraj. Revelation – The Story of Muhammad – *Peace and blessings be upon him*. 2015. Whiteboard, Scottsdale, AZ.

This family also gave me a copy of Martin Ling's book, 'Muhammad'⁶⁵.

Dr Afroz Ali taught that 'to know Muhammad's life example is to be rightly guided. Once we know, we can love, and then we start to imitate. Sadly, secular culture asks us to love its immoral principles, and this strips us of our faith. Ultimately the secular state will ask for allegiance to no other than itself, and it will try to destroy the knowledge of God from its citizens. If our nation follows this path the knowledge of God could be removed from society'.

'Virtue or godliness was the major teaching of the Prophets, from Musa to Ibrahim, Isa and Muhammad. We should peacefully dissent when these virtues are not practiced by the laws our politicians enact on our behalf in our modern democracy.'

'Truth is pure, there is no guile in it. Dissenting is one thing, and how we respond to it is the key to successful living that calls people back to the worship of Allah, the Supreme Creator.'

'A chronological study of life of the Muhammad is a diversion from the real lesson of the life of the Prophet. The benefit we should seek is wisdom and truth. Truth is pure. Dr Afroz Ali stated that the Prophet was created perfection, but the Koran teaches us that only Allah is perfect. Understanding and studying the life of the Prophet is the obligation of all Muslims. This pursuit of virtue from the life of the Prophet must not lead to a judgmental or a superior attitude.'

'The theology of Islam does not blame anyone else. Allah asks Muslims to critique themselves. Shaitan is the source of blame. He blamed Adam. Blaming others is a characteristic of Shaitan, and Muslims are

⁶⁵ Lings, Martin. Muhammad – His Life Based on the earliest Sources. 2006. Inner Traditions, Allen & Unwin, Rochester, VM.

required by Allah to empty themselves of all bad qualities. In the Qur'an, this action of confessing our sins to Allah is called '*repentance*' and Ash-Shura, Sura 42 ayah 25 gives us this promise;

'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins and he knows all that we do'.

Muslims are required to embrace purity and remove impurity so they can live in the presence of God by the power of the Al Kudus (Holy Spirit).'

'One who helps others to clean the impurity from their lives through repentance is the purist themselves.'

'This purity can only be attained by understanding the love of God/Allah. This makes Islam a religion of service. Love serves. Muslims don't look down into the gutter, but they are required to get into the gutter, and help people out of the gutter. The actions of Muslims are meant to be based on the adage 'actions speak louder than words.'

So how do Muslims achieve this. According to Dr Afroz Ali there are four stages of transformation.

'First, Muslims seek true knowledge, and that knowledge must lead to action. Action leads to change and transformation of character.

Knowing mercy, leads to merciful actions, a truly godly characteristic. Allah says: 'With the believers he is gentle and merciful (rahîm).'

(Al-Tawbah (Repentance) Surah 9:128)

Rahman leads to Rahim, and that leads to Al Rahim – the Merciful God/Allah.

Finally, we learn to love God in an intimate way. This completes the revelation of Allah's/ God's mercy, graciousness and compassion.

Doing good is not enough, if it is not good with God. The servant of God walks on the earth lightly! We seek Allah's favour like Noah did⁶⁶. It is unmerited. No amount of good works can attract unmerited favour. It is no longer unmerited if it is earned. Seeking merit from Allah is to diminish his choice to show His amazing love for the whole human race⁶⁷ impartially and unconditionally.'

'The ethics of Islam was the beauty that attracted the Bedouin to Islam. They learned from the Prophet that trust and peace were the key to Islam.'

