

# AL-Risalah

**“In the (Blessed) Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful.”**

***WELCOME BACK!***

***Meet the Shura***

***Welcome Week Reflections***

***Student Art Page***

***Newsflash on Syria***

On behalf of the MSA Shura, we hope you enjoy this issue. Please understand that this is the culmination of the hard work of your fellow students and the scholars of our community. Therefore, it needs to be treated with all due respect. If you are not going to read the issue, kindly refrain from using it otherwise. Many of the articles, if not all, have direct Islamic themes therein, and some may include verses from the Holy Qur'an or Hadith of the Prophet (S). Thus, it is to our common understanding that everyone will treasure this humble work. May Allah (SWT) allow Al-Risalah to serve as the beacon of light it is intended to be, Aameen.

~ The Al-Risalah Staff

# Welcome to Al-Risalah

## Assalaamua'laykum Readers!

Being involved with the MSA for the past year has truly been an extremely rewarding experience. Not only has this organization allowed me to nurture my passion for writing through Al-Risalah, but it has given me opportunities to meet some very talented people. I started working with the devoted team of this newsletter in the Fall of 2012 as an Editor, and have loved it ever since! Alhamdulillah, Al-Risalah has grown so much in the past year.

It has not merely become a platform for our very own students to express themselves, but it has also evolved to include articles from scholars themselves. Each Al-Risalah issue is a new beacon for sacred knowledge; with such a wide array of voices, it has become extremely diverse. These issues have grown to cover memorable MSA events and incorporate poetry, artwork, reviews, student reflections on Islam, and much more! It is my honor and pleasure to coordinate the newsletter this Fall. Insha'Allah, I will try my best to have Al-Risalah continue to be a benefiting light for all of our readers! This semester, we have an enthusiastic and devoted team of writers, editors, designers, and printers, and it has been a privilege to work with them to produce the very first issue of the 2013-2014 school year. Al-Risalah is always welcoming new additions to our team - no experience necessary, the more the merrier! If anyone would like to contribute to Al-Risalah in any way, please feel free to contact me. I hope to work with all of you to make this semester our best yet insha'Allah!

JazakAllah Khair!

Shaziya Barkat  
Newsletter Coordinator

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(S): sallalahu `alayhi wa aalihi wa sallam; prayers and peace be upon him and his progeny

(SWT): subhaanahu wa ta`aala; may He be Glorified and Exalted

(R): radiullaahu `anh/`anha; may Allah be pleased with him/her

# From the President's Desk

Asalaamu 'Alaykum Everyone,

My name is Laith, I'm a senior majoring in Biophysics and minoring in Mathematics, and I am humbled to be your MSA President for the 2013-2014 year inshaAllah. Although I am a senior, this is only my second year here at Loyola and my experience thus far has been extraordinary. Alhamdulillah, my involvement with this MSA began only last year as the Brothers' Advisor, and unintentionally led to this.

SubhanAllah, I have had the opportunity to visit many schools around the country and never have I seen anything quite like Loyola. We are truly blessed to have such an institution. The combination of Jesuit graciousness along with a vibrant, diverse, and bright population of Muslim students yields an undergraduate community unlike any other. InshaAllah, it is with this blessing that we hope to move forward and fill this year with many bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood amongst ourselves, between Muslims and non-Muslims, between freshmen and seniors, between history majors and those super rare biology/pre-medical types. I pray this will be a beautiful year filled with success for everyone, InshaAllah. I ask that you keep your Muslim brothers and sisters in your duas. Remember:

*"The believers are like one body in their love, mercy, and compassion for each other." (Muslim)*

Finally, if there is anything we can do to better serve you, please don't hesitate to let the board members know. I welcome you all to Loyola University Chicago's very own Muslim Students Association.

JazakumAllah Khairan wa Salaamu 'Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatoh,

**Laith Elkurd**

*MSA President, 2013-2014*

# From the Brother's Advisor

Assalamu Alaikum,

As the Brothers' Advisor for LUC MSA this year, I'd like to welcome all the brothers back! It's always exciting to see the new and returning faces on campus. From what I have seen these first few weeks of classes, the MSA has a strong cast of brothers this year, bringing lots of potential for amazing events and brotherhood. Some of the events we have planned include weekly halaqas and the MSA retreat. A halaqa is an open Islamic forum or discussion where we hold on either Wednesday or Thursday nights. Its main purpose is to share Islamic knowledge between ourselves and to discuss a wide range of topics. Usually moderated by a discussion leader, the halaqas allow for anyone to share anything. Don't be surprised if we go from talking about the Sunnah to Derrick Rose's ACL in a matter of minutes. As we all take some time off from our hectic schedules, these weekly discussions help us grow in brotherhood. In my two years at Loyola, I credit these meetings as an opportunity to make great friends. After the halaqa, there are group activities where you can either play basketball or take a trip to Devon. I see some JK Kabob Chilli Chicken rice in the near future! Come join us for these very beneficial weekly discussions. Timings and locations will be announced.

Besides these weekly halaqas, the MSA has a major event planned for this semester: the annual MSA Retreat! The retreat is a two day journey to Loyola's LUREC in Woodstock, IL. The brotherhood grows during these two days as we partake in many discussions led by a local Islamic scholar. With a wide range of topics, the amount of Islamic knowledge that is shared and learned is astounding. Hotel style accommodations, full course meals, and 48 hours of chilling with over 30 friends, what else could you ask for? More specific information will be sent out soon. Spots are limited this year so sign up fast!

Lastly, I'd just like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to help out with the MSA. I have the easiest position on the Executive Board, but also the best position. If anyone ever needs something from me, let me know and I'll try my best to help you out. Rishtas excluded.

Salam,

Raof Baig

*P.S. Contact Basharith Khan for life changing advice.*

# “Sowing the Seeds for Ever-Lasting Friendships”

**Ahad Bagasra**  
*Al-Risalah Writer*

What a phenomenal start to the year: the MSA Welcome Week helped ease the sadness and stress brought on with the end of a great summer and the beginning of an exciting, yet difficult, semester. The welcome week helped everyone, including the freshmen, transition from a relaxed mode to a more serious one. The welcome spirit could be felt in the air, as reflected by the turnout at every event.

