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When the **Moon** split

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The Moon Cleft Asunder
By: Dr. Zaghoul El-Naggar

Anas ibn Malik (A.S.) narrated that the people of Makkah asked the Prophet (PBUH) to show them a miracle , so he showed them the splitting of the moon , into two distinct parts , that they even saw the mountain of Hira' between them.

Explanation of the Hadith

This incident was narrated by a number of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), among them were: 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullah ibn Abbas and others. The Indian and Chinese calendars have recorded the incident of the splitting of the moon.

A few years ago while I was giving a lecture at the Faculty of Medicine at Cardiff University, in Wales, a Muslim asked me a question about the verses at the beginning of Surat al-Qamar (the moon), about the splitting of the moon, and whether it is considered as one of the scientific signs which are mentioned in the Qur'an and whether there is any scientific evidence discovered to explain this incident.

My answer was that this incident is considered one of the most tangible miracles, which took place to support the Prophet (PBUH) when he was challenged by the polytheists and disbelievers of Quraish, showing them this miracle to prove that he is a Messenger of Allah. Anyway, miracles take place as unusual incidents that break all regular laws of nature. Therefore, conventional science is unable to explain how miracles take place, and if they were not mentioned in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), we would not have been obliged to believe in them. Therefore, we believe that the incident of the splitting of the moon took place exactly as the words of Allah Glorified be Who says:

(The Hour has drawn near , and the moon has been cleft asunder . And if they see a sign, they turn away, and say: (This is continuous magic). They belied (this Qur'an), and followed their own lusts. And every matter will be settled [according to the kind of deeds (for the doer of good deeds, his deeds will take him to Paradise, and similarly evil deeds will take their doers to Hell)]. And indeed there has come to them news (in this Qur'an) wherein there is (enough warning) to check (them from evil), Perfect wisdom (this Qur'an), but (the preaching of) warners benefit them not.) (Surat Al-Qamar (The Moon): 1-5)

When I finished my speech, a British man from the audience named Dawud Musa Pidcock, leader of the British Muslim Party, asked to add something to my answer. He said: "It is these verses, at the beginning of surat al-Qamar that made me embrace Islam in the late seventies." This occurred while he was doing extensive research in comparative religion, and one of the Muslims gave him a copy of translation of the meanings of the Qur'an. When he opened this copy for the first time, he came across Surat al-Qamar, and he read the verses at the beginning of the surah, and could not believe that the moon had split into two distinct parts and they were rejoined, so he closed the copy of the translation and kept it aside.

In 1978 Mr. Pidcock was destined by Allah's Will to watch a program about space journeys, in which the well-known British announcer James Burke, received three of the American space scientists. During the debate, the announcer kept criticizing the immoderate spending by NASA (millions of Dollars) on space projects, while there are millions of people on earth suffering from starvation, diseases and ignorance. The answer of the space experts came to assert that it was these journeys that made it feasible to develop important technology applied in medical diagnosis and treatment, industry, agriculture, and many other fields. During this debate, they referred to the first time that a human being landed on the surface of the moon, and how this trip cost more than \$100 million dollars. The scientists went on to say that this journey proved a scientific fact, that if they had spent several times as much as they did to convince people with it, no body would have believed them. This fact was that the moon had been split a long time ago and rejoined, and there is a lot of concrete evidence on the surface of the moon to prove this.

Mr. Pidcock went on to say : " When I heard this , I jumped off my chair , and said this is a miracle which took place fourteen hundred years ago to support Muhammad , and the Qur'an

narrates it in such a detailed way . After this long period and during the age of science and technology, Allah employs people (non-Muslims) who spent all this money for nothing but to prove that this miracle had actually happened. Then, I said to myself, this must be the true religion, and I went back to the translation of the meanings of the Qur'an, reading it eagerly. It was these verses at the opening of surat al-Qamar that lie behind my reversion to Islam.”

This happens at a time when some Muslims claim that the splitting of the moon has not yet taken place, and that it is one of the signs of the Hereafter as the opening of the surah says: (The Hour has drawn near.) They are oblivious to the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) said in a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim , on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'd that Sahl said : "I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say :

“I and the Last Hour are (close to each other) like this (and he pointed by joining his forefinger, (one) next to the thumb and the middle finger (together).”

Those who deny the incident of the splitting of the moon, use incorrect evidence to support their opinion as they use the verse in surat al-Isra:

(And nothing stops Us from sending the evidences (proofs , signs) but that the people of old denied them.) (Surat Al-Isrâ' (The Journey by Night): 59)

This verse is not used in the right context since many perceptible signs and miracles took place during the noble life of the Prophet (PBUH).

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon the seal of Prophets (PBUH) , for whom Allah made the moon split into two parts , twice , as an honor for him and to raise his rank and support his message (among his people) , and left for us a concrete evidence to prove that this splitting did actually take place .

