

THE MESSAGE

The Muslim Family

What's your role?

***“The best
among you
are those who
are best to
their families,
and I am the
best one to my
family.”***

Prophet Muhammad (s)





Editorial: Raising Islamic Values within the Family

Hurry up! You've been in that bathroom room for hours. You've wasted all the hot water! Where's the remote? I can't find my tie, have you seen it? Why isn't dinner ready yet? Why can't I stay out late tonight? Sounds familiar???

Welcome to another edition of 'The Message,' a continuation of the last theme which was about marriage. As we are all aware, the role of the family plays a vital role in raising Islamic values within the household and holds the keys to our ultimate quest for success...Paradise! So what is your role in the household? Whether you are a father, mother, guardian or sibling; what you do, or better yet, what you don't do can enhance or destroy your family structure. Most parents want to instil a sense of ethics, morals, and spirituality in their children. Taking our cues from the Quran and Sunnah, we strive to teach our children right from wrong, to help them develop compassion and respect for others, and to give them a sense of faith and purpose. While that's not easy to do when children are young, it's never too early or late for parents to start laying the foundation for a spiritual life.

The role of the family in raising the children is one of the most important roles. It is the first factor that influences the behaviour of the children in their early childhood. For this reason, the family's responsibility towards children is great, and the family will be accountable for them. The prophet Muhammad (S) said: *"Each and everyone of you is responsible and accountable for your responsibility. So the man is responsible in his house and accountable for his family, the woman is responsible in her husband's house and accountable for her husband's family."* {Reported by Imams Bukhari and Muslim.} The prophet (S) did not relieve anyone from responsibility and everyone will be accountable for it in this life and in the Hereafter.

The prophet (S) told us that, *"Every newborn is born on the pure nature (Fitrah, which is Islam), and his parents would either make him a Jew, a Christian, or a fire worshipper."* {Reported by Imams Bukhari and Muslim.} So, the first influence on the children involves the parents, then the older brothers and sisters. This is a reality which we can not escape.

This influence starts in the early life of the child.

Allah (S.W.T.) has put in every person the good tendencies and the bad tendencies, so that he/she will be tested with their choices. As a result, the parents must encourage and nurture the good tendencies in the child so that he/she can become a useful person that helps him/herself and other people. Allah (S.w.t) says in Surat At-Tahrim, (verse 6), which is translated as, **"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones."** One possible conclusion from this verse could be that protection from the Hell-fire is as a result of good education, the practice of good morals, and the guidance to nobility.

Raising children based on Islam will occur only when Islamic values are manifested in the way the family conducts all of its affairs. Raising children based on Islam does not occur with wishful thinking, sincerity, and will on its own. Nor does it occur solely through mere advice from the parents to their children that they should be holding onto Islam and good morals. This alone is not enough. Rather, it is a collection of the above where you must also **present good practical examples** whilst advising your children about right and wrong.

The good practical example set by the parents and older siblings is one of the most important efforts they should make after they give advice about holding onto Islam and good morals. In many situations, the good practical example (or being a role model) is sufficient to achieve these goals in the up-bringing of our children. The great messengers of Allah (S.w.t) were practical examples for their followers, where they demonstrated in their lives what they called for and set out to achieve. The prophet (S) was the best practical example for the Muslims to follow. Allah (S.w.t) says in Surat Al-Ahzab, **"Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much."**

As a result, trying to be the ideal role model for our children is necessary to make their upbringing process successful. The parents are the first ones that portray the good practical example to their children when they order them to do good and refrain from evil. They are the ones that also give the poor and contradictory example for their children when they advise them to do good but they themselves do not practice what they preach. They may also advise them to refrain from doing evil, but they themselves are indulging in it. When the parents offer this distorted example to their children, they undermine all the good which they have advised and taught to their children. This is because the children will think that what their parents are calling for are nothing but ideals that can not be implemented in life.

Therefore, to all the fathers and mothers out there, strive to be a role model to your children by instilling into them the best of manners and character. By doing this, you are successfully enjoining good and forbidding evil, and at the same time setting standards for your children to follow into your footsteps. One must realise that children are very likely to follow your footsteps, regardless if your actions are good or sinister, as they generally perceive their parents as their mentors in all aspects of their lives. Simply put, they would want to imitate their parents and siblings, since they spend most of their time with their family. When you order your children to do good and refrain from doing evil, you yourselves should practice what you are preaching, and show that you are implementing these ideals yourself. Otherwise, you will lose the credibility and effects of your words.

Let us step up to the game and be true mentors to ourselves and our children by following the example of our beloved Prophet (S), which can pave the way for a successful future – the real future we should all set out to achieve: Paradise.

The Team from 'The Message'

All praise is due to Allah (S.w.t), and we seek His forgiveness and mercy to grant us the highest ranks in Paradise.

One of the foundations of the Muslim community is the family, which plays a pivotal role in our status as a collective society in this time and place. Unfortunately, the word 'family' has lost its meaning and value, since we find 'families' these days comprised of individuals who slither in and out of their homes at variant hours of the day, with each person confined to their rooms with little or no communication, and if there is any contact, it is usually about the location of the 'idiot box' remote control. Families are found to be self-indulgent with the fantasies of family shows on T.V, whilst they make no effort themselves to re-establish their own. They live in a state of self-delusion, feeding the hollowness continuously, with no apparent result but their own self-demise. Generally, the real 'home unit' exists no more, except in a few cases which include the families that strive to keep the bonds intact, by seeking the example of the Prophet and his companions, who strived to maintain their families.

Alhamdulillah for the Prophet's example. Alhamdulillah for the beauty of our religion which prescribes exactly what is needed to keep the family spirit alive. Our beloved Prophet was found to be kind to his wives, playful with his children, a bread-winner for his household, and a role model for all. These are only a mere few examples of our Prophet's role. More so, there are examples of how Rasulullah interacted with his family. The key point to take is that spending **quality time** with your family is necessary for a strong household. Many of us know the hadith of how the Prophet used to race with his wife Aisha (R), or how the Prophet used to play with his children. Simply put, it is about making time for each other.

Parents must realise that they are the glue that keeps the family together. They must make time for their children, regardless if they come back home tired and late from work. They have the responsibility for the up-bringing of their children and their future. Making a set time each day for the family is not hard to accomplish. By setting such a time, the children and parents have a chance to voice their concerns and know that there is somebody there for them to listen to. Sitting down and discussing matters with children can be an incredibly satisfying thing to do. You will be surprised at how much children love to talk and express themselves. You will also be surprised at how little you know about them! Play with them and laugh together. Be their friends.

