

Last Issue of MSA Link

By: Nadim Ayche

I came to Ohio University and to the United States days before the spring of 2003. As any Muslim would do, I looked for the Mosque the first day I came to OU campus. As a matter of fact, I did ask about the existence of a Mosque close to OU before even arriving to this country. The first Muslim I met in Athens was an American Muslim who had lived here in Athens for years. It did mean a lot to me to meet – for the first time in my life – a Muslim who doesn't speak Arabic; living all my entire life in Lebanon, I didn't have such a chance. Days after, I learned more about the whole Muslim community in Athens, which contained people from a variety of countries, from United States, Indonesia, Malaysia, Somalia, Kenya, Turkey, Sudan, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, UAE, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and other nationalities I never even knew about. Unfortunately, I came to learn from the brothers that what I considered a big Muslim community is actually very small compared to the number of Muslims used to be in Athens in the 90's.

If we were to draw a chart of the number of Muslims in Athens versus time, we will be amazed at the drop the trend line has since the day of the tragedy of September 11. This is due to two main factors, the first one is the huge amount of stereotypes that the media spread taking advantage of the pain and sadness Americans felt due to the unpleasant incident. They knew that people were to believe anything in such moments. Unfortunately, the media was used by whoever felt it is a good chance to harm those Muslims in what they value the most in their lives, Islam. The other reason is that the Muslim community in Athens is a dynamic community; it is all about students studying and planning to leave. When a foreign person feels his life is not really as safe as it was, he tends to sing "there is no place like home."

Personally, I was hoping that the trend line would change its direction upward, or even continue horizontally. My wish did not come true. I was considered for a long time as THE LAST MUSLIM TO COME TO ATHENS. At the same time, I was witnessing a lot of farewells as Muslim brothers and sisters were graduating and leaving, and few people were coming. The trend line is still dropping down with a big slope.

We tried our best, through this humble newsletter, to point out the misconceptions people have about Islam and to clarify the truth. We felt that as a duty we owe our beloved faith. We also felt that as a duty we owe to the diversity of this campus. Such a diversity that you can easily view and experience if you visit the Mosque on 13 Stewart at a prayer time and watch the colors and nationalities of the Muslims standing to pray in one line, shoulder to shoulder and toe to toe.

The trend line kept going down fast until we came to a time that we don't even have enough volunteers to work on this 4 pages newsletter. In this last issue, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all the brothers and sisters helped in writing or editing for the newsletter, and all those who helped distributing the newsletter on campus, and a special appreciation for the non-Muslims who wrote something for us or helped us in editing.

Finally, we do appreciate every second people spend on reading our newsletter. It meant a lot to us that people were reading it, and we felt that we did reach out to the right people. To our readers I would say, the door of the Mosque will always be open to every one at anytime. Our email is always ready to receive your questions at anytime. Hopefully, there would be enough Muslims in Athens to answer your questions.

**To order your free copy of a translation of
the Qur'an, just go to
www.cair-net.org
and click on: Order Your Free Copy.**

Consultation

“And those who answer the Call of their Lord, and perform Prayers, and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them” Qur'an 42: 38. God had praised, in the Qur'an, the Muslims who consult each other. The Lord even joined it with believing in him, establishing prayers, and giving charity. Consultation is practiced by Muslims in their daily lives, whether it is a personal issue, family issue, community issue or any case that consultation would be helpful.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has set the example for us since the early days of Islam. He used to consult his companions on every matter that he had not yet received a revelation, which would tell him what to do in such a case. On major events, he used to ask people in public and say: *“O people, counsel me.”*

Before dying, and to establish the concept of consultation firmly in the hearts of Muslims, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not appoint his successor, but he rather recommended *Abu Bakr* indirectly, by assigning him to lead the Muslims in the prayers during the last days when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was very sick and not able to stand. And so, people did choose *Abu Bakr* to be the Prophet's successor.