Miracles of the Prophet
By Harun Yahya

The splitting of the moon (wa inshaqqa al-qamar) consists of the words "splitting" and "moon." "Splitting" comes from the basic Arabic root meaning "to divide, gum, the appearance of a plant after the soil has been ploughed." In this sense, it means "to be divided, to be cut into pieces, to be separated." The Encyclopaedia of Seerah contains a compilation of all of the related hadiths. In summary, they say:

It was an evening on the 14th day of the lunar month, five years before the hijra (immigration) to Madinah. At that time, the new-born moon was divided in two. One part went toward a hill opposite; the second part in the other direction. It was only a second. Then the two parts of the moon joined up again. At that time, the Prophet (saas) was in Mina. He addressed those who were there, saying: "Look and witness!" The unbelievers suggested that he had bewitched them, for which reason their eyes had not seen accurately. Others present there said: "Muhammad (saas) could have bewitched us, but not those not here. Wait a little, and let's ask those who come this way if they saw such an occurrence." Those coming from outside agreed that they had witnessed this. (Afzalur Rahman, Encyclopaedia of Seerah, 164.)

This story is included in the works of such great hadith scholars as Imam al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawud, al-Hakim, al-Bayhaqi, and Abu Nu`aym.²⁵ Some of these hadiths are as follows:

Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (said): We were with the Messenger of Allah at Mina when the moon was split in two. One part was behind the mountain and the other one was on this side of the mountain. He said to us: "Bear witness to this." (*Muslims*)

Abdullah ibn Mas`ud reported that the moon was split in two parts during the Messenger of Allah's lifetime. The mountain covered one of its parts and one part of it was above the mountain, and he said: "Bear witness to this." (*Muslims*)

During the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah, the moon was split in two; one part remained over the mountain, and the other part went beyond the mountain. On that, he said: "Witness this miracle." (*Albukhari*)

The hadiths state that this miracle occurred in Mecca. They also relate that the Meccans wanted him to perform this miracle:

The people of Mecca asked the Messenger of Allah to show them signs (miracles), and he showed them the splitting of the moon twice. (*Muslims*)

According to the story, the Prophet Muhammad (saas) did as they asked, but they continued to deny the truth of his message and embrace Islam:

If they see a Sign they turn away, saying: "There is no end to this witchcraft!" They have denied the truth and followed their whims and desires. But everything has its time. (Surat al-Qamar: 2-3)

The unbelievers could say nothing in the face of such a great miracle and accused our Prophet (saas) of bewitching them. After they saw the moon split with their own eyes, they should have realized that he was a true prophet. But because of their arrogance, desires, and passions, they did not accept the Qur'an. This attitude is common among all unbelievers. No matter what miracle they witness, they say:

Our eyesight is befuddled! Or, rather, we have been put under a spell! (Surat al-Hijr: 15)

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi mentions the splitting of the moon in his *The Letters*. He relates that many Companions witnessed it and that the unbelievers were rendered totally powerless in the face of this event:

Among his greatest miracles, a certain and mutawatir one, is the splitting of the moon. This miracle was related through various channels, to the degree of tawatur and by the foremost Companions, among them Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Ali, Anas, and Hudhayfa (ra). Moreover, the Qur'an announced this supreme miracle to the whole world: "The Hour has drawn near and the moon has split." (Surat al-Qamar: 1).

Even the stubborn unbelievers could not deny this verse; all they could say was: "It is magic!" Thus, even the unbelievers were certain that it had occurred.

Bediuzzaman says that one of reasons behind our Prophet's (saas) miracles was to expose the difference between a tyrant like Abu Jahl and a good man like Abu Bakr. In his *The Letters*, he says:

Miracles take place in order to prove the claim of prophethood and to convince deniers, but not to force them to believe. This miracle was needed to convince those who had already heard of the prophethood of Muhammad. To let it be seen from other parts of the world, or to demonstrate it in an undeniably obvious way, therefore, would have been contrary both to the wisdom of the All-Wise Creator and to the purpose of humanity's function in the universe, which is to open the way for the mind without disabling the free will. If the All-Wise Creator had, in accordance with the whims of materialist philosophers, left the moon in the same condition for a few hours to show it to the entire world, and if this fact had thereby been recorded by all historians, it would have been treated among other astronomical incidents, without being restricted to the messengership of Muhammad and without being considered a proof of his prophethood. Or, it would have been such an obvious miracle that it would have forced minds to believe and deprived them of free will. As a consequence, coal and diamonds (or Abu Jahl and Abu Bakr) would have been the same and the purpose of humanity's function in the universe would have been lost...

Like all other bodies and beings in the universe, the moon lies in the Lord's power; it can be seen if He wills and how He wills it to be seen. As the Qur'an says, whatever Allah commands to happen happens:

His command when He desires a thing is just to say to it, "Be!" and it is. (Surah Ya Sin: 82)

All this shows that Allah has placed His Messenger, Muhammad (saas), above all other human beings; revealed His last holy book to him, and, in His mercy, empowered him to perform miracles to soften people's hearts as a way of bringing them to faith. Some people have embraced Islam to save their lives in the next world; others have lost their eternal life by persisting in their rebellion. The words that Allah spoke to our Prophet (saas) have always turned out to be true.