Fathers, more so than the mothers who stay at home, need to have a bigger role in their children's lives. Spend time with them doing their homework and teach them some important lessons from the Qur'an. Instil in them the love for Allah at a young age, for the child's brain is like a sponge at such a delicate age. So by making sure that they absorb positive things, rather than negative things, you can pave the way for them leading more successful lives as Muslim role models when it is their turn to establish their own families.

Finally, **put your trust in Allah**, and make dua for yourself **and for your own parents**. They struggled themselves as parents to raise you and provide a good environment for you to live in. As a parent, you will realise how much they have sacrificed for you, so be thankful to Allah for what they have done for your personal benefit.

By the Grace of Allah Almighty, I pray that Allah grants us all the patience and time to spend with our children, so that we may have a better community to live in. After all, a healthy community stems from healthy families.

Wassalamu Alaikum warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu.

Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman

SHEIKH'S CORNER



MAKING TIME: YOUR CHILD AND YOU

**“SPEND YOUR MONEY FOR GOOD: TO
HELP YOUR PARENTS, YOUR FAMILY, OR-
PHANS, WAYFARERS, AND THE NEEDY”
(QURAN 2:215)**

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*Images adapted from photo.net
unless stated otherwise.*

*NB. The Message Magazine would like
to advise the Domestic Violence article in
the Marriage edition is not affiliated with
Hanan Dover. We apologise for the error.*

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THE

The Islamic family system brings the rights and responsibilities of the husband, wife, children, and relatives into a fine equilibrium. It nourishes unselfish behaviour, generosity, and love within the framework of a well-organized family system. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued by Islam, and it is seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families and by treasuring children.

The institutions of marriage and the family have been commended as the 'way of the Prophets'.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And surely We have sent Messengers before you, and we assigned to them wives and offspring; and it was not for any Messenger to bring assign except by God's leave. For every term has a Book." Qur'an (13:38)

And the Prophet Mohammad (S) said:

"Marriage is a part of my Sunnah. Whoever runs away from my path is not from amongst us". [Ibn Majah, Book of Marriage]

Moreover, a Muslim family has its unique features, e.g. it provides a secure and healthy 'home' environment for all its members, it guards against passions of whims and desires and channels them to wholesome and meaningful pursuit. It proliferates human virtues such as: love, compassion, sacrifice, justice etc. and it provides a refuge against any difficulty.

And since the family is the microcosm of a society, there are distinct roles for its members.

FAMILY PORTRAIT

What's your role in the household?

The Prophet Muhammad (S) says:

"Each one of you is a trustee (shepherd) and is accountable for that which is entrusted to him. A ruler is trustee and is accountable for his trust, a man is a trustee in respect of his family, a woman is a trustee in respect of her husband's house and children." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Men have the leadership role in the family, and in the family, women have to be loyal to men.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Men are the supporters of women, because Allah has stowed on the one more than the other, and for what they have to provide (for them) from their sources. So the righteous women are obedient and protect in the absence of their husbands that which God ordains to be protected." Qur'an (4:34).

Leadership raises the question of responsibility, consultation (shura) and justice. As shepherds of the house, women have responsibility over the house and children.

Parents are to provide their children with basic human necessities, such as food, clothes, shelter, education and medical support. This is treated as a Ibadah (worship) for the parents. Also, parents should provide their children with love, warmth, compassion, etc. Since the human being consists of a body and a spirit, parents must provide their children with the necessary life skills and spiritual nourishment.

Also there are many traditions regarding the children's responsibility towards their parents, as Allah orders them to obey and serve their parents, as well as being kind and decent to them.

The rights and responsibilities within the family are inter-twined. One's responsibility is the other's right. Rights and duties of the husband, wife, parents and children are inscribed in Shariah (God's Commands).

Our Prophet Muhammad (S) has stressed the importance of good conduct in the family:

"The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best among you to my family". "The most perfect believers are the best in conduct, and the best of you are those who are best to their spouses "(Tirmidhi).

Prophet Muhammad (S) shared household works with his wives. For genuine economic reasons, both spouses might need to engage in financial activities. But rearing up and educating children cannot be compromised. There should be frank discussion and consultation between the spouses. Children need to be involved when necessary and also in order to train them to become responsible in their lives.

Thus the family enjoys a high status in Islam. It is the core of the society, because a healthy family means a healthy society. Hence Allah, the Exalted, commands that parents should be treated with gentleness and submissiveness.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And we have enjoined upon man (to be good) to his parents. With difficulty upon difficulty did his mother bear him and wean him for two years. Show gratitude to Me and to your parents; to Me is your final goal" (Qur'an 31:14).

Reference:

www.islamonline.com

A Mother

If I were asked what the word family meant to me five years ago, I would have rolled my eyes and said one word: headaches! What good could possibly come from sisters that don't understand the word NO when it comes to borrowing your things, or brothers that assume you're their best friend and pin you on the floor until you agree to play punch-ups with them? You could say that nowadays, my opinion has changed... slightly.

This opportunity to share my thoughts on family could not have come at a better time. Having just passed the month of Ramadan, I hope we were all able to spend more time with our family than we usually would. Sadly for me, this wasn't entirely voluntary. My mother recently became sick and I (being the eldest daughter among seven children) assumed responsibility for the household. I was convinced that I appreciated my mother before, but boy was I wrong!

For just one week I was running back and forth from my own home to my parents, cleaning, cooking and most importantly, keeping the peace. By the end of that week I was so physically drained that I actually understood why my mum was no longer fit to complete these daily tasks.

One evening about 5 or 10 minutes before Athan al- Maghreb, my sisters and I worked frantically (as you usually do when you have fasting men to feed) to get the evening meal ready. The kitchen was in a state of chaos. There were spoons flying everywhere and salt was being hurled from one end of the room to the other. In a brief passing moment, I looked over at mum who could do nothing but watch this unfortunate sequence of events unfold, and I thought to myself... it has taken four twenty- something year-old women to complete routine tasks that one woman would usually do on her own, and we didn't even come close to completing it quite like she did. Allah (S.w.t) places so much emphasis on appreciating mothers and the selfless acts they complete on a daily basis. Evidence of this is found in the Qur'an where Allah (S.w.t) has stated: "And we have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and

good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardships... give thanks to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the final destination" [31:14]. Despite such proofs, we still find ourselves struggling to say thank you when a meal is served or when our work and school clothes are washed and ironed.

Being new to motherhood myself, I further understand the hardships a mother experiences throughout her life. This starts the day you are born until the day we return to our creator, Allah (Swt). How many meals has she prepared? How many hours did she spend teaching you how to pray? How many items of clothing has she washed? How many beds did she make? And it was all for the sake of 'family.'