'The prophetic traditions place a strong emphasis on respect for the customs and traditions of the people of the land. In New Zealand, Muslims should acknowledge and respect the important role of the people of the land (the indigenous) being the Maori who have kept the land for our habitation until today. We should learn from them about traditional medicine, and ways of preserving the trees and flora, and the wildlife, and fish that contain the blessing of God for the people. Their aspect of togetherness is important. The 'hongi' is the greeting of the Maori and we should use it to greet them out of respect for their traditions. Breaking the culture of the land that you migrate too is considered enmity, and leads to societal breakdown, and a lack of cohesion. It weakens the nation. People must be respected and Muslims must know the people of the land, and be culturally sensitive and sensible. Allah created all races, after the Noah flood, so we can learn from one another.'

⁶⁶ Genesis 6:8;

⁶⁷ John 3:16

‘This revelation knowledge reveals who Allah is and that leads us to deeper worship of Him. Finally, Allah rewards us with the Grace of God which is imputed to the person Allah favours, because of their love for Him. The refined soul becomes acutely aware of any defect, and gives Allah all the credit and honour. This person becomes the friend of God not just a slave of God. The complete and perfect soul rises to the presence of God, and honours God alone. The consciousness of the presence of God makes for a softened heart. Talk is not action. However, the actions of a godly person demonstrate their love for Allah. Prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, are all acts of worship that come from a heart that is motivated by love for Allah. The soul who has emptied itself of impurity is capable of these actions from a right motive. This was the message of the life of Muhammad p.b.u.h. We celebrate the place of the Prophet of Islam in our history.’

In a text written by Al-Haj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar MA (Punjab 1894), B.A. (Canterbury University 1897) Indian Gilchrist Scholar 1894-1897, and a graduate of the Imperial Institute Modern Languages Scholar (Arabic), 1896-1900: Member of the Malayan Civil Service 1896-1928; Mufti of Penang: Civil District Judge of Singapore (1923-1928) we find that this very learned man recorded the last speech of The Prophet of Islam.

All the famous Prophets in history who were descendants of Abraham, became known for their last speech, and in a sense, it is like their last will and testament. From these last speeches, we can understand the beliefs and values they aspired to see come to pass in their lifetime and beyond. Muhammad’s revelation is remembered in the same way.

Muhammad was reared in the desert by his foster-mother Halimah up to the age of six years. Then she went back to Medina and was joined again to her husband, and Muhammad’s grandfather Abdul-Muttalib.

25 years into his life Muhammad married Khadijah who was forty years old, and he was an exemplary father and husband. Muhammad reflected on his life in An-Nahal, Surah 16 ayat 68-69.

'And Thy Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in the hills, on trees and in men's habitations; To eat of all the produce of the earth, and find with skill the spacious Paths of its Lord; there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colours wherein is healing for men.'

The spiritual honey of the Prophets is not manufactured by men but in the solitary confinements of the Creator. One day at 40 years of age, and, as usual, engaged in maturing the honey of spiritual flowers within his own soul he tapped into the divine nature that commanded him to recite. From that source of spiritual honey came the dictation of the Al Qur'an.

Prophet Dawood had earlier written of a similar experience when he wrote in the Zabur 119 ayat 103, *'How sweet are Your words to my taste, yes even sweeter than honey to my mouth.'*

Muhammad from that time onwards gained his spiritual sustenance from the Word of God and it was like honey in his mouth.

In 632AD as his life came close to its end, Muhammad preached his final sermon knowing that his end was imminent. He started by asking the people for an attentive ear. He said, he thought this would be the final year of his life.

This ground-breaking message contained deep sociological, anthropological, and spiritual implications for the Arab races. It was contained in these words;

Just as you regard this month, this day and this city as sacred, regard the property of every Muslim as sacred. Return all goods entrusted to

you to their rightful owners, Hurt no one. Remember that you will all meet your maker, and he will reckon your deeds. Charge no one interest. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. All interest due today is waived.

Beware of Satan for the safety of your religion. Satan has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray, so beware of small things.

It is true that you have certain rights as to your women, but they also⁶⁸ have rights over you. They have the right to be fed, and clothed and treated with kindness. Treat them well, as they are your partners and committed helpers. Don't let them be friends with any man of whom you do not approve. Every man came from the womb of a woman. Respect them, honour them.