A Call to the Real Salvation

By Soliman Al-Buthi

This is an invitation to observe, to ponder and to be with us, aware and certain that it is our duty and moral obligation to convey the message of our Creator.

In the search for truth, it is indispensable that we take some time and effort to know the basis of our faith, and as true believers, we must follow the purest essence of our belief as exemplified by the messengers of God.

Who else can give us the guidance but those whom God chose and entrusted with the mission of proclaiming glad tidings to the believers and warnings to those who deviate from the way of our Creator and refuse to believe.

Religion for some may simply be a field of academics, to others it's a medium solely for spiritual enrichment, and to a lot more various aspects or views people may find fitting on their level of desires or caprices.

But for us, our religion is a complete way of life as shown by all the prophets of God (Peace and blessing be upon them all) and as epitomized by the last Prophet (Peace and blessing be upon him) in order to attain salvation.

There is no doubt that this temporary life is only a probationary period, a transitory phase to the next and final one. As such, it should offer everyone the necessary requirements instrumental in paving the way for our last destination, where belief in the lone Creator and obedience to His command (doing what is right and forbidding what is wrong) will be the only acceptable means to merit salvation.

Thus, knowing the true teachings of God is tantamount to knowing life! That's how important it is!

With due respect and love to Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) as one of God's mightiest prophets who was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, we cannot discount the teachings he brought to establish the way, the truth and the life.

We regard and accept him as a real messenger of God whose ways and belief inevitably coincide with ours as illustrated by the last Prophet including all the Prophets before him (Peace and blessing be upon them all).

Yes, Prophet Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) was not a Christian for he did not introduce Christianity to the world, as evidenced by what he said in Matthew 5:17 *"Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the prophets. I have come not to destroy, but to fulfill."* Instead, he confirmed the teachings preceding him, which was the Law set by Prophet Moses (Peace and blessing be upon him). A guidance that is sanctioned by and is also analogous with that of Islam, having been anchored upon monotheism, its inherent bedrock which happens to be every other prophet's battle cry and message.

Moreover, Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) further uttered words which prove that his mission was not yet complete and that another Prophet was to come after him to finalize the message, the guidance or the revelation itself, when he prophesied in John 16:7-14.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you, and when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to my father and you see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of the world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak of his own authority; but

whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify me. He will take what is of mine and declare it to you."

The concluder of this message was neither The Holy Spirit nor Paul himself, as some Christians believe or were made to believe. He was Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him), the only true Prophet who succeeded Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him).

Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him) was the sole Prophet who brought with him a complete, comprehensive and final revelation from the Creator.

This divine manifestation has been preserved as it was revealed to him originally, challenging the whole world to come up with even just one chapter like it. Such is the provocation and appeal, which frustrated those who were at the other end of the moral and spiritual spectrum during the Prophet's time including the rest of their kind today. As God said in Chapter 2:2-5 of the Holy Qur'an (which is translated as follows):

"This is the Book: In it is guidance sure, without doubt, To those who fear Allah; Who believe in the Unseen, Are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We Have provided for them; And who believe in the Revelation Sent thee, And sent before thy time, And (in their hearts) Have the assurance of the Hereafter, They are on (true guidance). From their Lord and it is these who will prosper."

It is the last testament of faith addressed to the whole world embodying complete light and guidance as well as the conviction of sin, a revelation that embodies Islam.

Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) thru Matthew, chapter 7 verse 15 of the Bible, cautioned people regarding the need to discern the false prophets from the genuine ones via a specific criterion, the same standard of measure that we ask you to gauge prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him) and his teachings against with:

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly, they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."

Give yourself a chance to know the true Religion of God including all His Prophets and discover the difference, for "Only the truth shall set you free". You've got nothing to lose, but once you understand and accept, you've got your whole life to gain!

Biblical Excerpts As Proofs Of Islam's Conformity With The Religion Of Jesus

Here are some points to consider regarding Jesus, Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon them) and the Muslims, which are indeed one in the essence of Islam. The following verses extracted from today's Bibles collectively support our claim as mentioned above.

We pray that such accounts will appeal to your senses as well as reconcile you with the truth, thus enlightening you in the process to the remaining facts still existent in the present versions of the Bible.

They are as follows:

I. BELIEF IN THE ONENESS OF GOD (ALLAH):

Jesus was very explicit in his words about the "Unity of God" instead of the "Holy Trinity" which he never said nor preached in his lifetime:

1. Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, *"Away with you Satan! it is written:." you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve"*.

2. Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him. *“The first of all the commandments is: Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one”*.

3. Isaiah 43:10-11 *“Before me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior.”*

4. John 17:3 *“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom you have sent”*.

II. GOOD DEEDS:

A. Carrying out Prayer (Prostration):

The only people in the whole world today who pray like Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him), and all the other prophets are the Muslims:

1. Matthew 26:39 *“He (Jesus) went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed, O my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”*.