I believe that no matter how much one can try to explain the value of family in their life, you fall very short of understanding just how great each family member's contribution has been in making you who you are today. Coming from a large family myself, I found it so unbelievably annoying growing up. It was very easy to lose things (because your siblings were always taking them when you weren't around), there was never any toilet paper left in the bathroom, no- one ever put a fresh towel out when it was your turn to take a shower, and it was almost impossible to have a five- minute conversation because it's a sure bet that you'll be interrupted. In hindsight though, I wouldn't have had it any other way.

You were guaranteed to be entertained every evening. There was always someone to talk to; someone to inspire you, and someone to guide you... and surprisingly, this role wasn't always occupied by a parent. For instance, it wasn't long ago that I put the veil on. Many years before that, both my younger sisters had bravely made the commitment that I was putting off. I know many young girls who look up to their older sisters, but I will always proudly declare that my younger sisters educated me in a way that no one else has or ever will.



r's Glow

A sister's reflection on family, marriage and a new born child



Fathers also have a significant effect on other family members and have volumes to contribute in terms of understanding and experience. Now, if you have ever met *my* dad, I can guarantee that it is one experience you would have never forgotten. My Dad is hilarious. He is honest, outspoken and totally unlike anyone else. He always emphasised the need to speak up when there was an issue you were passionate about and to overcome all obstacles in the pursuit of knowledge. I value education so much today and it is largely due to his opinion of it. He never made his opinions on education explicit but I slowly learnt through many valuable lessons, that education is one of the most precious tools to attain.

I guess some of my father's positive influences have rubbed off on his sons because my brothers are rocks! Yeah, they're annoying, and yeah they're loud, but ultimately they're my brothers. They were always there to look out for me and never hesitated to make the time to take advice or give it. Alhamdulillah, I have a fantastic older brother who is really the glue in our family. I think older brothers underestimate their influence on their siblings. If I were ever uncomfortable in raising an issue with my parents, he was always the way to go. He knows exactly what to say to make the situation seem completely trivial (funny thing is, it's probably what mum or dad would have said anyway, but for some reason it makes more sense coming from him).

One fond memory I have of my brother seems to linger around the dining table at Suhur time. Despite my mother's efforts at waking us up, we always seemed to be sleeping in our food rather than eating it. That was until my big brother stood up and did the most stupid dance which would make us laugh so hard it was almost impossible to go back to sleep. I constantly remind him of those days and we spend half the evening re-enacting how silly we all were. I don't think he realises how much joy he has brought into our lives and I don't know how other males operate, but what I do know is that if they're as approachable, understanding and as loving as my brother was, memories growing up would be that much better.

Insha'Allah I intend on making the pilgrimage to Mecca with my husband this year, and to do that, we had to make the tough decision of leaving our eleven month-old infant behind for four weeks. As a parent, I now see how difficult it is to be separated from your child. You believe that no one will care for them as you do and that only harm will be inflicted in the absence of your presence. For many weeks I was unhappy with my decision to leave my child, and rather than being elated at the thought of seeing the Ka'bah and carrying out this pillar of Islam (Hajj), I was miserable. In times of difficulty, we always turn to Allah (S.w.t) for guidance and upon reading the Qur'an, I found the assurance I was looking for where He (S.w.t) states: "... when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)" [3:159]. Subhanallah since reading that Ayah, I am now at peace with my decision and have become very excited about Hajj.

Allah (S.w.t) states: "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young" [17:23-24]. This is not the first or last time that the Qur'an emphasises kindness towards parents. At the heart of every family unit are a mother and father who should be honoured, as they have established an Islamic family system where unconditional love is given and received. Further, Islamic family life promotes generosity, kindness and respect in a time of greed, disorder and confusion. It is the family which provides you with the correct values needed to make wise decisions in a chaotic post-modern society. Ultimately, it is where everlasting memories are formed and morals are learned.

Your sister in Islam

Manal Mikati

You open your eyes in the early morning to the sound of silence, you sigh *ahh*, is it too good to be true? Suddenly, "wa wa wa", that peaceful serenity is torn right apart. I think to myself, "o my God, I'm a parent!"

Parenthood is a path that most of us will undertake. You will get assistance from magazines, training wheels from your parents and advice from a lot of people; but essentially, this is your journey. We all have to go through it and it is what you make of it. This is your right and at the same time, no one else can do it for you so it is your responsibility, and that is the key.

Parenthood is a creative struggle to accommodate a new-comer in a world where everything needs to be shared in the family. It is a

journey through new experience that leads to more maturity and accountability of the parents. The journey is a one-way traffic path, full of bends, curves, ups and downs. But it is the sense of consciousness that makes parenting a lively and challenging enterprise. Positive parenting also requires a determined effort.

Parenthood is a historic journey that brings in challenge and reward in one's life. At the start of a journey every parent is expected to know two essential things. Where is his destination and how is he going to reach there? Confusion or lack of planning in this process will end up with tragic consequences.

Parenthood could also be the most pleasurable and worthwhile engagement in life. But prepara-

tion is fundamental for that pleasure. One must also realise that acquiring these skills does not happen overnight, so we must all learn from our experiences. The same way you experienced the first day at school and finally completed year 6 is the same way you stepped foot into that big intimidating High School and finally graduated. The same thing is applied upon attendance at TAFE or University, until graduation is accomplished. They are all the same, and this is yet another milestone that you will experience yourself and will accomplish yourself. This is your journey.

What you decide to do is up to you. You can either educate yourself, work hard and set a standard for your children or you can just leave things as they are,

The Bundle Of Joy Has Arrived...

I heard my name so I walked in from the yard,

Before I knew it, we were in the car, don't slam the door too hard,

We were on our way to the hospital, swerving through traffic like Peter Brock,

Sorry, it's an emergency: park in the car in the loading dock,

I ran to the reception desk hasty for service,

Breathing hard, sweating, blinking more than normal, nervous,

"Yes, can I help you?" Says the bored looking lady,

"Umm, it's my wife, I think she's gonna have a baby?!"

Just like a toast pops out of a toaster,

This old lady popped out from behind the counter,

"Oh, come this way please." She took us through the labor ward,

(Do I have the guts to cut the umbilical cord?)

Into a room we followed this nurse

(Look on the bright side, it could have been worse?)

"Please sit here and I'll call the doctor right away"

Try and relax, it's going to be a long day..."

Judging by the door sign and the degree on the wall,

We were in the office of Dr T. Wil-tore

Oh here we go a thank you-certificate, his first name is Troy (I wonder if it'll be a girl or a boy)

"There's nothing to be worried about, everything will be okay"

(Yeah right, Troy-boy, it's bloody easy for you to say!)