While *Abu Bakr* was dying, he consulted the companions about assigning *Omar Bin Al-Khattab* to be the next Successor. He then appointed *Omar* based on the people's agreement. *Omar* himself, appointed six companions while he was dying. He told people to choose one among those six. After his death, the companion *Abdel Rahman Bin Awf* was agreed on to consult people about who's to be the next successor among those six companions. *Abdel Rahman* consulted every one in *Medina*. He consulted men, women, even children. And so, that consultation was practiced in Islam since the beginning of the religion.

The Qur'an has set some rules to be considered during consultation. It says to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) : **“Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs; so when you have decided, then place your trust in God; surely God loves those who trust”** Qur'an 3:159.

God had commanded His Prohpet in this verse with a few commands that came in a wonderful sequence. He commanded Prophet Muhammad first to pardon them for whatever is related to him, which is an indication that you should consult people for which you don't have any hard feeling. Then He commanded him to ask forgiveness for them from God, which is an indication that when you consult somebody, you should choose the person that you think is righteous and pious. After that He commanded him to consult people. At the end, He commanded him to place his trust in God before going into action **“....so when you have decided, then place your trust in God; surely God loves those who trust.”**

Consultation is a very essential practice in all aspects of Muslims lives. One example where consultation is essential is among the husband and wife. Consultation would bring them closer to each other, by showing how much each one of them appreciates the opinion of the other person. This is true between any two persons, not only the married couples.

It has to be taken into account that the one who is counseling you is trying his best. It is not his fault if things did not go the way you wanted. Consultation is all about different opinions, but at the end, a Muslim should choose the opinion that is closest to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (Teachings of Prophet Muhammad).

To summarize the steps that should be taken while consulting people: you should consult whom you think is righteous and pious and it should be someone you trust. And then, it is important to pick the one who's experienced in the matter you need guidance in.

In the end, with all the importance that is given to consultation, a Muslim should depend on God and not on the consultation itself.

By: **Nadim Ayche**
Email: ayche@ohio.edu
Edited by: **Kate Isham**

A View on Death

Like Jews and Christians, Muslims believe that the present life is only a trial and preparation for the next realm of existence in the Hereafter. Death, therefore is another state of the living soul - although the physical self has decayed and become a part of the earth, the spiritual self is still aware and in a state of sleep, awaiting its Resurrection.

Death is not a time for mourning or uncontrolled wailing and weeping, instead it is a time for sober reflection. When a Muslim dies, he or she is washed, usually by a family member, wrapped in a clean white cloth, and buried with a simple prayer preferably on the same day. Muslims consider this one of the final services they can do for their relatives and an opportunity to remember their own brief existence here on earth.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that three things can continue to help a person even after death; charity which he had given and which people keep on benefiting from after his death, knowledge which he had taught, and prayers on their behalf by a righteous child.

God had hidden from us the times were going to die so we would worry about this moment that might come any time, and without warning. The Qur'an says: **"Verily, with God alone is the knowledge of the Hour. And He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Surely, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware."** Qur'an, 31:34

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honor blameless. But he who falls into doubtful things falls into that which is unlawful. Just as a shepherd who grazes his cattle in the vicinity of a pasture declared prohibited (by the king); he is likely to stray into the pasture. Mind you, every king has a protected pasture and God's protected pasture is that which He has declared unlawful. Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body, if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart."

For further readings about Islam we suggest:

www.islamonline.net

A Woman's Reflection on Leading Prayer

On March 18, 2005, Amina Wadud led the first female-led *Jumuah* (Friday) prayer. On that day women took a huge step towards being more like men. But, did we come closer to actualizing our God-given liberation? I don't think so.

What we so often forget is that God has honored the woman by giving her value in relation to God—not in relation to men. But as western feminism erases God from the scene, there is no standard left—but men. As a result, the western feminist is forced to find her value in relation to a man. And in so doing she has accepted a faulty assumption that man is the standard, and thus a woman can never be a full human being until she becomes just like a man - the standard. When a man cut his hair short, she wanted to cut her hair short. When a man joined the army, she wanted to join the army. She wanted these things for no other reason than because the "standard" had it.