The week started with the grand potluck, get-together where all the returning students were excited to be reunited and greet the incoming freshman. This event helped everyone get to know each other better, and fostered new, everlasting relationships. What strengthened the brotherhood and sisterhood more were the week-

ly halaqahs. I cannot speak for the sisters' halaqah, but the brothers' halaqah focused on how blessed we are to be surrounded by fellow Muslims. Having the same values



and goals, we all strive to keep each other in check and in turn increase our Imaan. What is important is that we strength-

en our brotherhood and use our time at Loyola University to not only prepare ourselves for this world, but the Hereafter. This is why it is crucial to have Muslim brothers and sisters we can all rely on. What made me rejoice more was seeing new faces at the halaqah. It makes me happy to see the incoming students bond so well and dedicate themselves to the MSA. If there is any advice I can give you as an upperclassman, it is that you hold onto these relationships. Your Muslim brothers will be there for you during the best and the worst of your times at Loyola. It will bring the best out of you. You will look back at these times and realize how blessed you were to be given such an opportunity. Make the most of these friendships; help each other become not only better Muslims, but also better people, because in the end, what else is our purpose in life if we cannot be there for our friends and family.

# “FAITH FEST”

**Rizwan Khan**  
*Al-Risalah Editor*

One of the many interfaith initiatives Campus Ministry hosts throughout the year is Faith Fest. During the first week of school, the Ministry, along with other faith organizations like MSA, Hillel (Jewish students group) and HSO (Hindu Students Organization) set up tables with information on their groups as well as programs each organization hosts to increase the faith and spirituality of their members.

The event drew quite a number of fresh-

men, many remarking on the diversity in faith they see at a Catholic university. With desserts provided by the Loyola student-run business Felice's, students were encouraged to visit each table and learn about the different faith organizations on our campus.

The MSA table received visitors from students of many different faith backgrounds: the Muslims inquiring about the Friday prayers offered on campus, the non-Muslims invited to observe those prayers as well as an invitation extended to all members of the Loyola community to the much anticipated Welcome Back Dinner hosted the week after.

I had a chance to visit other tables and was glad to hear of all the planned events other organizations were speaking about. Hillel had a BBQ/dinner planned soon after Faith Fest and HSO was planning for Garba, a Hindu festival celebrated in October on our campus.

With so many organizations as ready to start the new school year like the MSA with activities geared towards building the brotherhood and sisterhood as well the spirituality on our campus, we are set up to have an eventful and uplifting year, insha'Allah.



## “Fajr by the Lake”

**Shaziya Barkat**

*Al-Risalah coordinator*

*‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SWT) saying: “One who performs the Fajr prayer in congregation, is as if he has performed Salat the whole night.” [Sahih Muslim]*

Early morning mist collected throughout Loyola University Chicago’s campus and over Lake Michigan as the first week of school began. While many slept, students from the Muslim Student Association gathered during the tranquil nights to stand up for Fajr (dawn prayer), kicking off MSA’s “Welcome Week” with one of the most beautiful of acts of worship: prayer in congregation.

With a blanket of stars as a cloak above, harmonious recitations of the Quran, and the sound of gentle waves hitting the rocks, Fajr by the lake is extremely moving. The event begins with prayer and concludes with a breakfast hosted by the MSA. Many students, however, stay to watch the sun paint the sky as it rises.

Sophomore Anbreen Basher beautifully describes, “We all know that peaceful feeling of having started our day off right by praying Fajr, but praying Fajr by the lake just elevates the spirituality to a whole new level. Fajr by the lake is probably my favorite MSA event, and Alhamdulillah we have been blessed enough to have it six times so far this year. Not only do we get the thawaab (reward) of praying Fajr, but we also get the opportunity to pray such an important salah in jama’ (congregation), only increasing our reward. And as an added bonus, we get to enjoy Allah (SWT)’s most beautiful creation – nature. Nothing compares to sitting on the beach watching the magnificent sunrise, which never fails to be the highlight of my busy days. I honestly can’t think of a better way to start my day than in remembrance of As-Salaam (The Giver of Peace), Al-Mu’min (The Inspirer of Faith), Al-Khaliq (The Creator).”

## “Sister’s Welcome Back Dinner & Halaqa”

**Sarah Choudhry**

*Guest Writer*

I am truly going to miss this--the halaqas, the dinners, the chilling! We kick off every year at Loyola MSA with an annual sisters’ welcome back halaqa and dinner. The halaqa is where everyone introduces themselves, and then the Sisters’ Advisor of MSA discusses the beauty of sisterhood in Islam. This year we had many alumni visit - alumni who also gave us insight on how different life is when we leave our little bubble of sisterhood. They kept emphasizing that we need to cherish what we have, cherish it and maintain it even after we graduate. This really struck me, I never thought before coming to Loyola that I would develop such an intimate and close bond with the Muslim sisters on campus. It honestly is a blessing in disguise. The alumni mentioned that this sisterhood is hard to find in the real world, which is not that far from where we are now.

The Sisters’ Advisor this year, Sujud Ottman, gave a beautiful halaqa. She focused the halaqah on the topic of loneliness. The idea that when we enter college we feel like we can take on the world, but what we fail to realize is that we can not do so alone. She discussed how Islam teaches us the importance of having good company. That this good company is what allows you to grow closer to Allah (swt), and as we grow closer to our Lord we are able to understand and furthermore attain happiness, success, and peace.

After the halaqa we all made our way to Usmania Chinese. SubhanAllah we had to take two buses! Upon arriving, everyone was seated--over 70 girls in the restaurant, masha’Allah. I remember my freshman year there were around 30 and each year I have seen this group grow. The beauty of the welcome back sisters’ dinner is that not only do you see old friends, but are also given the opportunity of seeing many fresh, new faces. This year especially, we had over 20 freshmen and transfer students. These past few weeks have set the foundation for our sisterhood and I’m excited to see what this year holds. May Allah (SWT) spread His immense rahma on the Muslim students at Loyola and may He strengthen the sisterhood and brotherhood on campus. Ameen.

### Al-Risalah: Goal for October

Do something for yourself by doing something for someone else. Help someone in need. We forget at times that when we help others, we ourselves benefit greatly.