"First thing we'll get you to do is complete some tests..."

(What will we feed all the guests?)

"...and if you can get into something comfortable that would be great"

(Well, I'm glad someone in this room is thinking straight!)

The Doctor said those words, left

the room and closed the door behind him...

(The chances of getting out of this place any time soon were looking dim)

To cut to the chase, the next big stage was the delivery room,

Any time and the baby was gonna pop its head out of the womb!

Even though I was the only male around,

I'm sure they could all hear my heart pound...

My wife, tabarakallah, she was a soldier,

Considering the circumstances, I haven't seen anyone more confident or bolder

There was plenty of screaming and shouting in there

Not just from my wife, it seemed to come from everywhere

I think the whole labor ward went into symphony

There were aaahs, ooohs and a lot of eeeeh,

THE SWEETNESS OF

By Muhammad Khodr

Denial, I was in denial. I didn't want to admit it so that I wouldn't be disappointed later on in case we were wrong. That would be catastrophic. Then again the fact that I wasn't accepting it was a little offensive to my wife, as you can imagine.

Claiming that the self-tests you buy from woollies can be wrong sometimes was pushing it a little and suggesting that the doctor doesn't know what she's talking about didn't work for too long either; hmmm. However when you see your wife's stomach getting bigger and bigger, you sort of get the idea. That's when you surrender to the truth: you're wife is pregnant.

You plan to have a child. But what does that mean? How do you react? What are you supposed to do? The child is meant to be *planned* right? But why is it that when you finally receive the good news you had anticipated, you don't know what to do with yourself all of a sudden? I mean fair enough, you hug your wife, you pick her up and you twirl her around the lounge room while you both laugh and tell each other that you're going to be parents.

That's the kind of joyful knee-jerk reaction that everyone would find themselves doing. That's not what I'm talking about here.

I'm talking about the thoughts that catch up to you in due time about being a parent. Here you are finding yourself standing at the first brick of the yellow brick road, square one, the bottom of the ladder, the first step in the mile long journey. No experience, no real knowledge, no confidence and plenty



FATHERHOOD

of anxiety, worry and panic. It's going to be a long road.

Alhamdulillah is the most sensible thing to say. To be happy is the most obvious feeling. To be anxious to tell others, especially the family, about the good news would be the most appropriate thing to do. That's the easy part, piece of cake. How about trying to answer these questions: Am I going to be a good parent? Will I give this child enough of my time? Do I have the patience? Do I have what it takes to be a father? That's assuming you already know what a 'good parent' is, how much is 'enough time' with your child and what it actually takes to be a father before you ask whether you possess those things.

As a matter of fact, those questions are such good questions that parenting magazines discuss all the time. But you have to be careful from those things; they can have some very negative attitudes about parenting. It's bad enough that they published a story about this woman who had a child who died at birth, yet they had another one that lived but her mother had died who didn't get to see her child grow up ...this was found in a new parent magazine. As if new mums didn't have enough worries, stress and depression about everything as it is? You may say that this could be the reality for some, but hey, what do I know?

By the way, as a bloke I actually find it offensive that there are hardly any parenting magazines that actually address the father. It's almost like the word parent is exclusive to mothers and the other mention of fathers is from the partners' point of view or that fathers usually do this and tend to do that. That's not fair! I congratulate 'The Message' for publishing this article: I am a father and I have an opinion too!

So you hope by reading these mother oriented magazines, looking up parenting websites and watching *Super Nanny* that you would know what to do. If you're anything like my wife, you would have read and researched everything under the sun. Anyway, you are mistaken, and that is not the solution. What you get is a whole heap of conflicting ideas: some say carry the baby when it cries as often as possible, others say avoid it, one party says keep everything artificial away from the child, another party says that the baby ought to get used to it because hardly anything today is natural; one side says breastfeed your child as long as possible, others say put them on solids because it's more practical. Then you get the frenzy about this common syndrome and that rampant sickness and this disease that 1 in every 10 children get and don't forget to take this to the hospital and never do this and watch out for that. We even had conflicting opinions about when our daughter was due, a mix up between the GP and the ultrasound people. After all this, the unanimous advice is to relax... go figure!

Drum roll! Enter the parents! Good old mum and dad. If you thought dad was just there to give you money and mum was only the best cook, then you have another thing coming! In situations like this, the parents from both sides can offer the world of support and advice. They've been there - done that. Although as you may admit, they did do a few mistakes with you, but overall, they know their stuff. Personally, my wife and I stayed at my parents place for 10 days after she came out of the hospital with our bundle of joy. No wonder that's a common practice. I have to admit that after a week, you kind of forget whether you're staying there because of the support your child receives, or because of mums' great food, but that's a different story.

So you're wife is pregnant and she is counting the days and weeks until the appointed day. Trust me, these nine months in your life will zap right before your eyes and the next thing you know, you're at the hospital. Meanwhile, hearing your baby's heartbeat for the first time, seeing your baby wriggle and move through the ultrasound images, and feeling this 'object' moving and poking on the surface of your wife's stomach which startles her at night are enough to raise the hairs on your neck, drop your jaw and raise a few eyebrows - Allahu Akbar, it's very fascinating stuff.

Throughout the entire pregnancy it was like I was in a trance, it just wouldn't sink in. Wow! A heartbeat was coming from my wife's stomach and oh look at that little baby rolling around on that black and white TV screen. I was thinking about how cool it was that the stomach actually changed shape when the baby moved. In theory I understood what all of those experiences were, but in practice it just wouldn't sink in my friend...

Until I witnessed the birth.

For all the to-be-fathers that are reading this, a message from a witness: if you're not in that delivery room when your wife gives birth, I'm going to take these toe thongs off right now and beat you on the head with them. Then I will grab you from your feet and throw you over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. After you swim out, I'll lock you in a meat freezer for a week. (/end outburst)

To date, I can say without a doubt that it was the most amazing experience I have ever witnessed in my entire life. To actually see a human being coming out of another human is truly a miracle beyond description. I have never been so emotional in such a way before and I couldn't believe what I was witnessing. I was so mesmerized by my daughter, it was as if I had never seen a child before. It was as if it was the first time I had seen a nose, or ears or heard a baby's cry. Fascinating stuff! She was so tiny, so fragile and so adorable. She was my daughter...Allahu Akbar.

The best thing about it all is that you get to take the baby home! That's when things get a little more serious. This stage is not about preparing, it's the doing. But really, it turned out to be pretty straight forward. You'll find that the baby only knows 4 things and once you time them right, you're set for the next few months: eat, poo, sleep and cry - there's plenty of that. The thing with the cry is that they have to put so much effort into it that you think you're putting them in so much pain, but you aren't - they're just not used to life yet. It's because of these 4 things that a baby in the first month or so isn't very rewarding, because they don't interact. Wait a few months later and you'll be wrapped.