2. Psalm 55:17 *“Evening and morning and at noon, I will pray and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice”*.

3. Numbers 20:6 *“So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them”*.

B. FASTING:

Islam obliges Muslims to fast just as Jesus and the prophets did during their tenure in the world:

1. Matthew 4:2 *“And when he (Jesus) had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry”*.

2. Exodus 34: 28 *“And he (Moses) was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water”*.

3. Matthew 6:16 *“Moreover when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, with a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward”*.

C. CHARITY:

Islam obliges Muslims to pay charity, just as Jesus urged his constituents in his time:

1. Matthew 6:3-4 *“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly.”*

D. PILGRIMAGE TO MACA/BACA:

Muslims perform pilgrimage (Hajj) like the prophets before them to the first house of worship (Ka'bah) in Maca, also known as Baca, which was built by Abraham, the father of all the prophets and his son Ishmael.

1. Psalm 84:5-6 *“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, They make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools”.*

E. GREETINGS:

Muslims greet each other by saying: Peace be with you (*As-salam ‘Alaykum*), the same way Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) greeted people during his ministry on earth:

1. Luke 24:36 *“Now as they said these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you”.*

2. John 20:19 *“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you”.*

Conclusion

We abide with God (Allah) when He tells us in His Holy Book (Quran) that if anyone speaks THE TRUTH, let him produce THE EVIDENCE as mentioned in chapter 2:111(which is translated as follows):

"...Say: Produce your proof if ye are truthful."

In the same breadth, we want you to realize that what we have just deliberated are but some of the many practices that the true believers emulate. They are ways and manners which are reflective as well as representative of the genuine teachings of Jesus (Peace and blessing be upon him) and even more so with Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him).

Likewise, the same very practices should serve as sound proofs to help you realize the truthfulness of our claim, that indeed, there is only one way leading to the true salvation, and that is ISLAM.

As Allah says thru chapter 5: Verse 19 of the Holy Quran (which is translated as follows):

“ O People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Now has come to you Our Messenger (Muhammad) making (things) clear unto you, after a break in (the series of) Messengers, lest you say: “There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no Warner”. But now has come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. And Allah is able to do all things.”

He further says in Verse 77 of the same chapter (which is translated as follows): *“Say (O Muhammad): “O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Exceed not the limits in your religion (by believing in something) other than the truth, and do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray in times gone by, and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the Right Path.”*

We in our capacity had presented the preceding facts in order to enlighten you only, and it is up to you to make the next move.

If you really treasure your salvation in the hereafter that much, and desire an eternal life of rewards over an eternal existence of punishment, then the choice must be clear by now. We advice you to act soon enough, before it's too late, for no one ever knows when or where he or she is going to die---death being like a thief that comes in the middle of the night!

As for your guidance to the truth, you should ask directly from the CREATOR--- the One and Only, the Absolute, the Unlimited and the One who begets not, nor is He begotten. Seek it from Him who has no equal or no one comparable with. Pursue it from the Only One who

Knows our intention and what we have in our hearts, with all your humility, sincerity and honesty. Turn your face to Him who is in the heaven, above His throne, ultimately seeking for His help and direction!

As they say: "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened up to you."

We will be looking forward to your Real SALVATION !!!

Dear brother in Humanity,

There is no compulsion for a person to accept the TRUTH, but it is certainly a shame upon the human intellect when a man or woman is not even interested in determining the TRUTH!

Islam teaches that our CREATOR has given human beings the faculty of reason. Therefore it is incumbent upon them to reason things out objectively and systematically for everyone to contemplate, to question and to reflect.

Nobody should press you to make a hasty decision to accept any of the teachings of Islam, for Islam teaches that human beings should be given the freedom to choose. Even when a person is faced with the TRUTH, there is no compulsion upon him to embrace it.

But before you begin to form an opinion about Islam, ask yourself whether your existing knowledge of it is thorough enough. Examine whether that knowledge has been obtained through third party sources who themselves have probably been exposed to only random glimpses of Islamic writings and have yet to reason on Islam objectively and systematically themselves.

Is it fair that one should form an opinion about the taste of a particular dish just by a mere hearsay from others who may not have actually tasted the dish themselves?

Similarly, you should find out for yourself about Islam from reliable sources and not only taste it, but rather digest it very well before you form an opinion of it. That would be an intellectual approach to the TRUTH.

In making your next move to the Religion of TRUTH, Islam will continually reassure you that your rights to freedom of choice and freedom to use that God-given faculty of thought and reason will be respected. For everyone has that individual will, no one else can take away that will and force you to submit to the will of our CREATOR, you have to find out and make that decision yourself. May your intellectual journey towards the TRUTH be a pleasant one...

An Icelander's Journey to Light
Anna Linda Traustadóttir

I was born Anna Linda Traustadóttir to Icelandic/Danish parents in Reykjavík, Iceland in 1966 and baptized into the Lutheran Church. My family moved to Vancouver, Canada and then to New York City when I was young. I finished high school at 16. In 1988, I got my B.A. from McGill University, Montréal, Canada. Since then I have been traveling around the world, studying and working. Denmark has been my base since 1990.