Abu Dharr reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Do not regard any good deed insignificant, even meeting your brother with a cheerful face.” (Muslim)

## Reflections on The Dinner

### Arjumand Fatima

*Guest Writer*

September 6th was the annual MSA Welcome Back Dinner. Every year MSA hosts a dinner at the start of the year to give returning and new students a chance to socialize and begin an exciting year together. The turnout for the Welcome Dinner has always been impressive and this year was no exception. Students of all faiths attended in support of the Muslim Student Association. Catered by various restaurants on Devon, the dinner was also an excellent opportunity to sample local cuisine over an inspirational keynote address by Professor Omer Mozaffar. Here is a reflection written by a member of the MSA.



### Sameen Elahi

*Guest Writer*

Despite having attended Loyola for a year and practicing Islam my whole life, I had never before attended the Muslim Student Association's first event of the year – the Welcome Back Dinner. However, this year, I had seen the hype on the MSA's Facebook page and in person at the Musallah; it inspired me to get more involved in the organization by attending.

I had not expected much beyond excellent food and better company. Though both were present, I received much more than I'd anticipated. The program was catered toward those of different faiths as well as the Muslims on campus, which was refreshing and comforting. Clearly, the MSA was fully aware that followers of many faiths were going to be present. The keynote speaker, Professor Omer Mozaffar, made some very candid points about the politically defensive attitude of the Muslim community – something that I believe is beneficial for both Muslims and non-Muslims to



learn about.

Professor Mozaffar spoke specifically about the fact that the defensive speeches Muslims have been giving to non-Muslims for the last hundred years have all been more or less the same. We have always spoken about how Islam is not about violence or oppression – something I found thought-provoking. I believe the fact that we have been repeating ourselves for years indicates a need to move on as a community and show who we are through example.

The other aspect of the evening that I found particularly surprising was the fact that not only did many members of Loyola's MSA attend, but members of neighboring schools' MSAs did as well. In addition, the families of many students were present too. I thought this spoke volumes about the merit of the event. Clearly, it was something many people look forward to every year. The MSA Welcome Back Dinner gave me fantastic insight into the strength of the Muslim community at Loyola. After attending one, I have already planned to attend more in the future.



# Getting To Know Your Peers

## Freshman Interview

**Rizwan Khan**

*Al-Risalah Editor*

Freshmen year is, arguably, always the most memorable year for all undergraduates. As a senior now, I can say wholeheartedly my freshmen year had the most significant impact in shaping me to how I am today. The excitement you feel, the mistakes you make, the lessons you learn, all of these come together to form an unforgettable experience. I had the opportunity to speak with Abdullah Ansari, a freshman Biology major (of course), on the experiences he had during his first three weeks on campus and the expectations he holds.

### **Q: You're about to finish your first month of undergrad; any thoughts? How have the past 3 weeks been? Best memory so far?**

A: The past 3 weeks have gone very well. Coming into Loyola, I expected college to be really difficult because college students I talked to or even my own friends would tell me things like "Its nothing like high school" or "Loyola's grading system is really harsh." What I realized is yes, it is different, but in a good way.

The best memory so far was Fajr by the lake with the guys, and running into the freezing lake afterwards. I think the fact that we were having fun doing random stuff like that, balling, or just chilling instead of getting involved in harmful stuff that the many people begin doing in college is important.

### **Q: What is your favorite aspect of the MSA?**

A: My favorite aspect of the MSA would be the brotherhood I found in only a couple weeks of time. It was the upperclassman that really welcomed us and made us feel like real brothers in Islam.

### **Q: If you could change one thing about the MSA, what would it be?**

A: If I could change one thing about the MSA, I would set some times during the day for prayers in the Musallah. Instead of people coming and going and praying on their own, we could set times for each prayer.

### **Q: Why did you choose Loyola?**

A: ... it was more of a feeling that it was a place where I could excel above others and at the same time challenge myself.

### **Q: Have you joined any other clubs on campus?**

A: I want to join AMSA, Loyola Refugee Outreach, and American Red Cross.

### **Q: What are you most looking forward to this year? It could be MSA related or general college related?**

A: I am looking forward to the MSA retreat and when I asked Mohammad Farooqi, a freshman he said "Yea man, that's one of the events I'm counting down the days for. I can't wait."

## My Journey to Hijab

**Anbreen Basher**  
Guest Writer

I recently began wearing hijab; I officially started at the beginning of the month of Ramadan. It was a decision that had been brewing for a while, and I finally decided that it was the right time to start. In any case, there were a few factors that led up to my decision. My first inspiration is my mother, who also wears hijab. Ever since I was little, I always wanted to be exactly like my mom; I even changed my handwriting so it would look more like hers. I always knew that I would wear hijab one day. There was no doubt about it in my mind or heart, because being like my mother meant also wearing hijab. And now I even wear it exactly like she does. I am, Alhamdulillah, really blessed to have such an extraordinary inspiration so close to my heart.

Another factor in my decision is this amazing sisterhood that we have on campus. This sisterhood truly inspires me to become both a better person and a better Muslim. These sisters have, SubhanAllah, brought me closer to Islam, and helped ground me in my decision to wear hijab. Probably one of the biggest pushes in my decision was the Walk A Mile In Her Hijab event during the 2013 Islam Awareness Week. That was my first time experiencing an entire day as a hijabi, and I loved it.

Wearing the hijab didn't feel like an extra burden, and wearing it just felt good and right. I know that's not very descriptive, but it's hard to describe what you feel in your heart. That day, I felt so certain that I wanted to wear hijab that I even considered starting from then, but my lack of hijabs at the time made it a bit difficult. But everything happens for a reason, and this way I was able to start the new school year afresh. Lastly, I found that wearing hijab had more advantages to it than I had previously realized. SubhanAllah, when I really think about it, I can't find any disadvantages to wearing hijab; everything I think of is just another positive aspect. There are virtually an infinite number of benefits to such a beautiful component of Islam.

Having worn hijab for about two months now, I have concluded that wearing hijab makes me feel at ease, and all the support that I have received from everyone in my life has only enhanced that feeling. Furthermore, wearing hijab automatically makes me feel like a better Muslim, and it forces me to make more of an effort to be a better person. There was a point where I felt that I was not the best person, let alone Muslim, I could be. But going on this journey has helped me realize that it is always possible to improve, and that it is really never too late to improve and Insha'Allah become a better person and a better Muslim.