Soon enough you will see your child's first smile and the neighbours will think you've gone coo coo. In the beginning you'll kind of lose your daughter in her clothes because she's so tiny, but you'll notice how she will begin to fill her clothes and it will really be fun when you get to dress her up. The best part of your child's growth is when she begins to recognize your face and voice from amongst all the people they meet - especially the mother. You will pick up on the different cries that come from your child - a painful cry, an 'I want attention' cry, and a hungry cry which the mother will develop a sixth sense for, it's only natural. At 4 months you'll laugh at how your baby will even 'fake' a cry to get your attention because as soon as you carry it, they'll just burst into displaying the biggest victory smile!

Your family will look forward to seeing her/him and you won't be the popular one anymore, and that's so rewarding even though they ignore you when you walk in, you'll still be happy. It'll become more interesting when the child develops their touch with their hand-eye coordination and direct things straight to mouth, they will love holding things which may be your clothes, mums hijabs and especially my beard. I think I may only have a few hairs left.

Surprisingly, changing her was not as bad as I thought. I expected a bad stench to fill up the room and send me to the dunny can or something, but that wasn't the case. Because the new born breast feeds, their poo doesn't smell very strong as opposed to a child who is on solids. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether it is some nappy technology but I made my wife laugh once regarding this issue. I walked into the bedroom and I said mmm, whats that smell? It smells nice... That's when she told me it was the nappy bin so yeah, there you have it.

At this stage Minna loves to be carried. She loves it when you walk around too so she can see and look at everything - sitting won't do. We feel a little special because she isn't familiar with a lot of people and only smiles and plays with us - with everyone else she cries but I'm sure that will soon change and before we know it, she'll be out and about at school with her friends.

At the end of the day, you rush home to see your daughter. It means the world to you when she looks at you, recognizes that you're the parent and gives you that golden smile. The endless games you can play with her, the many experiences that await her, the lovely blessed relationship you can have together is something beyond description. Subhan Allah, this is the one of the bounties of Allah, which is why we called her Minna - which means bounty or gift from Allah in Arabic.

I ask Allah for eternal gratitude for my daughter for the rest of my life. It is a favour that I can never repay and I will thank Allah for it everyday. So as I end this article and think about being a parent and what it means, 4 months after the birth of my daughter, I bring to realize the answer to my queries.

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Monday

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By Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman

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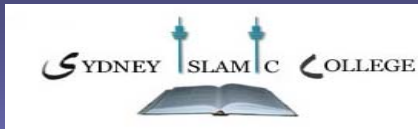
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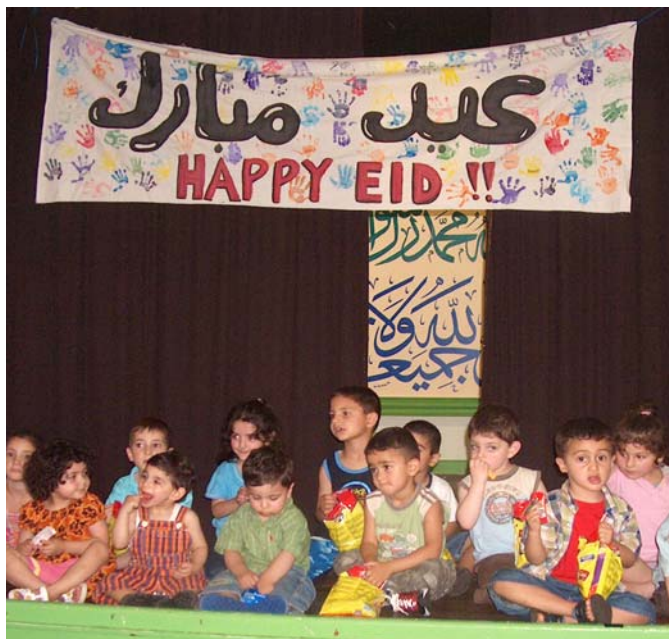


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Reviving the Prophet's Sunnah

HOW TO WELCOME IN A NEW BORN CHILD

For Muslims, every act is a ibadah (servitude to Allah). What else could be more rewarding than helping to create and welcome a new servant of Allah on earth? Nine months may not be that much, but for a baby in the womb, it brings the end of an extraordinary stage of his journey. It is a journey through which an impure 'spurting fluid' (al-Qur'an 86:6) is fashioned in the safe lodging of the mother's womb (al-Qur'an 23:12-14) and grows bigger and bigger to become a 'human being'. As the human being is not meant to be confined in a tiny space, he needs a wider physical world in order to go through the process of 'test and tribulation' for which he is destined.

The Birth

The birth of a baby is a mixture of anxiety, excitement and expectation. For mothers, it is a fulfilling experience. Allah has given them unusual resilience, strength, and courage to bear the burden and discomfort. A new life in their lap is a dream coming true for both the parents. It is the ultimate experience for a couple of 'togetherness', both working in unison to bring a new being into the world.

Although parenthood is a matter of preparedness from the time one plans to marry, birth initiates the 'real world' experience of parenting. Labour is a traumatic and painful physical, as well as psychological, experience for a woman. For many husbands it may be hard to watch their beloved one in pain, but their presence has a soothing effect on their partners. It reduces anxiety and provides a feeling of security to wives when most needed. The shared experience creates a deeper bond between the couple in their common goal to serve Allah.

Islamic Customs on Birth of a Child

The comfort and safety of the baby suddenly shatters in the new unknown world. The new born (al-mawlood) cries out. The Sunnah of the Prophet teaches us that when a baby is born, he needs to be cleansed and dressed. A male adult, father or someone close in the family, should recite adhan (ritual call for collective prayer) in the right ear and iqamah (ritual announcement for starting the prayer) in the left ear. Thus, the first sound to reach a baby's ear should be the declaration of Allah's greatness, so that the sound always reverberates in his memory and is settled in his soul. This is evident in the hadith, where the mother of the faithful Aisha (R) mentioned, "I saw the Prophet give adhan in the ear of al-Hussein ibn Ali when his mother, Fatima, gave birth to him." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi).

Furthermore, when a child was born in a family, Ayesha (R) would not ask whether it was a boy or girl, rather she would ask, "Is it complete and sound?" So, if she was told that it was, she would say, "All praise and thanks for Allah, Lord of all creation." (Bukhari)

It is also an excellent practice to give a bit of small chewed date to the baby, so that he starts his life with sweetness. Ayesha (R) said, "New born children used to be brought to Allah's messenger and he would supplicate for blessing for them and rub a chewed date upon his palate." (Muslim, Abu Dawud)

Moreover, the arrival of a child in a family is a glad tidings that needs to be conveyed and shared (al-Qur'an 3:39, 37:101).