People listen to me in earnest, worship God, perform your five daily prayers, fast for the month of Ramadan, offer Zakat, and perform Hajj if you have the means.

All mankind came from Adam, Arab have no superiority over non-Arab nor vice versa. Every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim no matter what race or colour they are. Do not do injustice to each other.

Remember that day you will appear before God. Do not stray from the righteous path, after I am gone.

⁶⁸ Laffin, John. The Arab Mind - A Need for Understanding. 1975. Page 3, a quote from President Anwar Sadat in the book titled Story of Arab Unity stated; 'Whoever loves the Prophet, loves the Arabs...whomever God has guided to Islam knows that Mohammad is the chosen of the prophets ...etc. Anwar Sadat wrote this before he became President of Egypt. Muhammad foresaw this racial superiority and ethnocentrism that could arise among the Arabs and consequently his final sermon included an injunction for all Arabs to put aside their ethnocentrism and love and respect all races of mankind. Allah created them all. They all deserve respect.

No Prophet will come after me. After me no new faith will be born. Reason well the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.

Everyone is to pass on my message, and the last ones who hear this will understand my words better than those who listen to me directly now. Be my witness O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people.

Muhammad delivered this sermon after his final pilgrimage, and countless numbers of Muslims followed him on that sacred journey and heard his final sermon. Sadly, he died peacefully, of an unknown disease, in the arms of his beloved Aisha in her apartment, with the consent of his other wives. His male followers bathed him in his clothes and buried him the same day. Like most great prophets the final sermon was a summary of all he stood for, and hoped to achieve under the guidance of the Almighty.

The history of Islam clearly records that his followers took the missionary message very seriously and committed themselves to the proclamation of the message in an expansive manner, that caused millions to submit to the words of the Qur'an. Most did not understand it, but were ready to submit because of the benefits of social justice, jurisprudence and faith in a Creator God who was gracious and merciful. They embraced Islam because they observed these characteristics in the Nation of Islam.

'Ali ibn Ali Talib the successor of Muhammad was clearly a disciple of Muhammad's heavenly vision for the nations. He wrote;

No individual is lost and no nation is refused prosperity and success actions if the foundations of their thoughts and actions rest upon piety and godliness, and upon truth and justice⁶⁹.

This expansion envisaged by the Messenger of Islam, expected an expanding understanding and influence of his message from the study of the words of the Qur'an throughout the generations to come. It implies that scholarly study of the message of 'guidance on the straight path', as revealed by Allah, would expand the application of the justice and governance of the message across the races of the world as the Muslims took the message to the nations.

The Holy Qur'an speaks of the link between ultimate reality and its objectivization in similar terms, where reality is a spiritual expansion or deployment from Hidden Divine Origin into a manifest theophanic Presence:

He is the First and the last (Alpha and Omega), the Hidden and the Manifest, and he is the Knower of all things.

The terms 'batin' ('Hidden'), and 'zahir' ('Manifest') are sometimes translated as the 'Most High' implying transcendence, and 'Most Near' (implying immanence), respectively. Allah/God far above is the Majesty, and Allah/God with us is Emmanuel, the Christ as we all will see on His return. In the meantime His Spirit causes us to worship the 'Most High – the Majestic' in Spirit and in truth and Allah's/God's presence is manifest by His Spirit among us. The immanence creates the synergy of 'ummah' or community of Allah/God, and Christians call the Body of Christ.

⁶⁹ Lakhani, M Ali. 2006, The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam, Chapter 1, Introduction, page3.

It would be inconsistent to the cause of proclamation to the nations of the 'Guidance on the Straight Path' to limit, and inhibit the initial understanding because of the 'last Prophet role of Muhammad'. Throughout his lifetime Muhammad's revelation was progressive, and continuous, and for it to suddenly cease on his death would not have been his intention. As the message of Islam was taken to more, and more nations after Muhammad's death, it implied the need to contextualise the application of the 'guidance' of the Qur'an within the context of the nations the message reached⁷⁰.