In 1997, while studying Arabic in Cairo, one of my English girlfriends, a born-again Christian bought me a portable Bible, with both the Old and New Testaments. I was extremely pleased because I had decided that I needed to know what the Bible was and what was in it. And I felt that I could hardly call myself Christian without consciously studying the Bible.

In 1998, whilst studying at Damascus University, I read the whole Bible, from cover to cover, taking notes as I went along. Once I had completed it, I realized that there were too many inconsistencies, too many things I didn't agree with. Like the Old Testament's portrayal of God and women, not to mention all the things that Paul wrote in the New Testament. And when I read about the holy men, the Prophets, like Noah, Lot, David, etc., I found that I didn't respect them. I love and admire Moses (from the Old Testament) and Jesus (from the New Testament).

Having already read the Torah, I tried getting a complete Jewish Talmud, to no avail. I'd always heard that Jews (except for Reformed) do not recognize someone who converted to Judaism. Also, many, though not all, Jews are Zionist (those who support Israel). And I am terribly anti-Zionist and anti-Israel, and so, by default, pro-Palestinian. I also wanted a religion that would accept a convert. I dabbled with Buddhism but decided this was not for me, as Buddhists don't believe in God. And I strongly believe in God, always have. Buddhism is still interesting as an alternative way of life. My mum and I used to discuss Hinduism and so I was very interested in it, but there are just too many Hindu gods for me. Therefore Hinduism was out of the question. That, and the fact that you cannot convert to Hinduism.

When I had my son, Andrés Ómar, in October 2001, I was asked whether he would be baptized, and even then I refused. I felt that innocent children would surely be welcome in Heaven, baptized or not. Anyway, how could I introduce him into the Christian religion when I myself did not call myself a believing Christian, though I was born and raised as a Protestant? I didn't believe in the Trinity, in Mary as the "mother" of God, in Jesus as the "son" of God, in Jesus dying to cleanse us of our sins, in Jesus crying out in Aramaic on the cross: "Eli, Eli, lama sabakh-tha-ni?" I mean why would Jesus cry out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when Jesus knew he was sent on a mission by God as a prophet of God?

I grew up being one of the most anti-Muslim, anti-Islam people you could ever meet. This is true: I was. I had also been anti-Arab before moving to Cairo to study Arabic (I thought Arabic calligraphy was beautiful). I'd grown up in the States, raised on American movies, which always portrayed Arabs as fundamentalists, radicals, women-oppressors, religious fanatics, terrorists, never normal, average people. The large majority of people who are anti-Arab have never been to any Arab country. The reality there is very different.

In 1999, I went back to Damascus to work at an embassy. There in 2000, I met an engineer named Mohannad. We married soon after we met. To be honest when I married Mohannad, I married him because I loved him, even though he was Muslim. Over time, I realized I loved him because he was Muslim. A good Muslim. I had met many Muslims here in Denmark and in the Middle East, and just like in my life, I've met some nice and not-so-nice Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. I thought all those Muslims I'd met were representing Islam. And whenever I asked Muslims questions about Islam, one thing struck me: Nearly everyone claimed to be an expert in Islam, even those who gave me, I later found out, false information. It would have been more prudent just to say: I don't know/I'm not sure. Yet I never judged Christianity or any other religion by its followers. Strangely though, I judged Islam by every

Arab I meet, even though (1) not all Arabs are Muslim. Some are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Druze, Coptic, Alawite, etc. And (2) most Muslims aren't Arab. Muslims can be Indonesian, Indian, Chinese, Macedonian, Malay, Russian, Thai, African, Bosnian, American, Swedish, etc., and of course, Arab. I had been raised not to be prejudiced, but I was. It took me a long time to realize this.

It's only after countless hours of discussion, and at times arguments (!), with my husband that I came to be open-minded enough to realize that I didn't have the full picture.

During Ramadan, November 2002, I asked Mohannad whether he would help me read the Qur'an in Arabic. He had little time, but I was determined to read the Qur'an in Arabic with the help of a good translation. When I read the Qur'an, Islam's holiest book, I thought it was beautiful, so scientific, so compassionate, so feminist! Nearly all the books I'd ever read about Islam, all written by non-Muslims, showed Islam in a negative light. Those people who wrote against Islam sometimes gave partial quotes from the Qur'an, leaving out the rest of the verse, or they would translate the verses incorrectly, on purpose or by mistake. I knew enough Arabic to know that what I was reading was unlike anything I'd ever read.