## Hidden Gems

**Shaziya Barkat**  
Al-Risalah Coordinator

*"I love Ramadan because that kid who never prays, prays. That girl who never covers, covers. That guy who never fasts, fasts. Even if it's just for a month, at least these 'types' of people tasted the 'sweetness of faith' just for one month. And perhaps months later down in life, if their life ever becomes bitter- they'll refer back to Ramadan and yearn for that same 'sweetness' they sampled just that one month. You call them "Only Ramadan Muslims" but I call them "Muslims who may only need Ramadan to change."*

During Ramadan, everyone seemed to be getting their Ramadan grind on: fasting, taraweeh, and dhikr. There were those who were practicing Muslims, increasing their usual daily worship, while others struggled to pick up the Quran even once outside of the month. Sometimes, as we stocked up on our own good deeds, we may have begun to look down upon those that found it a challenge to improve in their worship. Knowingly or unknowingly, we might have started to point out their faults: Why does this brother not come to taraweeh prayers regularly? Why does she only wear hijab during Ramadan?

Unfortunately, this sort of attitude can negatively impact us even now, if not addressed. While people are attempting to make a change in their life, their shortcomings are mocked. Rather than stressing their progress, they are criticized to such an extent that some may even give up trying. We need to keep our focus. We all have our weaknesses; no one is perfect. Empower others to progress through love and acknowledgement of their good, not through arrogance and a condescending view of their faults. We need to reflect on our own weaknesses to overcome them, and use this time to improve our own relationship with God. Don't try to define where others stand, because we never really know.

There are some people that are not often viewed as "religious" in the public's eyes and may be the least expected to even be practicing. Yet, they are the ones that turn to God sincerely behind closed doors. This might be the sinner who has given up his bad actions and goes to God over and over again for repentance, while you judge him for a sin he has already been forgiven for. This might be that kid that hadn't shown up to taraweeh prayers consistently. But, he stood alone with khushoo during those long nights in prayer in solitude, where he was more comfortable, while you yawned behind the Imam. It might be the sister who didn't wear hijab outside of Ramadan, yet she consistently makes an effort to make every Ramadan be the one which grants her enough strength to continue on with it. They are persevering. Yet, they are often misjudged. Only the One who never overlooks, the Ultimate Judge, knows the value of their genuine efforts: Hidden gems.



# How to Deal with Loss



**Safia Khan**

*Guest Writer*

People come into your life only to impact you; once that's done, Allah (SWT) takes them to where they need to go next, and you to where you need to go next. Don't spend too much time being sad; think about the future. Don't let that person's footprints into your life be for nothing. Use it to fuel you, to make a difference in the world and in other lives, because that's the whole point of life: to leave a lasting impression on the world for when you are no longer in it.

**Shaziya Barkat**

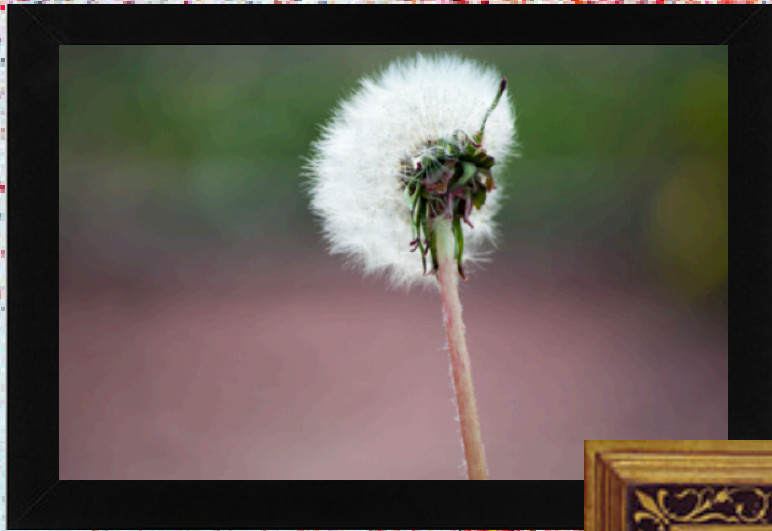
*Al-Risalah Coordinator*

Gain and loss. That's life. But it's not a punishment, never was meant to be one. To have those things that bring us joy for even a mere second in our lives are a mercy and a gift from God. Even when they are taken away. People, wealth, and possessions come and go because they were never really ours to begin with.

“...*Inna Lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un*” (Surah Baqara 2: 156)  
 “Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him shall we return”

Have trust, patience, and faith. Just as everything in this life is temporary, so are our struggles and challenges. Leave it up to Al-Alim, the One who knows best. “That is the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Exalted in Might, the Merciful” (As-Sajdah 32:67). No pain, no tear, ever goes unnoticed. Know that He is with you every step of the way. Realize that whatever situation you might be in, there are others who have it far worse than you. Call upon As-Salam to grant you peace and contentment with what you have. And as difficult as it might get to think otherwise, know that Allah (SWT) puts people in your life for a reason and removes them from your life for a better reason.





-**(LEFT) Ahmed Aleem,**  
*“Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:  
“If a Muslim plants a tree or sows  
seed, and then a bird, or a person or  
an animal eats from it, it is regarded  
as a charitable gift for him.”*  
(Bukhari)

-**(RIGHT) Khadija Sufyan Barkat,**  
*“Allah has created every [living] crea-  
ture from water. And of them are those  
that move on their bellies, and of them  
are those that walk on two legs, and of  
them are those that walk on four. Allah  
creates what He wills. Indeed, Allah is  
over all things competent.”*  
(Surah Nur 24: 45)



-**(LEFT) Sunset at Lake  
Harmony, Pennsylvania  
Shaziya Barkat,**  
*“By the night as it envelops”*  
(Surah Lail 92:1)

# THIS IS HIS JIHAD

Abdullah Motiwala

*Guest Writer*

Again he made the same mistakes with a smile  
 Forgot about the apology call, and to the devil redialed

His story began again,

The young man grieved about his beloved innocence  
 As his innocence left him in the dark, by himself  
 At the ripe age of 13, where momma was there to clean, momma was there to feed, momma  
 was there to help, momma stood him on his own feet, yes, momma corrected him to suc-  
 ceed

he grieved because, innocence left him an orphan  
 An orphan in evils presence,  
 In a world where evil is practiced, preached and heard, where good is bleeped out, the  
 truth is blurred, In a world where the value of shame and modesty has been stripped to two  
 piece clothes

Honestly  
 How was this young boy, how was he to be able to survive this ignorant reality, this corrupt-  
 ed society, he became a product of this atrocity

No one forced him to develop into who he became, except his company who whispered  
 their tales

He sits in his golden age, yet chooses to continue the same 16 year old hormonal phase  
 He is to be blamed

His wounds swollen after he discussed his story

No balm can treat his pores  
 Well aware of his locker, and his two guardians writing his story, of where all his sins he's  
 stored  
 Of both the key he has and the one he let the devil hold

He was reminded

God signaled to you my friend  
 many times, many times  
 but you chose to ignore

Frequently soul searching to find peace for his soul,  
 Like a homeless man in search for shelter when the season turns cold  
 It's a struggle everyday, this is his jihad, he said, not what we know, not holy war.