In the Hadith of the Hidden Treasure, Allah/God created the world, not out of privation (for God suffices unto Himself) but out of His gracious bounteousness (the Hadith refers to love as His motive), in order 'to be known' (the object of knowledge, the known) – but again this must not be understood in any privative sense, since Allah/God is the possessor of all knowledge. Imam Ali stated: *'I know God by God, and I know that which is not God by the light of God'*⁷¹.

Our hearts are illuminated by the 'Light of God'. 'Light upon Light' from the famous Qur'anic parable in 'The Verse of Light' (Al-Nur 24:35). God guides to His enlightenment whoever He wills. So it was not the Prophets intention to limit Muslims pursuit of Allah for Light by restricting subsequent Prophets/Messengers, because to do so would restrict Allah's methods of illuminating the seekers mind and heart. The ontological knowledge of our theomorphic nature is inscribed within our hearts. To know the spiritual foundation of things is to participate ontologically in a spiritual Oneness, whose radiance

⁷⁰ Lakhani, M Ali. 2006, The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam, Chapter 1, Introduction, page 21

⁷¹ _____page 24

permeates the whole of creation and whose discernment corresponds with what is termed 'The sense of the sacred'⁷².

Isa the Messiah experienced the reality of this Oneness when he prayed in John 10:27-30:

'My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them from My hand, My Father who has given them to Me is greater than I: no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are One'.

Envisioning the 'ummah' or the manifestation of the Body of Christ on earth Isa prayed;

For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they maybe sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone but for all those who believe in Me through their word; that they maybe one, even as You, Father are in Me and I in You, that they may also be in Us, so that the world may believe that you sent Me⁷³.

Key Points:

1. Muhammad was an orphan
2. His early life was tough
3. Muhammad was illiterate and unable to read. He relied on other people to read to him
4. Muhammad started working to support himself at a young age
5. Muhammad was concerned about the injustice of tribal fighting and idolatry of the people living in Mecca.
6. At 25 years old he married Khadijah his employer – she was 40
7. Khadijah and Nawfal ibn Waraqah were Muhammad's counsellors

⁷² Lakhani, M Ali. 2006, The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam, Chapter 1, Introduction, page 21page 25

⁷³ John 17: 19-21

8. When Muhammad had his cave encounter and was instructed to dictate, he was 40 years old
9. Unsure about the source of the revelation he received, he received confirmation from Nawfal ibn Waraqah and Khadijah
10. Muhammad stayed faithful to his wife Khadijah until she passed away. He was a faithful, responsible, trustworthy, honest husband.
11. Many of his additional wives were the widows of his soldiers killed in war, and he felt a responsibility to care for these widows and the children. Because of his generosity, he died a poor man.
12. Aisha his youngest wife cared for him the most, and was the one who nursed him in his last days just prior to his passing
13. Muhammad's last sermon summarized the things he envisioned for the welfare of his movement

Key Questions

1. What were the things contained in Muhammad's last sermon that helped you understand his lifelong vision?
2. Why do you think the Qur'an has so much Biblical content?
3. What part of the Meccan lifestyle did Muhammad want to reform?

Personal Reflections

1. What can you learn from Muhammad's life that will help you have a deeper more meaningful relationship with God?

2. How did Muhammad understand the Mercy, and Graciousness and Compassion of Allah and how did he practice it?

Prayer:

O Allah, please empower me by your Holy Spirit to be a faithful, responsible, trustworthy, honest person who is a godly example to everyone on my community so your name will be praised. Show me today a poor person who I can help, an injustice I can address, and a community leader I can serve, support and encourage in their service in our community.