What she didn't recognize was that God dignifies both men and women in their distinctiveness—not their sameness. On March 18, Muslim women made the very same mistake. For 1400 years there has been a consensus among scholars that men are to lead prayer. As a Muslim woman, why does this matter? The one who leads prayer is not spiritually superior in any way. Something is not better just because a man does it. Leading prayer is not better, just because it's leading.

Had it been the role of women or had it been more divine, why wouldn't the Prophet have asked his wives *Ayesha* or *Khadija*, or his daughter *Fatima* - the greatest women of all time - to lead? These women were promised heaven - and yet they never lead prayer.

But now for the first time in 1400 years, we look at a man leading prayer and we think, "That's not fair." We think

so although God has given no special privilege to the one who leads. The *imam* (the one who leads the Muslim Prayer) is no higher in the eyes of God than the one who prays behind. On the other hand, only a woman can be a mother. God has given special privilege to a mother. The Prophet taught us that heaven lies at the feet of mothers. But no matter what a man does he can never be a mother. So why is that not unfair?

When asked who is most deserving of our kind treatment? The Prophet replied '*your mother*' three times before saying '*your father*' only once. Isn't that sexist? No matter what a man does he will never be able to have the status of a mother.

And yet even when God honors us with something uniquely feminine, we are too busy trying to find our worth in reference to men, to value it- or even notice. We too have accepted men as the standard; so anything uniquely feminine is, by definition, inferior. Being sensitive is an insult, becoming a mother - degradation. In the battle between stoic rationality (considered masculine) and self-less compassion (considered feminine), rationality reigns supreme.

As soon as we accept that everything a man has and does is better, all that follows is just a knee jerk reaction: if men have it - we want it too. If men pray in the front rows, we assume this is better, so we want to pray in the front rows too. If men lead prayer, we assume the *imam* is closer to God, so we want to lead prayer too. Somewhere along the line we've accepted the notion that having a position of worldly leadership is some indication of one's position with God.

A Muslim woman does not need to degrade herself in this way. She has God as a standard. She has God to give her value; she doesn't need a man.

In fact, in our crusade to follow men, we, as women, never even stopped to examine the possibility that what we have is better for us. In some cases we even gave up what was higher only to be like men.

Fifty years ago, society told us that men were superior because they left the home to work in factories. We were mothers. And yet, we were told that it was women's liberation to abandon the raising of another human being in order to work on a machine. We accepted that working in a factory was superior to raising the foundation of society - just because a man did it.

Then after working, we were expected to be superhuman - the perfect mother, the perfect wife, the perfect homemaker - and have the perfect career. While there is nothing wrong, by definition, with a woman having a career, we soon came to realize what we had sacrificed by blindly mimicking men. We watched as our children became strangers and soon recognized the privilege we'd given up.

And so only now - given the choice - women in the West are choosing to stay home to raise their children. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, only 31 percent of mothers with babies, and 18 percent of mothers with two or more children, are working full-time. And of those working mothers, a survey conducted by Parenting Magazine in 2000, found that 93% of them say they would rather be home with their kids, but are compelled to work due to 'financial obligations'. These 'obligations' are imposed on women by the gender sameness of the modern West, and removed from women by the gender distinctiveness of Islam.

It took women in the West almost a century of experimentation to realize a privilege given to Muslim women 1400 years ago. Given my privilege as a woman, I only degrade myself by trying to be something I'm not - and in all honesty - don't want to be: a man. As women, we will never reach true liberation until we stop trying to mimic men, and value the beauty in our own God-given distinctiveness. If given a choice between stoic justice and compassion, I choose compassion. And if given a choice between worldly leadership and heaven at my feet - I choose heaven.

By: Yasmin Mogahed

Yasmin Mogahed is an Egyptian-American free-lance writer. She contributed this article to Media Monitors Network (MMN) - <http://usa.mediamonitors.net> from Wisconsin, USA

MSA Link is published by the Muslim Students Association of Ohio University.

<http://www.ohiou.edu/~muslimst>

For further questions or feedback, please write to us at:

muslimst@ohio.edu

Islamic Center of Athens
13 Stewart St.
Tel: (740) 594 3890