So much science, so much knowledge that has been only recently discovered. I mean the Prophet Mohammad mentions: black holes, space travel, DNA and genetic science, evolution (transformation and mutation), geology, oceanography, embryonic development, aquatic origins of life... WOW! I had always heard that the Qur'an was basically just a watered-down version of the Bible, but none of this was in the Bible! I wondered how someone over 1400 years ago could have written anything like this! Some of these ideas were only discovered this century. Then I thought, well, Arab scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, cartographers were so advanced for that time, maybe some of them got together and wrote a book, loosely based on the Torah and the Gospels. But then I studied it further and realized that the Arabic scientific revolution followed the arrival of Islam. Then I read that Muslims believe that the Qur'an was given to Mohammad through the Angel Gabriel, and is the continuation of God's word. Muslims believe that parts of the Torah and parts of the Gospels, that speak of Jesus' life, are inspired by God, or "Allah" as God is called in Arabic. Not just Muslims, but Christian and Jewish Arabs also call God "Allah." Muslims revere Abraham, Solomon, Moses, Jesus, and Noah, in fact, all of the Biblical Prophets. It is also mentioned that there are other prophets that came to other nations to help them become better people. It's said that Buddha was one of these prophets, but that he along with Jesus, never meant for people to believe he was superior to God, just that he was a messenger of God. They also believe that the Prophet Mohammad is the last prophet, until Jesus returns to Earth.

It says in the Qur'an that Allah can put a veil over our eyes and a stone over our hearts so that we can neither see nor feel the message of the Qur'an. Only when Allah is ready for us to know it, do we understand. On 12 December 2002, I had an incredible dream that started me thinking and contemplating religion more deeply. Dreams are very important in Iceland and dream interpretation is practically a science! I never thought I needed a religion. Religion fascinated me, but I had believed I was doing fine just believing in God, taking bits from different religions until I got my own cocktail: "Anna's Mix."

In January 2003, I started looking at the Internet, just doing searches like: "Islam," "Qur'an," "Muslim," etc. In March, whilst in Reykjavík, I got the opportunity to speak with one of my best Icelandic girlfriends, a Muslim, and she recommended a really good English translation (the Abdullah Yusuf Ali version), to go along with the original Arabic. In April, I received it and started using it as a supplement.

In May 2003, my Icelandic Muslim friend returned the visit and stayed two weeks with us. We started talking about the Qur'an. I told her that I wanted to translate it into Icelandic. She told me it was her dream too. We agreed we would do it together. We used our time together well, discussing Christianity, Judaism and Islam all day, every day. She had questioned her Lutheran faith, considered Judaism, visited Israel ("Occupied Palestine" as far as I am concerned) twice, and only on her second visit, started to consider the other side of the Arab-Israeli conflict. She got interested in Islam. She had earlier gone a similar path as I, coming to

the same conclusions. Back in 1995, when she told me she'd become Muslim, I behaved badly: I was extremely negative. Shame on me for being unsupportive!

Now I found myself seeing myself Muslim. I told my husband about my revelations, and he questioned me at length. He asked me to wait with changing my religion. He told me that becoming Muslim would make my life more difficult, that people who didn't know Islam would treat me differently, that at this time, in the year 2003, and in this world we live in, people would ridicule me. He said I might lose contact with my family and my friends if I took on the Muslim faith. He feared that people that didn't know me so well or that I hadn't seen in a long time, or ever met him, would think he was forcing me to become Muslim. I told him if that were true, we could not have got married, for when we married, I was Christian, and had remained Christian up until then. Also, I argued, people who have known me at all know I am a strong-minded, true feminist/humanist, that I am opinionated, but not narrow-minded, and that no one can control me... My parents have tried for years to no avail!

I decided then and there that if friends and family didn't want any contact with me because I decided to become Muslim, so be it! My religion is mine and I am proud of my research into Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. It has taken me years and countless hours of reading and soul-searching to get to this point. My belief in God is something I have always taken seriously and I have never been ashamed to declare this faith, even when others ridicule me for believing in something they say we cannot see. I argue, look around you, how can you not believe in a supreme being that created everything around us. And for those of you that view Islam as some kind of cult, it isn't. It's one of the biggest religions in the world, if not the largest: One in four people on this planet is now Muslim, and it's the fastest growing religion.

So finally, on 4 June 2003, I decided to officially become Muslim so that I could go on Hajj to Mecca. I had been searching for answers for a long time, since my childhood, and by the mid-1990's, I was buying books on different faiths. Deep inside, I imagined I would find the answers for me. I remember the first time I heard the "Azan" (the Muslim call for prayer, when a fellow says "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) from a minaret at a mosque). It was a bright, sunny, February Sunday in Cairo in 1997, so church bells were also ringing, but when I heard the call for prayer, tears streamed down my face, without my realizing it. I wasn't Muslim, but it moved me. One of my oldest and dearest friends, a Catholic, was in Beirut a while ago, staying at a hotel and woke up to the call for prayer at 4.30 during her first night in Lebanon. She thought it was so moving that she also cried.

When I read the Qur'an, I feel it in my stomach, deep in my gut, that this is right for me. The inspirational beauty of the Qur'an makes me sometimes cry. It's an all-encompassing way of life. No other religious book ever moved me to tears.

