

## FAMILY IN AN ERA OF CRISIS

Is the Muslim family, as a time-honored institution, entering into crises era? And if so, what can we do to preserve its integrity amidst the chaotic social developments of the modern world? What are our individual and collective roles in keeping our tradition of a strong, supportive family from eroding? The answer lies in taking initiative and re-prioritizing. 'Striving for the Sake of Allah' begins in the home and not outside of it.

By Amer Haleem



## DEPARTMENTS

### 4 EDITOR'S NOTE

### 6 STRAIGHT TALK

### 8 LETTERS

### 10 HEART TALK

Hearts swinging between hope & fear.

### 12 CHARACTER

Accepting Allah's will, whether or not it matches our own, is a basic tenet of our faith

### 14 YOUTHFUL HORIZONS

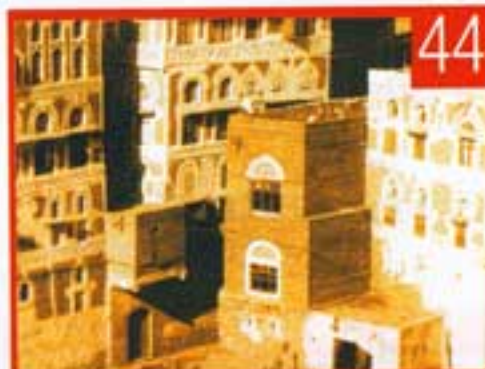
Undoubtedly, paradise is a goal we all strive for. However, in our desire to reach its much coveted gates, we should not lose sight of the arduous journey that such an endeavor entails.

### 28 LETTERS FROM THE BACKWOODS

An unfortunate personal experience with the disturbing culture of narcissism. Are Muslims giving up the tradition of altruism and brotherhood the notions of radical individualism?

### 30 SCIENCE UPHOLDS FAITH

On the consciousness in the human cell-part 8 in the series.



The Rise and Consolidation of the Ulama in Islam-3 (Series: The Aftermath of the Mihna and Transformations of Islam during the Fourth Century)

FATAWA

- Rulings on Organ Transplantation
- The Legality of Using Fetuses for Organ Transplants
- Rulings on Transplanting Reproductive Organs

16

## DEPARTMENTS

### 32 NUTRITION AND SPIRITUALITY

For those of us inflicted by the lack of healthy eating and exercise habits, it may be spiritually uplifting and highly motivating to learn how the early Muslims were concerned with their physical welfare.

### 36 IN FOCUS

Even for those who care about planning and managing time, staying the course of a plan for a whole year can be a challenge. This article offers important insight into the plans and goals some of our Muslim youth aspire to achieve this new 1429 Hijri year.

### 40 MIND OVER MATTER

Why is there so much oppression and suffering in the world? Why do the strong overtake the weak? Why is there so much violence in vain? The answer to these questions lies in knowing the One Lord without whom no power may actually exist.

### 47 A MATTER OF FIQH

How often, when traveling, do you find yourself not sure whether you can shorten salah or not? Here is a truly comprehensive discussion, which deals with the most frequently asked questions on the subject, presented from the perspectives of the Four Fiqh Schools.

### 52 MADARIJ-US-SALIKEEN

Translation series of Ibmul Qayyim's classic manual of Islamic Spirituality; Madarij-us-Salikeen (Steps of the Seekers).

### 64 REFLECTIONS

It is not only rituals of worship, if you ensure pure intention, almost any act we do can in fact be a means through which Allah will bless our time.

## FAMILY LIFE



### 54 PARENTING

Your children share more than a physical resemblance with you. They may resemble you in more ways, including character, mannerisms and outlook, than you could have ever imagined. And it serves parents well to become the model individual they would want their children to be.

### 58 WOMEN'S ISSUES

Are we being true to ourselves? Real happiness, in marriage as well as in life, resides in being honest with ourselves, admitting faults and working on our character. Only then can we feel contentment and move toward happiness.

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# The Best Laid Plans

*Accepting Allah's will, whether or not it matches our own, is a basic tenet of our faith*

BY NOUR HABIB

A few years ago, on the car ride home from flunking my driving test a third consecutive time, I sat brooding next to my father in the failure position, otherwise known as the passenger seat. I stared out the window at a loss for why? Why did I falter? Again. Why, after so much practice and such assurances that that this would be my day, did I not pass the test?

My father read my thoughts and delicately unclocked a story. Its moral: Though we may not understand it, Allah does everything for a reason.

When he was in college, during midterms, he and his friends decided to skip an extremely hard exam that they were sure they were unequal to. Instead, they planned a trip to

Alexandria, Egypt, and intended to stay at one of their friend's houses.

They left the night before the exam. But on their way, the car broke down. By the time they got it fixed, it was too late to go on with their trip. They turned back to Cairo in defeat, and surrendered to the fact that they had to face their test (which they all ended

up passing, to their great astonishment).

Soon afterward, they learned that the house they had planned to visit had collapsed that very day. The entire balcony, as well as the room they were to stay in, just fell off the building due to faulty construction.