# Dear Mufti...

## ...with Mufti Abrar Mirza

**DEAR MUFTI:** I was wondering if we are allowed to complete our missed Ramadan fasts and our Shawwal fasts at the same time. In other words, are we allowed to “double-dip” the fast by making the intention to do both the Ramadan and Shawwal fasts?

*-Hungry Muslim*

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has stated, “Whoever fasts Ramadan and then follows it with fasts of Shawwal, it is as if he has fasted the entire year” (Abu Dawud).

Keeping in mind that Allah Ta’ala has multiplied each good deed at least tenfold (Quran 6:160), the thirty day of Ramadan together with an additional six days of Shawwal are multiplied by ten, which is equivalent to the reward of 360 days of fasting, i.e. roughly one full year. Hence, the Shawwal fasts are meant to be in addition to the Ramadan fasts and should be fasted separately.

However, there are several other sunnahs in fasting. For example, it is sunnah to fast on Mon-



day and Thursday, on the Ayyam al-Bid (lit. days of white, i.e. 13th, 14th, and 15th of the Islamic month), and on any three days of the month. If a person makes the intention of fasting on the Ayyam al-Bid along with the intention of the sunnah of fasting three days of the month, such a “double-dip” would be completely valid. Moreover, if any of those three days fell on a Monday or Thursday, the person may also make the additional intention of the sunnah of fasting on a Monday/Thursday. InshaAllah, the person will get the reward for all three intentions, each multiplied tenfold. And Allah knows best.

**DEAR MUFTI:** As a pre-medical student, I often find myself burdened with so much that it becomes common for me to feel depressed. What are some ways that Islam provides for me to overcome this?

*-Stressed-out Student*

It is understandable for a person to be under stress at times. However, instead of feeling depressed about the workload, a person should take a few practical steps.



First, time management is essential. Islam stresses the importance of time and one needs to analyze how to reduce distractions from their responsibilities, such as TV, YouTube, social media, etc.

Second, always pray a two rak’ah nafil prayer in the morning and then ask Allah Ta’ala to put barakah in one’s time. Based off personal experience, a person will find a significant difference in what is accomplished on days when these two rak’ahs are prayed vs. not.

Third, recite the du’as taught by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) that reduce stress in one’s life, such as



Allahumma la sahla illa ma ja’altahu sahla, wa anta taj’alu al-hazana sahlana iza shi’ta (O Allah, there is no ease except that which You make easy, and You make sadness easy if You so desire).

Fourth, read the biographies of the pious predecessors to get motivation from how they were able to accomplish so much in a limited amount of time. Sitting with one’s local scholars and looking at their lives should also be a source of inspiration in tackling large amounts of workload.



Finally, despite all other responsibilities, a person should always make time for the remembrance of Allah Ta’ala, as it is through the dhikr of Allah Ta’ala that hearts find peace (Quran 13:28). May Allah Ta’ala put barakah in our times.

Would you like to have your questions answered by Mufti Hussain or Mufti Abrar, and featured in future issues inshaAllah? Brothers, please contact Ahmed Aleem (maleem920@gmail.com). Sisters, please contact Shaziya Barkat (shaziyaabarkat@gmail.com.) We limit questions to 3-4 per issue, so space is limited! Any questions, please do not hold back and benefit from this blessed opportunity.

# Ensuring a Strong Bond: Seeking Forgiveness

Mawlana Khalid Abdul Sattar

*ilmgate.org*

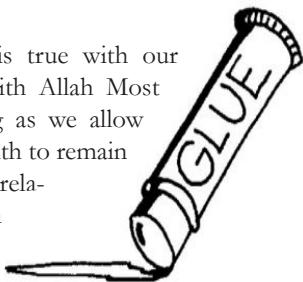
One of the first steps on the path to Allah Most High is to ensure that we seek forgiveness from those wrong actions we have committed in the past. Each time we sin, disobeying Allah or leaving one of his commandments, we add a layer of spiritual



filth onto our hearts. The result of this is that when we try to perform dhikr and other acts of worship, we cannot fully experience them, because that filth becomes a block between the reality of that act, and its receptor in the body, which is the heart. This is why despite performing our daily adhkar, despite reciting the Quran, sitting in muraqabah, sending salawat, we are not able to fully reap the benefits of these actions.

If you look at the instructions on a pack of glue, it will always mention to ensure that both surfaces which you want to join together are clean, to ensure a secure bond. The reason is because if there is any dirt or foreign substance between the two, the bond cannot take hold and remains weak.

The same is true with our relationship with Allah Most High. As long as we allow that layer of filth to remain upon us, our relationship with Him can never take hold and be maintained, and we will remain in the same pathetic state. Everyday saying that tomorrow will be different, tomorrow will be better,



only to wake up to the same reality day-in and day-out.

## Reminder Concerning Tawbah

[...] Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmad (may Allah preserve his legacy) gave a very beautiful, and practical reminder on turning in repentance to Allah Most High. I wanted to share a few of the points he made [...]:

### 1. Detach Yourself from Bad Company

Everyone is responsible for their own actions, but the company we keep strongly influences the decisions we make and can often be the impetus leading us to sin. Imam Ghazali mentions that a bad companion is worse than the bite of a snake because the poison of a snake only kills the body, whereas the poison of a bad companion kills one's iman.



He further explains that a bad companion is actually worse than Shaytan because although Shaytan plants the idea of sin in our hearts, he does not compel us to act. It is our doing which takes that idea and manifests it into sin. But when a friend calls us toward sin, he not only plants the idea in our mind, but he grabs our hand and drags us toward the sin.