The Qur'an is simply put the most complex book I've ever read. The more you read it, the more you both understand and at the same time, question. The Qur'an is meant to inspire you to learn more. Every time you read it, you peel off different layers of understanding. I am not an expert; I never will be. Even if I read from it every day for the rest of my life, I will still learn something new. It's full of mysteries. I still also supplement my Qur'anic studies with Biblical studies like the "Gospel of Barnabas," "The Torah," etc.

I've also since got some new Muslim girlfriends over the Internet. Whilst searching the net, I came across an Icelandic Muslim site: www.islam.is, and I contacted the writer. We started a correspondence. Around New Year's 2004, I sent her a report I wrote entitled "Islam in Iceland 2003," which I am submitting to the Saudi Government, she suggested we three work on the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic to Icelandic (Kóraninn), as she also speaks Arabic. So it seems that we will be three Icelandic Muslim women working on translating the Arabic Qur'an. For those of you looking for a good English version, I've heard the Muhammad Asad translation is also very direct, but I myself have yet to get hold of it.

I did however buy an incredible amount of reading material in Kuala Lumpur last summer. It's a new Muslim's mecca for books. I really stocked up! My husband, son and I stayed a

month in Malaysia. What an incredible place! Of Islamic areas, I had only been to the Arab Middle-East and here was a whole new Islamic world in South-East Asia! The experience was wonderful to say the least. I had always been fond of Islamic art and architecture, and all of Malaysia is both an indoor and outdoor museum! Under the former Muslim Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Islam had a revival. He wants to unite all the Islamic countries, not just in a so-called Islamic Union, but he also wants one currency, a gold dinar. What a visionary! Islam needs more men and women like him!

I always try to be positive, so I think it's a very exciting time, the 21st century! If someone like me can become Muslim, there's hope for anybody! The friends that I have discussed religion with recently know that I have become Muslim, and without fail, they have been extremely supportive. I was a bit surprised that they were not shocked. They said they knew one day I'd find my niche (I'd been searching so long), and they were happy for me. Some even call me by my new Muslim name: Núr, which means light. I also still use Anna Linda, because it's the name my parents gave me and it represents part of the person I was for 36 years. Núr is just the continuation of me!

So ends my story: "Journey to Light," a journey which is, in fact, just beginning!

Great Stories: Abdullah ibn Jahsh

Abdullah ibn Jahsh was a cousin of the Prophet and his sister, Zaynab bint Jahsh, was a wife of the Prophet. He was the first to head a group of Muslims on an expedition and so was the first to be called "Amir al-Mumineen"-- Commander of the Believers.

Abdullah ibn Jahsh became a Muslim before the Prophet entered the House of al-Arqam which became a meeting place, a school and a place of refuge for the early Muslims. He was thus one of the first to accept Islam.

When the Prophet gave permission for his Companions to emigrate to Madinah to avoid further persecution from the Quraysh, Abdullah ibn Jahsh was the second to leave, preceded only by Abu Salamah. Emigrating was not a new experience for Abdullah. He and some members of his immediate family had migrated before to Abyssinia. This time, however, his migration was on a far bigger scale. His family and relatives--men, women and children, migrated with him. In fact, his whole clan had become Muslims and accompanied him.

There was an air of desolation as they left Makkah. Their homes appeared sad and depressed as if no one had lived there before. No sound of conversation emanated from behind those silent walls.

Abdullah's clan were not long gone when the alerted Quraysh leaders came out and made the rounds of the districts in Makkah to find out which Muslims had left and who had remained. Among these leaders were Abu Jahl and Utbah ibn Rabiah. Utbah looked at the houses of the Banu Jahsh through which the dusty winds were blowing. He banged on the doors and shouted:

"The houses of the Banu Jahsh have become empty and are weeping for its occupants." "Who were these people anyway," said Abu Jahl derisively, "that houses should weep for them." He then laid claim to the house of Abdullah ibn Jahsh. It was the most beautiful and expensive of the houses. He began to dispose freely of its contents as a king would share out his possessions.

Later, when Abdullah ibn Jahsh heard what Abu Jahl had done to his house, he mentioned it to the Prophet, peace be upon him, who said:

"Aren't you satisfied, O Abdullah, with what God has given you instead, a house in Paradise?"

"Yes, messenger of God," he replied, and became at peace with himself and completely satisfied.

Abdullah ibn Jahsh had scarcely settled down in Madinah when he had to undergo one of the most testing experiences. He had just begun to taste something of the good and restful life under the sponsorship of the Ansar--after going through persecution at the hands of the Quraysh--when he had to be exposed to the severest test he had ever known in his life and carry out the most difficult assignment since he became a Muslim.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, commissioned eight of his Companions to carry out the first military assignment in Islam. Among them were Abdullah ibn Jahsh and Sad ibn Abi Waqqas.

"I appoint as your Commander the one who can best bear hunger and thirst," said the Prophet and gave the standard to Abdullah ibn Jahsh. He was thus the first to be made amir over a contingent of believers.

The Prophet gave him precise instructions on the route he should take on the expedition and gave him a letter. He commanded Abdullah to read the letter only after two days' travel.