Islamic Customs in the first Week of a Child

"Every child is held in pledge for his Aqiqah (an animal sacrifice which is fed to people) which is sacrificed for him on his seventh day and he is named on it and his head is shaved" (Ahmad and Abu Dawud).

In addition, their names must be meaningful. Praiseworthy names are those which mean slaves of Allah or His attributes, or are names after the Prophets and the pious people. "The most beloved of your names in the eye of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, are Abdullah and Abdur Rahman" (Muslim).

Another example of an Islamic custom is shown in the following hadith: "When al-Hasan was born, he (the Messenger) said to her (Fatima): shave his head and give the weight of his hair in silver to the poor. So, she shaved off his hair, weighed it and its weight was a dirham or a part of dirham. (Ahmad and al-Baihaqi).

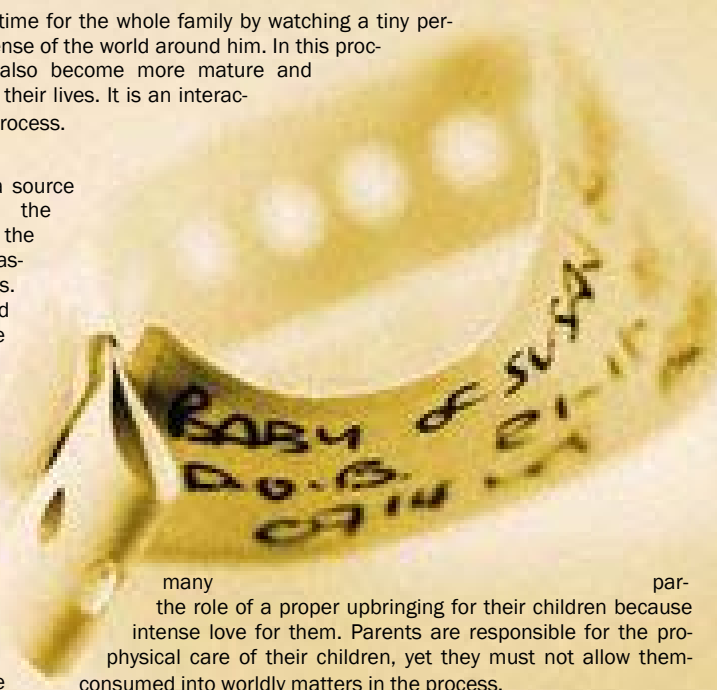
Also, it is known that the fitrah (the natural way) is constituted of five physical actions: circumcision, shaving the private parts, trimming the moustache, clipping the nails and plucking hair from the armpits (Bukhari, Muslim). In the case of the new-born, circumcision is preferred on the 7th day.

Passing on the Trust of Faith

Holding a baby in the arms is one of the most emotionally fulfilling experiences in life. Watching a baby grow and thrive is most rewarding. Getting to know a new born baby in the first few days and weeks is also a thrilling experience which reaches far beyond just caring for his daily needs. The baby learns about his parents, the family and the surroundings. It is an

unforgettable time for the whole family by watching a tiny person making sense of the world around him. In this process, parents also become more mature and responsible in their lives. It is an interactive dynamic process.

Children are a source of vigour to the heart, joy to the souls and pleasure to the eyes. Wealth and children are adornments to human beings (al-Qur'an 18:47) which allures them towards worldly life. However, parents forget of their protection and selves to be



many parents forget the role of a proper upbringing for their children because of their intense love for them. Parents are responsible for the physical care of their children, yet they must not allow themselves to be consumed into worldly matters in the process.

In addition, time is the invaluable gift that parents can give to their children. On top of everything, Muslim parents are in obligation to pass on the amanah (trust) of faith to their children from the very young and tender age, so that they can grow with a balanced Muslim personality. Only then can they bear witness to the Truth before mankind in the future.

Reference

www.islam.about.com



The Effects of the Electronic Babysitter

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said:

The zina (adultery) of the eyes is the gaze (at which is unlawful, e.g. nudity); the zina of the ears is to listen (to talks of immoral or sexual indecency which excites the carnal desires); the zina of the tongue is to speak (what is evil); the zina of the hand is to touch (the female or male that is unlawful to you); the zina of the feet is to walk (towards immorality); the zina of the heart is to desire (what is unlawful), and it is the private parts which either commits or shuns the actual act of fornication. (Muslim)

After reflecting on the Sheikh's words, I have decided to focus and extend on what he said about the effects of the "idiot box (television)" on the family, especially on children, as this electronic babysitter has become a home wrecker for most families, where it has become the primary source of communication, hindering the ability of the family to interact with each other.

Many of us may find that our children or younger siblings are slouched in front of the T.V, with their chins locked by their two hands, hypnotised by the television without uttering a word. Some hours later, we find them in the same exact position, slouched in front of this mechanical device and entranced by what is projected to them. What is even more detrimental is that we also find ourselves in the exact same situation during many occasions. Many of our parents are also glued to the T.V set with Al-Jazeera being screened all day, or they are otherwise found to be watching Arabic versions of soap dramas.

One must distinguish however, that the television device itself is not the harmful thing per se, rather it is what is projected and shown through those these images that Islam has a problem with; and rightfully so! Images of sexual immorality are constantly being repeated to us and are being imprinted into our brains so that we can become desensitised to the different forms of adultery that our Prophet (S) warned us against. This is why I have chosen the hadith above, as the television is a source of zina for the eyes and ears, which can fundamentally lead to the ultimate zina. What was once a shock for us to see (eg: a kiss or an exposed man/woman) becomes the social norm, so it is now ok for us to look at people engaging in sexual behaviour, and with some people, pornography has become the norm, and will be for many other people in time to come.

The brain of a child is like a sponge. It will absorb anything and everything around it, as the brain is still developing constantly at a

high rate. The brain feeds on its surroundings to shape and mould the personality of a child. This also occurs in adults, but more so in our younger generation. Therefore, since we have a limited environment which largely includes television, these illicit images that are constantly being absorbed in our brains will cause a change in our morals and behaviour. We may not realise this, but television numbs our brains as we watch it with an inner calm. We do not reflect, nor question the images projected to us, but we allow the television to do it for us. It deprives us from the potential for reflection and intellectual thought.