### 2. Make Tawbah from Two Sides

As soon as we disobey Allah Most High, we should ideally turn to Him in sincere repentance. However, many times we may not realize the mistake right away, or be so caught up in it, that we don't care. So once we recognize the disobedience, we need to make tawbah from two sides:

- Tawbah from the disobedience, and
- Tawbah from the delay in making tawbah.

### 3. Fulfilling Rights is Part of Tawbah

Part of tawbah is having remorse and asking for forgiveness, but we must also ensure that the rights due upon us are fulfilled. Some of these are the rights of Allah; for example, making up missed



prayers and fasts, paying our overdue zakah, etc. Others are the rights of the servants of Allah; for example, compensating for any financial loss (i.e. in the case of theft), apologizing to someone if we backbit or spoke inappropriately to them, etc.

### 4. A Common Deterrent to Tawbah

We all have made our fair share of mistakes (may Allah forgive us), but sometimes Shaytan tricks us into thinking, "I have so many sins, how can they all be forgiven? There is no point in making tawbah!" The key is not to look at the sins, however numerous and horrific they may be, but rather to look at the One forgiving the sins; how perfect and merciful is He!

### 5. A Common Complaint After Tawbah

"I made tawbah, but bad memories of the sin linger." If the tawbah was sincere, the memories will dissipate over time. Focus on creating good memories in the meantime (i.e. acts of obedience), and on increasing your daily dhikr (so that the remembrance of Allah can replace the whisperings of Shaytan). These were just a few of the reminders; may Allah Most High forgive my shortcomings in presenting the words of our beloved Shaykh.

# 9 Questions About Syria You Were Too Embarrassed to Ask

Max Fisher

*The Washington Post*

What's happening in Syria is really important, but it can also be confusing and difficult to follow even for those of us glued. Here, then, are the most basic answers to your most basic questions. This is not an exhaustive or definitive account of that entire story, just some background, written so that anyone can understand it.

## 1. What is Syria?

Syria is a country in the Middle East, along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It's about the same size as Washington state with a population a little over three times as large – 22 million. Syria is very diverse, ethnically and religiously, but most Syrians are ethnic Arab and follow the Sunni branch of Islam. Civilization in Syria goes back thousands of years, but the country as it exists today is very young. Its borders were drawn by European colonial powers in the 1920s.

Syria is in the middle of an extremely violent civil war. Fighting between government forces and rebels has killed more 100,000 and created two million refugees, half of them children.

## 2. Why are people in Syria killing each other?

The killing started in April 2011, when peaceful protests inspired by earlier revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia rose up to challenge the dictatorship running the country. The government responded -- there is no getting around this -- like monsters. First, security forces quietly killed

activists. Then they started kidnapping, raping, torturing and killing activists and their family members, including a lot of children, dumping their mutilated bodies by the sides of roads. Then troops began simply opening fire on protests. Even-



tually, civilians started shooting back. Fighting escalated from there until it was a civil war. Armed civilians organized into rebel groups. The army deployed across the country, shelling and bombing whole neighborhoods and towns, trying to terrorize people into submission. They've also allegedly used chemical weapons, which is a big deal for reasons I'll address below. Volunteers from other countries joined the rebels, either because they wanted freedom and democracy for Syria or, more likely, because they are jihadists who hate Syria's secular government. The rebels were gaining ground for a while and now it looks like Assad is coming back. There is no end in sight.

## 3. How did it all go so wrong in Syria? Please give me the short version.

There are two general theories. Both start with the idea that Syria has been a powder keg waiting to explode for decades and that it was set off, maybe inevitably, by the 2011 protests and especially by the government's overly harsh crackdown.

The Syrian government really overreacted when peaceful protests started in mid-2011, slaughtering civilians unapologetically, which was a big part of how things escalated as quickly as they did. Assad learned this from his father. In 1982, Assad's father and then-dictator Hafez al-Assad responded to a Muslim Brotherhood-led uprising in the city of Hama by leveling entire neighborhoods.

He killed thousands of civilians, many of whom had nothing to do with the uprising. But it worked, and it looks like the younger Assad tried to reproduce it. His failure made the descent into chaos much worse.

Okay, now the theories for why Syria spiraled so wildly. The first is what you might call "sectarian re-balancing" or "the Fareed Zakaria case" for why Syria is imploding (he didn't invent this argument but is a major proponent). Syria has artificial borders that were created by European colonial powers, forcing together an amalgam of diverse religious

CONTINUED on Page 14

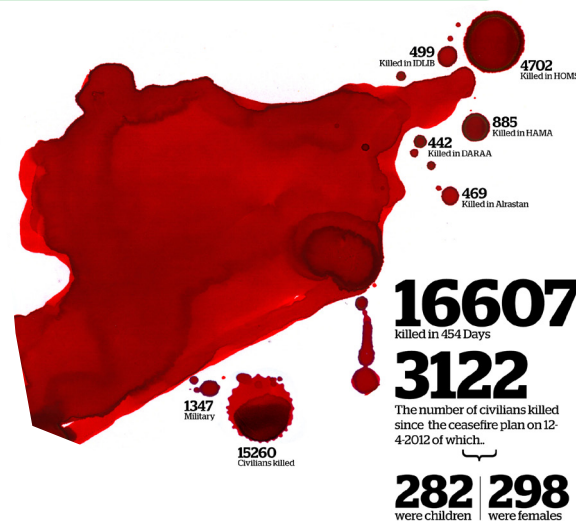
and ethnic groups. Those powers also tended to promote a minority and rule through it, worsening preexisting sectarian tensions.

Zakaria's argument is that what we're seeing in Syria is in some ways the inevitable re-balancing of power along ethnic and religious lines. He compares it to the sectarian bloodbath in Iraq after the United States toppled Saddam Hussein, after which a long-oppressed majority retook power from, and violently punished, the former minority rulers. Most Syrians are Sunni Arabs, but the country is run by members of a minority sect known as Alawites (they're ethnic Arab but follow a smaller branch of Islam). The Alawite government rules through a repressive dictatorship and gives Alawites special privileges, which makes some Sunnis and other groups hate Alawites in general, which in turn makes Alawites fear that they'll be slaughtered en masse if Assad loses the war. (There are other minorities as well, such as ethnic Kurds and Christian Arabs; too much to cover in one explainer.) Also, lots of Syrian communities are already organized into ethnic or religious enclaves, which means that community militias are also sectarian militias. That would explain why so much of the killing in Syria has developed along sectarian lines. It would also suggest that there's not much anyone can do to end the killing because, in Zakaria's view, this is a painful but unstoppable process of re-balancing power.