After the expedition had been on its way for two days, Abdullah looked at the contents of the letter. It said, "When you have read this letter, press on until you come to a place called Nakhlah between Taif and Makkah. From there observe the Quraysh and gather whatever information you can on them for us."

"At your command, O Prophet of God," exclaimed Abdullah as he finished reading the letter. Then he spoke to his colleagues:

"The Prophet has commanded me to proceed to Nakhlah to observe the Quraysh and gather information on them for him. He has also commanded me not to go further with anyone of you who is against the purpose of this expedition. So whoever desires martyrdom and is in total agreement with this expedition can accompany me. Whoever is not in agreement, may turn back without blame."

"At your command, O messenger of Allah," they all responded. "We shall go with you, Abdullah, wherever the Prophet of God has commanded."

The group continued until they reached Nakhlah and began to move along the mountain passes seeking information on Quraysh movements. While they were thus engaged, they saw in the distance a Quraysh caravan. There were four men in the caravan--Amr ibn al-Hadrami, Hukm ibn Kaysan, Uthman ibn Abdullah and his brother Mughirah. They were carrying merchandise for the Quraysh--skins, raisins and other usual Quraysh stock in trade.

The Sahabah conferred together. It was the last day of the sacred months. "If we were to kill them," they agreed, "we would have killed them in the inviolable months. To do so would be to violate the sacredness of this month and expose ourselves to the wrath of all Arabs. If we leave them alone for a day so that the month will be completed, they would have entered the inviolable precincts of Makkah and thus be secure from us."

They continued consulting until finally they agreed to pounce on the caravan and take whatever merchandise they could as booty. Before long, two of the men were captured and one was killed; the fourth escaped.

Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his men took the two prisoners and the caravan on to Madinah. They went to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and informed him about what they had done. The Prophet was greatly upset and strongly condemned their action.

"By God, I did not command you to fight. I only commanded you to gather information on the Quraysh and observe their movements." He granted a reprieve to the two prisoners and he left the caravan and did not take a single item from it.

Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his men then knew that they had fallen into disgrace and felt certain that they were ruined because of their disobeying the command of the Prophet. They began to feel the pressure as their Muslim brothers censured them and avoided them whenever they passed one another. And they would say, "These went against the command of the Prophet."

Their discomfiture grew when they learnt that the Quraysh had taken the incident as a means to discredit the Prophet and denounce him among the tribes. The Quraysh were saying: "Muhammad has defiled the sacred month. He has shed blood in it, plundered wealth and captured men."

Imagine the extent of the sadness felt by Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his men at what had happened, more so because of the acute embarrassment they had caused the Prophet.

They were sorely tormented and the agony weighed heavily on them. Then came the good news that Allah--Glorified be He--was pleased with what they had done and had sent down revelation to His Prophet about this matter. Imagine their happiness! People came and

embraced them, congratulating them on the good news and reciting to them what had been revealed in the glorious Quran about their action.

"They ask you about fighting in the sacred month. Say: Fighting therein is an enormity as well as preventing (people) from the path of God and disbelief in Him. Expelling people from the Masjid al Haram is a greater sin in the eyes of God. Moreover, persecution is greater than killing." (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 212).

When these blessed verses were revealed, the Prophet's mind was eased. He took the caravan and ransomed the prisoners. He became pleased with Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his men. Their expedition was certainly a major event in the early life of the Muslim community . . .

The Battle of Badr followed. Abdullah ibn Jahsh fought in it and was put to a great test, but a test to which his faith was equal.

Then came the Battle of Uhud. There is an unforgettable story involving Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his friend Sad ibn Abi Waqqas concerning an incident that took place during the Battle of Uhud. Let us leave Sad to tell the story:

During the battle, Abdullah came to me and said, "Aren't you making a dua to God?"

"Yes," said I. So we moved aside and I prayed, "O Lord, when I meet the enemy, let me meet a man of enormous strength and fury. Then grant me victory over him that I might kill him and acquire spoils from him." To this my prayer, Abdullah said Ameen and then he prayed:

"Let me meet a man of great standing and enormous fury. I shall fight him for Your sake, O Lord, and he shall fight me. He shall take me and cut off my nose and ears and when I meet You on the morrow You will say, "For what were your nose and ear cut off?" And I would reply, "For Your sake and for the sake of Your Prophet." And then You would say, "You have spoken the truth . . ." Sad continues the story:

The prayer of Abdullah ibn Jahsh was better than mine. I saw him at the end of the day. He was killed and mutilated and in fact his nose and his ear were hung on a tree with a thread. God responded to the prayer of Abdullah ibn Jahsh and blessed him with martyrdom as He blessed his uncle, the Leader of Martyrs, Hamzah ibn Abdulmuttalib. The noble Prophet buried them together in a single grave. His pure tears watered the earth anointed with the fragrance of martyrdom.

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Contact us:

International committee for the support of the final prophet (ICSFP)

Your input is value to us, If you have any comments or suggestions please email us at:

info@icsfp.com

info@whymuhammad.com

Address:

1090 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA

Fax: +12539819150