The television does the thinking for the viewer (like a sitting zombie), who is unaware of this effect. They become oblivious to both their internal and external surroundings. People like these are mentioned in the Quran:

"They have hearts they do not understand with. They have eyes they do not see with. They have ears they do not hear with. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)."

Moreover, television also has the capacity to impede the child's imagination, or attention span. It may also hinder the child's reading skills and slow down the child's speaking skills. In the child's mind, it doesn't need to learn how to read or speak, as the television does it for them.

The list goes on and on, and it takes way more than a simple and limited article like this to discuss the endless effects of the "idiot box." However, it is easy to come up with some practical solutions to this problem. The simple answer is to turn it off and only use it when you need to. It only takes a few calories to do this, which may actually be a good thing for the couch potato. Hold on a sec, the remote control can do that.

I can acknowledge that it is hard to go "cold turkey" regarding television, however, there are far more rewarding things that can take its place, like communicating with the family and spending time together. Playing in the park can help maintain the child's mind in a healthy state, as well as yours! Reading books can help expand the mind, rather than numb it. Playing arts and crafts can stretch the imagination. There are many different things we can all do. However, the challenge is to go out and seek to achieve them.

By Hesham Mourad

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Television and Sexual Immorality, by Hanan Dover.

Determining your child's education

Public School vs. Islamic School

by Samana Siddiqui



Seven-year-old Zaahirah Abdullah has a passion for nose rings and bellybutton rings, thanks to her friends and a favorite teacher at her local school.

"She's really into style," says her mother Najla Abdullah, who attended the same public school as a child. "I can see I really need to build Islamic fundamentals with her," she adds earnestly.

Zaahira's interest in body ornamentation through the influence of friends and her teacher speaks to the power of public schools in shaping the attitudes of most Muslim children in her country.

Zaahirah is one of the 90 percent of Muslim children in her country who attends a public school. And it's her generation over whom the debate currently rages about sending Muslim children to either a Muslim or a public school.

Better environment in Muslim schools

The strongest argument in favour of

sending children to Muslim schools is the presence of an Islamic environment. Muslim kids in most of these schools pray and interact with other Muslim children in classes and during breaks. They also generally have less exposure to sex, drugs, alcohol and violence. In addition, Muslim schools are a place to build identity and security.

In today's educational society, it is the belief of many that a Muslim school is the only place where Muslim kids will ever have the chance to develop an identity that says, "Hey, these are my people. I belong to an identifiable community."

Muslim schools give students a sense of self-worth, pride and cultural identity which they could never get in a public school.

A sense of identity comes not just from being with other Muslim kids but also with the memories of praying, hearing the Adhan and discussing Islamic issues. For the child, "that's invaluable." How-

ever, others may argue otherwise.

The perception of Muslim schools as "a quick fix option to problematic children"

"What usually happens is that when a parent realises his kid is turning into a foul-mouthed wretch with bad values and such, they look for a quick fix and toss him in an Islamic school. In one school I worked in, over a third of the kids fit this description," a common opinion echoed by a teacher.

This is the double-edged sword of providing a comparatively better environment than most public schools. It has led to some parents of kids who have become out of control in public schools to dump them into Muslim schools.

More Islamic knowledge in Muslim schools

Children tend to be more exposed to Islamic knowledge in Muslim schools.

"I know a lot of brothers and sisters who have been to public schools and have a big problem learning Arabic Duas and Quran, and sometimes there is also a difference in the way they think about Islam or certain things," says a concerned individual.

But others see the Islamic knowledge offered by many Muslim schools as limited.

For example, one brother interviewed as part of this article had three daughters. Muslim schools were not available in his area for his two older children when they were growing up. But they were for his youngest daughter, who attended one.

While he acknowledged that she was able to learn Surahs and verses from the Quran, he adds, "but did the school make a difference in the thinking and understanding of those Qur'anic verses? The answer is no."

An overall bad administrative model

A top-down leadership approach, imported from "back home" versus a more team-oriented leadership approach, is also a cause for clashes in many Muslim schools.

In the first approach, a good leader is considered as someone who bosses everyone around, without consultation. This, in fact, is seen as a drawback. In the second case, consultation is part of the process, and the head of an organisation engages in this with fellow workers. It is interesting to note that the latter method has roots in Islam and is known as "Shura" or conducting all affairs by consultation.

This culture clash in leadership perception leads in many Muslim school teachers to quit in frustration, with many non-Muslim teachers taking over teaching duties.

Do Muslim schools create insular children?

Some parents fear their kids will become closed and insular if they attend a school comprised of Muslims only. A mother who sent her child to a public school highlighted the following concerns by stating "...I have seen many children who went to Islamic schools who cannot interact with their Australian neighbours. They feel shy or feel like they cannot talk to them. I don't want my child going through that. I want her to be able to interact with all the children here in this country."

But many within the Islamic community have strongly rebutted this notion by arguing "Do Muslim kids who attend Christian schools in Pakistan have any danger of becoming closed to their society? Are Jewish kids who attend Jewish schools in America somehow socially stunted or unable to cope with American society?"

"No and no," they answered.

Putting the problems in Muslim schools in perspective

For all of their different opinions about this issue, everyone interviewed for this article expressed strong support for Muslim schools.

It is essential that parents devote more than just money occasionally to support

Muslim schools. They must devote time and commitment as well.

"Many believe that the problems are a necessary element of the eventual excellence of Muslim schools. I think the Muslim schools are on the letter 'H' on a scale of A to Z. H stands for How To. They're still learning How To. And that's okay," says another concerned individual.

The public school system is never going to be everything that practicing Muslim parents want it to be for their children. These parents want every aspect of a school to be Islamic: its ethics, purpose and the style in which teachers are motivated.

Some of the problems in public schools include chronic misinformation textbooks, the issue of food, clothing for physical education, dances and other social events.

It all starts in the home - Parents' responsibility

What is often disregarded in the whole debate is the role parents and the family play in a child's Islamic development, which is much more important, many say, than which school the child attends.

"We're asking Muslim schools to perform the tasks that we as parents are supposed to perform. **The Muslim schools are not supposed to be substitutes for parental responsibility,**" says one concerned parent.

"Muslim schools are not the answer. An Islamic environment that incorporates all the principles of Islam is the answer. If I succeed in doing that gradually, then I would have an option of sending them to Muslim schools and/or public schools," she continues.

With regards to the dangerous environment found in many public schools, one parent concluded that, "The public school is not the reason for Muslim kids getting into drugs, alcohol and wild dating. The reason is that the parents of these Muslim kids have not developed a secure relationship of knowledge, trust and humility."