The second big theory is a bit simpler: that the Assad regime was not a sustainable enterprise and it's clawing desperately on its way down. Most countries have some kind of self-sustaining political order, and it looked for a long time like Syria was held together by a cruel and repressive but basically stable dictatorship. But maybe it wasn't stable; maybe it was built on quicksand. Bashar al-Assad's father Hafez seized power in a coup in 1970 after two decades of extreme political instability. His government was a product of Cold War meddling and a kind of Arab political identity crisis that was sweeping the region. But he picked the losing sides of both: the Soviet Union was his patron, and he followed a hard-line anti-Western nationalist ideology that's now mostly defunct. The Cold War is long over, and most of the region long ago made peace

with Israel and the United States; the Assad regime's once-solid ideological and geopolitical identity is hopelessly outdated. But Bashar al-Assad, who took power in 2000 when his father died, never bothered to update it. So when things started going belly-up two years ago, he didn't have much to fall back on except for his ability to kill people.

## 4. I hear a lot about how Russia still loves Syria, though. And Iran, too. What's their deal?



Yeah, Russia is Syria's most important ally. Moscow blocks the United Nations Security Council from passing anything that might hurt the Assad regime, which is why the United States has to go around the United Nations if it wants to do anything. Russia sends lots of weapons to Syria that make it easier for Assad to keep killing civilians and will make it much harder if the outside world ever wants to intervene.

The four big reasons that Russia wants to protect Assad, the importance of which vary depending on whom you ask, are: (1) Russia has a naval installation in Syria, which is strategically important and Russia's last foreign military base outside the former Soviet Union; (2) Russia still has a bit of a Cold War mentality, as well as a touch of national inse-

curity, which makes it care very much about maintaining one of its last military alliances; (3) Russia also hates the idea of "international intervention" against countries like Syria because it sees this as Cold War-style Western imperialism and ultimately a threat to Russia; (4) Syria buys a lot of Russian military exports, and Russia needs the money.

As for Iran, it is already feeling isolated and insecure; it worries that if Assad falls it will lose a major ally and be cut off from its militant proxies, leaving it very vulnerable. So far, it looks like Iran is actually coming out ahead: Assad is even more reliant on Tehran than he was before the war started.

## 5. Why hasn't the United States fixed this yet?

The military options are all bad. Shipping arms to rebels, even if it helps them topple Assad, would worsen rebel in-fighting, probably leading to lots of chaos and possibly a second civil war (the United States made this mistake during Afghanistan's early 1990s civil war, which helped the Taliban take power in 1996). Taking out Assad somehow would probably do the same, opening up a dangerous power vacuum. Launching airstrikes or a "no-fly zone" could suck us in, possibly for

years, and probably wouldn't make much difference on the ground. An Iraq-style ground invasion would, in the very best outcome, accelerate the killing, cost a lot of U.S. lives, wildly exacerbate anti-Americanism in a boon to jihadists and nationalist dictators alike, and would require the United States to impose order for years across a country full of people trying to kill each other. Nope.

The one political option, which the Obama administration has been pushing for, would be for the Assad regime and the rebels to strike a peace deal. But there's no indication that either side is interested in that, or that there's even a viable unified rebel movement with which to negotiate.

## 6. So why would Obama bother with strikes that no one expects to actually solve anything?

Okay, you're asking here about the Obama administration's not-so-subtle signals that it wants to launch some cruise missiles at Syria, which would be punishment for what it says is Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians.

It's true that basically no one believes that this will turn the tide of the Syrian war. But this is important: it's not supposed to. The strikes wouldn't be meant to shape the course of the war or to topple Assad, which Obama thinks would just make things worse anyway. They would be meant to punish Assad for (allegedly) using chemical weapons and to deter him, or any future military leader in any future war, from using them again.



## 7. Hi, there was too much text so I skipped to the bottom to find the big take-away. What's going to happen?

Short-term maybe the United States and some allies will launch some limited, brief strikes against Syria and maybe they won't. Either way, these things seem pretty certain in the long-term:

- The killing will continue, probably for years. There's no one to sign a peace treaty on the rebel side, even if the regime side were interested, and there's no foreseeable victory for either. Refugees will continue fleeing into neighboring countries, causing instability and an entire other humanitarian crisis as conditions in the camps worsen.

- Syria as we know it, an ancient place with a rich and celebrated culture and history, will be a broken, failed society, probably for a generation or more. It's very hard to see how you rebuild a functioning state after this. Maybe worse, it's hard to see how you get back to a working social contract where everyone agrees to get along.

- Russia will continue to block international action, the window for which has maybe closed anyway. The United States might try to pressure, cajole or even horse-trade Moscow into changing its mind, but there's not much we can offer them that they care about as much as Syria.

- At some point the conflict will cool, either from a partial victory or from exhaustion. The world could maybe send in some peacekeepers or even broker a fragile peace between the various ethnic, religious and political factions. Probably the best model is Lebanon, which fought a brutal civil war that lasted 15 years from 1975 to 1990 and has been slowly, slowly recovering ever since.



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# Peace: Give Faith a Chance, Maybe?

Hiba Zakai

Guest Writer

When asked the question, “Where are you from?” I would always find myself changing the topic or avoiding this simple, yet difficult, question completely. However, just a few years back after moving to the Midwest, I realized it is perfectly fine not to have one particular place of belonging. At the end of the day, home is where I am at peace. Can one achieve peace anywhere? Sure, the power is in one’s mindset. For me, it is a work in progress, but essentially I strive to first be at peace internally and then externally. Finding the ability to accept what is humanly out of your control and permitting a higher power or the universe to take its course is the first step to help one achieve internal peace. A person may go on long nature walks, meditate, jam out to music, or pray. I do all the above, but it is praying that allows me to let go completely – a true blessing. I identify as a Middle-Eastern born Muslim with a South Asian background living in America.