Conclusion:

The author's purpose for writing this book titled 'Guidance for the Straight Path' was to explore the reason why Allah sent the Qur'an to humanity. The book set out to explore what the Qur'an says about itself to find an answer to this important question. Key points, questions, and reflections were included in the text to help seekers to explore the significance of this revelation?

The question the author now asks is this. Did the book clarify and shed light on how the Qur'an is able to provide 'guidance for the straight path'? The study of a few of the most important the attributes of Allah were highlighted. They were the Graciousness, Mercy and Compassion of Allah. The 'Signs of the Prophets' were used to reveal how Allah throughout history had revealed these attributes and what significance they contain for humanity.

There is a major theme in the 'Signs of the Prophets' that this study highlighted. Mankind disobeyed Allah repeatedly throughout history,

and in most cases, a blood sacrifice was required to atone for the sin of mankind. Good works did not erase the penalty of sin in these stories. Only the Graciousness (unmerited favour and forgiveness) of Allah, and His Mercy and Compassion remedied mankind's woeful state. Adam needed divine intervention to remedy his disobedience. Allah provided a sacrificial act in slaughtering an animal, and providing leather clothes for Adam and Eve. This act did not reverse the consequences of Adam's sin and the nature of the earth and its productivity were changed forever.

Allah's solution for the evil of Noah's generation was catastrophic. Nearly the entire human race was wiped out in a watery sacrifice for sin. The power of evil and the propensity to sin was still present in subsequent generations.

Abraham was a righteous man, who succumbed to having his first-born son with his maid. He neglected sharing his inheritance with Ishmael when Hagar was forced to leave his household. This nearly resulted in the death of Hagar and Ishmael. Allah's amazing Grace, Mercy and Compassion rescued Hagar and Ishmael when they were about to die. Allah asked Abraham to demonstrate his willingness to submit to Allah's will by the sacrifice of his son. At the last moment, a lamb was provided as a substitute sacrifice, and Allah rescued Abraham's son.

Joseph was sacrificed to slavery in Egypt to rescue Jacob and his sons who were Abraham's descendants.

Through Moses' near death experience as a baby, Allah raised him up to be a Prince in Egypt who was divinely used to deliver the Nation of Hebrews from Egypt by the sacrifice of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians.

Jonah was willing to sacrifice his life for the people of Nineveh, and the sailors on the ship sailing to Tarshish. Allah saved Jonah, the crew of a ship, and a city of over 100,000 people through his Divine intervention.

John the Baptist, the Prophet who was called to announce the 'Straight Path' of the Messiah, Jesus, was sacrificed by beheading to please the sadistic pleasure of Herod's daughter.

The 'Signs of the Prophets' throughout history point to the efficacy of sacrifice to redeem sin, and demonstrate the gracious favour of Allah for the forgiveness of all mankind.

Only Abraham is attributed as a Prophet who won the favour of Allah by his good works. By faith Abraham was counted as righteous. Righteousness was imputed to him because of His exceptional faithful obedience. But the ultimate example of Abraham's faith was his willingness to sacrifice his son. He Trusted the Lord to Provide. He proclaimed the revelation of the 'Lord who will Provide' after his act of slaying his son was interrupted. Every Prophet since Abraham expected the Messiah to come from the 'Lord who would Provide'. And Provide He did. Isa the Messiah was provided by Allah through the virgin Mary. Allah/God showed us His unmerited favour by providing a Savior and Messiah through an act of sacrifice. Allah had to sacrifice His Son on this occasion. All the signs of the Prophets were forerunners of this Great Sign.

The Qur'an was given by Allah to mankind to 'Guide us all to this Straight Path'. 'Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of Darkness, by His will, Unto the light. He guides them to a path that is Straight!' Surah Al-Maidah 5:17.

Jesus said; ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the Light of life.’⁷⁴ The Light Jesus promised is the revelation of the Word of God (Khalimat’ullah), by the Holy Spirit. This revelation will rightly guide us on our pilgrimage here on earth, and on into the heavenly Kingdom of God.