Reference:

An edited excerpt from

<http://www.soundvision.com/Info/education/pubschool/edu.muspubl.asp>



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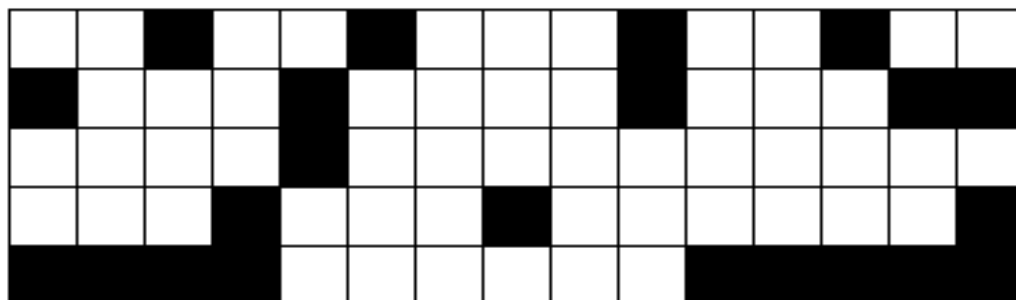
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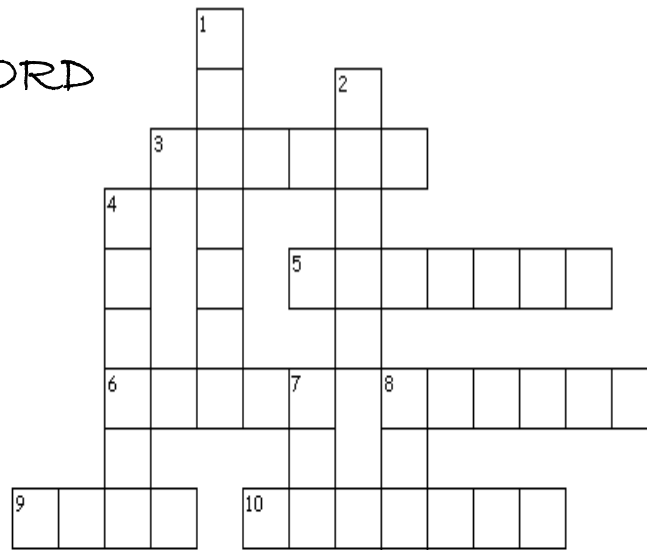
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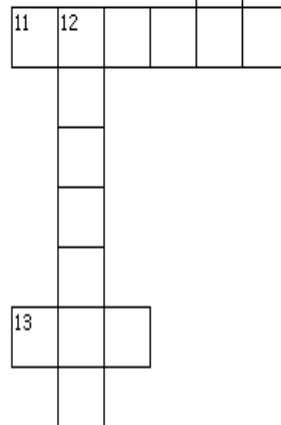
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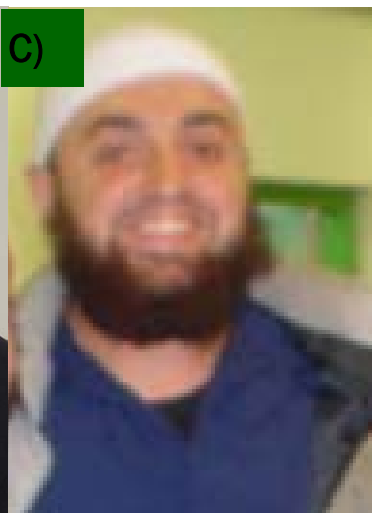
Down

1. The Prophet (s) said Allah has forbidden you to be undutiful to who?
2. Name of a Prophet whose son was also a Prophet?
4. Which son was Prophet Ibrahim meant to sacrifice?
7. The husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatima
8. Heaven is under whose feet?
12. Which Prophet was given the title of the father of the Prophets?



Across

3. The keys to paradise will be given to the one who sponsors who?
5. Name of Prophet Muhammad's tribe
6. The mother of the believers
8. Which mother is described in the Quran as being above the women of all mankind?
9. Which animal did Prophet Yousef's brothers claim killed him?
10. Age difference between the Prophet and his wife Khadijah
11. Name of mother who ran from Mount Safa to Marwa looking for water for her child
13. How many children did Prophet Muhammad have altogether?



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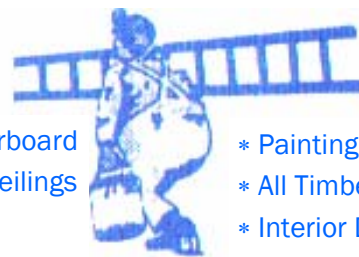
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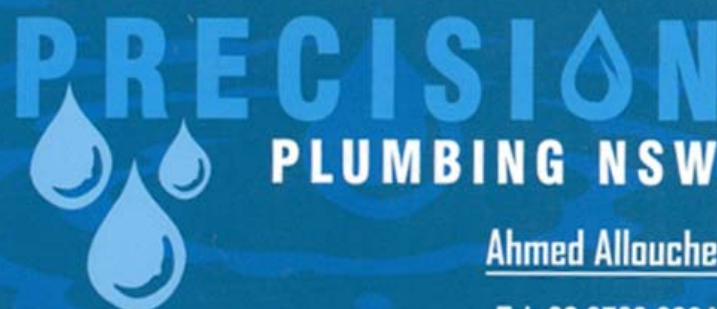
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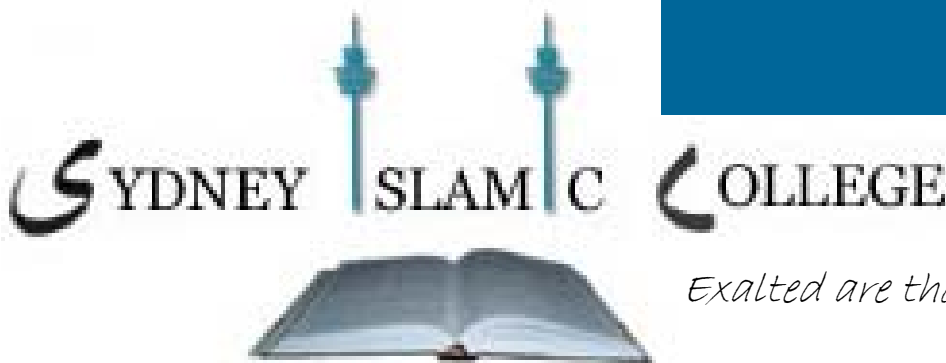
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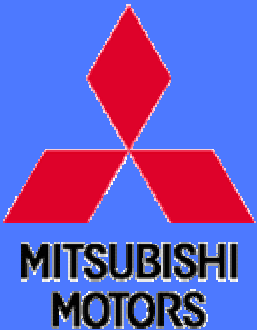


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