The events of September 11, 2001, highlighted how the safety of U.S. citizens is interconnected with the citizens of other countries. I recall sitting down for dinner with my family in Al-Jubaïl, Saudi Arabia when we got a call to listen to the devastating news. The next day I vaguely remember an uncomfortable environment in Rahima Academy, one of the International American School branches. The attendees were children of expatriates from both Islamic and non-Islamic states, creating a mixture of Arab, South Asian, American, South African, Filipino, and European students and teachers. Subconsciously, that was the first time I recognized the importance of understanding the challenges faced with globalization in foreign affairs. In my journalism class, I came across a quote from Kofi Anan, the General Secretary of the United Nations at the time,

“Clearly, we need to use education to advance



tolerance and understanding...[which] is essential to world peace -- ... between faiths, ... nations, ... [and] cultures. Today, we know that just as no nation is immune to conflict or suffering, no nation can defend itself alone. We need each other -- as friends, as allies, as partners -- in a struggle for common values and common needs.”

Just as religion is rooted in the world of belief, practices, and character, culture is rooted in the world of expression, language, and symbol. The Director of the Nawawi Institute, Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, speaks of culture as the thread that “weaves together the fabric of everything we value and need to know—beliefs, morality, expectations, skills, and knowledge—giving them functional expression by integrating them into effectual customary patterns.” In the United States, the current Muslim generation consists of three categories: One, American born with immigrant parents; Second, converts (belonging to another or no religion prior); and third, journeyed to the United States in pursuit of higher education or the American Dream. Just as religion is rooted in the world of belief, practices, and character, culture is rooted in the world of expression, language, and symbol.

The 21st century Muslim youth in America

have become the movers and the shakers of their communities by redefining cultural identities around homes, mosques, Islamic schools, and on college campuses. The upcoming generation has produced a number of notable Muslim American writers, poets, musicians, artists, and even stand-up comedians. The increase in cross-cultural and interracial marriages show that many identify foremost with their religious identity than their national identity. Compared to their parents, this new generation may be at a higher level of cultural maturity by cultivating a deeper understanding of their religion, pride in their cultural background, and the responsibility of social change that coincides with their American identity.

Religion is a catalyst for cultural success. Inner consistency and stability are two rare, yet strong threads needed to complete weaving the colorful fabric of true religiosity and deep spirituality, which can only be achieved within a sound cultural core. A key element of culture is the ability to create a sense of community and its capacity to shine an identity, produce social unification, and inspire its members to acquire the knowl-

See RELIGION page 18

*“A person may go on long nature walks, mediate, jam out to music, or pray. I do all the above, but it is praying that allows me to let go completely – a true blessing.”*

# RELIGION: Quest for Meaning and Purpose

CONTINUED from page 17



edge and skills to empower them to achieve personal and societal goals for growth. Despite the incredible individual talent and the increasing numbers, community and self-determination are two ingredients required for the balance of achieving a successful culture.

Religion has the power to affect the social and experiential reality. When we fail to allow religion to voice out these realities, it becomes an irrelevant conceptuality. It is the foundation of any basic relationship – to reach out to one another with *basirah* “insight” (in Arabic). Sincerity and deterrence ensure us religion still matters. Sincerity is when you do something with no reason other than to please God. Deterrence can be explained by Dr. Sherman Jackson, King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture at University of Southern California, “The greatest threat to religion in any society is not persecution, but rather apathy born of irrelevance.”

Cultural and knowledge imperative embrace a religious contexture in learning spaces. Islamic studies teach us that Prophet Muhammad (S) led his people out of a state of *jahiliyah* (ignorance) and into the *noor* (light) of Islam with the command to read, “*Iqra!*” given to him during the revelation of the Qur’an, emphasizing the importance of education as the stability of religion and culture. In Islamic history, we learn that the foundational moment from which this Ummah (Muslim community) was born was a moment grounded on a “knowledge imperative.” Prophet Muhammad (S) sought the assistance of Allah (God) during his retreat into the Cave of Hira. He sought not only clarity but for solutions to problems he encountered in his social and cultural surroundings. The Divine’s response was the command to seek knowledge.

In the realm of higher education the In-

clusive Excellence movement has gained momentum in incorporating the diversified conversations into how we compose campus wide committees. Inclusive Excellence means integrating experiences with diversity as one criterion that is used in selecting every faculty and administrator, regardless of what they teach or where they lead on campus as diversity forms a part of our core values. While issues of equity remain essential; powered by the courts, the changing demographics, and the emergence of a global economy, another rationale has emerged: the growing understanding that diverse experiences can be beneficial to us all. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, and gender. However, to this date an employer is not required to make any accommodations for religious reasons until asked. The question we need to ask is how do the provisions of the civil rights act state religion as a protected class against discrimination, and yet soundlessly endorse approval



through the lack of actions? Actions speak louder than words any day.

A learning community that has embodied the quality of Inclusive Excellence in a faith based context is Ta’leef Collective, an organization that tailors its model to provide alternative social and sacred spaces, culturally relevant programming and positive companionship for young Muslims to practice Islam within their social norms. A collection of teachers, volunteers, and peers who understand firsthand the challenge of living as Muslims in the West strive to provide the necessary means to facilitate that perceived reality. Whether we approve or not, there is tension among ethnic minority religious groups, especially when confronted with American separation of religion from culture. Many deny that faith is part of public life and expression.

The realization of a world society for the 21st century means that local people deal with people from all over the world, including places where Christianity is the minority belief system. International corporations around the world have always needed multilingual skills in their employees, but they are also seeing the need for further education. They are training their employees in cultural issues as well, emphasizing the different belief systems within the global diversity. Hence, the need to interact with faith-based diversity is becoming both global and local. Why is exposure to religious diversity so powerful? For one thing, religion and spirituality touch on the core beliefs of humanity. Religion and spirituality embody the personal quest for meaning and purpose; they are aspects of our lives that matter deeply to us. Faith is a gateway to our inner lives, unveiling what truly matters at the end of the day.



# The Prophets of Islam

(Peach Be Upon Them)



## Word Bank

ADAM	MUSA	ILYAS	YUNUS	MUHAMMAD
IDRIS	YAQUB	ISMAEL	IBRAHIM	SULEIMAN
ISHAQ	DAWUD	NUH	ISA	YUSUF

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