Table A

Names used in this text that appear in the Bible and the Qur’an –
Arabic/English

Chronology	Name	Arabic (transliteration)	English- Judeo Name
1	Allah	 (Allâh)	God / YHWH Elohim
2	Adam	 (Ādam)	Adam

⁷⁴ John 8:12

Chronology	Name	Arabic (transliteration)	English- Judeo Name
3	Eve	Adam's wife	Eve
4	Nuh	نُوح (Nūḥ)	Noah
5	Musa	مُوسَى (Mūsā)	Moses
6	Aaron⁷⁵	(Harun)	Aahron
7	Zipporah⁷⁶	(Zipporah)	Zipporah
8	Elisheva⁷⁷	אֵלִישֶׁבָּע 'Ēlīšēḇā'	Elisabeth
9	Ibrahim	إِبْرَاهِيم (Ibrahīm)	Abraham
10	Hagar⁷⁸	No Arabic name in the Qur'an	Hagar
11	Sarah⁷⁹	No Arabic name in the Qur'an	Sarah
12	Ismail	إِسْمَاعِيل (Ismā'īl)	Ishmael
13	Ishaq	إِسْحَاق	Isaac

⁷⁵ Harun, Aaron – brother of Moses - eloquent speaker

⁷⁶ First wife of Moses, daughter of Jethro

⁷⁷ Elisabeth was the wife of Aaron, Moses older brother. Her name came from El-Sheba meaning God's abundance or bounty

⁷⁸ Hagar – Abraham's maid – mother of Ishmael

⁷⁹ Sarah (Sarai) first wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac (Ishaq)

Chronology	Name	Arabic (transliteration)	English- Judeo Name
		(<i>Is'hāq</i>)	
14	Yaqub	يَعْقُوب (<i>Ya'qūb</i>)	Jacob
15	Yusuf	يُوسُف (<i>Yūsūf</i>)	Joseph
16	Shu'ayb	شُعَيْب (<i>Shu'ayb</i>)	Jethro
17	Nathan	Not in the Qur'an	Nathan
18	Dawud	دَاوُد \ دَاوُود (<i>Dāwūd</i>)	David
19	Sulayman	سُلَيْمَان (<i>Sulaymān</i>)	Solomon
20	Yunus	يُونُس (<i>Yūnus</i>)	Jonah
21	Zakariyya	زَكَرِيَّا (<i>Zakariyyā</i>)	Zechariah
22	Elizabeth⁸⁰	إِلْيَاصَابَات (<i>Ilīṣābāt</i>)	Elizabeth

⁸⁰ Elizabeth was the wife of Zakariyya the father of John the Baptist. She was not directly mentioned in the Qur'an. Elisabeth was the mother of John the Baptist.

Chronology	Name	Arabic (transliteration)	English- Judeo Name
23	Yahya	يَحْيَى (<i>Yahyā</i>)	John the Baptist
24	Maryam	مَرْيَمَ (<i>Marīam</i>)	Mary the Mother of Jesus / Isa
25	Isa	عِيسَى (<i>‘Isā</i>)	Jesus
26	Muhammad	مُحَمَّدٌ (<i>Muhammad</i>)	Muhammad

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Guidance – for the Straight Path

‘Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light. He guides them to the Straight Path!’

Surah Al Maidah 5:16

‘Your word is a lamp to my feet,
and a light to my path.’
Psalm 119:105

‘The way of thy Lord is leading straight. We have
detailed the Signs for those who will be guided’
Surah Al An’am 6:126

‘The righteous person is a guide to his neighbor.’
Proverbs 12:26

‘In the way of righteousness is life, and in its
pathway there is no death.’
Proverbs 12:28

‘Where there is no guidance the people will fall.
But in the abundance of counsellors there is victory.’
Proverbs 11:14

ISBN Barcode No.

978-0-473-50987-3