They planned. And Allah planned. And Allah's was the best of plans. At the time their car broke down, they were very upset that their strategy was

*"Yet it may be that you hate a thing, while it is good for you. And it may be that you love a thing, while it is evil for you. Yet God knows (what is most beneficial for you)." [2:216].*

thwarted. When the stunning news of the crumbling reached them, they realized that Allah had saved them.

"Yet it may be that you hate a thing, while it is good for you. And it may be that you love a thing, while it is evil for you. Yet God knows (what is most beneficial for you)." So says Allah in the Qur'an [2:216].

Many times I have heard this verse. Repeatedly, I've read it myself. I've recited it in prayer and talked about it in tafseer classes. But do I really take it for what it is?

I know we believe that Allah's plans are the ultimate design of our life, no matter how we may try to get around them.

I know this unveils itself like the new dawn in everything we do, from the seemingly minor (driving tests and exams) to the momentous (birth and



# CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE CELL-8

BY HARUN YAHYA

## EVERY SINGLE PROTEIN IN YOUR BODY POSSESSES FAULTLESS DESIGN AND VITAL DUTIES

The most effective way to show that coincidences have no powers to create is to expound on the proofs of God's existence. Take an example from your own body.

Whether standing up or raising your arms, all your movements are carried out as a result of the action of your muscles. For us to perform these actions, our muscle cells require a continuous supply of oxygen. The duty of transporting oxygen to the muscle cells has been taken up by one of our body's proteins called myoglobin. It very much resembles hemoglobin, another protein whose duty is to transport oxygen in the blood. But the difference between the two is that myoglobin has the capacity to carry only one single oxygen molecule. Due to this feature of myoglobin, flow of oxygen to muscle cells is carried out in a slow, regulated manner.

Consider that hemoglobin, the protein that transports oxygen in the blood, swaps places with the myoglobin that transports oxygen from the lungs to the muscle cells. In such a situation, myoglobin won't be able to carry sufficient oxygen to the body. On the other hand, hemoglobin will carry too much oxygen to muscle tissue and will

deposit it suddenly, upsetting the balance of the entire body. But no such thing ever happens; and both proteins are always found in the right place at the right time. As a result, we breathe comfortably and we can move as freely as we please.

Of course, hemoglobin and myoglobin are only two of the proteins found in the human body. Similarly, other proteins in the body have characteristics that fulfill the body's needs and are produced where they are needed. As these examples show, it's not possible for the human body's perfect design to have come about by chance. The Possessor of this perfect design is God, the Lord of the worlds.

## ENZYMES THAT IDENTIFY MISTAKES

Due to external factors, mistakes occasionally arise in the DNA, the body's information bank. But these mistakes are fixed immediately by a control mechanism or repair process, effected by enzymes that are synthesized according to information found in the DNA itself.

The repair process is made up of a number of steps:

1. An enzyme called DNA nuclease identifies the damaged portion of the DNA strand.

2. DNA nuclease removes the identified faulty portion, creating a gap in the strand.

3. Another enzyme called DNA polymerase identifies the correct information from the undamaged strand of DNA, then repairs the damaged strand according to this undamaged model.

4. The repair process does not end here, however. A gap has been left in the sugar phosphate "backbone" in the area where the repair has taken place, but an enzyme called DNA ligase fills in this gap.

As you can understand from the functions they carry out, the enzymes that repair the DNA possess many multiple functions. In order to repair DNA, they must be very familiar with it. Moreover they must know where to get the correct information, and how to fill the gap that results.

The most amazing part is that the synthesis of DNA and the enzymes controlling its synthesis are all produced according to information stored within that same DNA, and are under the control of proteins made by that DNA. It is impossible for this magnificent system, with processes occurring within processes, to have come about in stages, by coincidence. In order for the enzymes to exist, DNA must exist to begin with; and in order for DNA to exist, the enzymes need to exist! But in order for them both to exist, the cell and the membrane and all of the other complex organelles must be in existence as well.

The theory of evolution that claims that living things came about gradually, as a result of "beneficial coincidences," is denied conclusively by the DNA-enzyme paradox, because DNA and its enzymes need to be in existence at the same time. This shows the evidence of a conscious creation.

# To Shorten or Not to Shorten

## That is the Praying Traveler's Question

BY OMAR HALEEM

A storm photographer, who makes his living selling close-up pictures of severe weather systems and their effects, sees a funnel cloud pass over his house. He grabs his gear, jumps in his jeep, and begins the chase.

About 50 miles from his home, it drops its cone of destruction. For another 25 miles, he's still shooting. The whirlwind leaps back into the sky and disappears. He looks at his watch. Asr-salah is just 25 minutes away. He's been on the road two hours, and hasn't performed the Dhuhr salah. Is it permissible for him to shorten his obligatory salah? Is it lawful to combine them?

Can you answer these two questions? Should you be able to?

Most of us do not chase storms for a living, but we nonetheless travel a great deal, not a few of us even in our daily lives for work. That makes knowing how to apply the legal, or *fiqih*, rulings (*ahkam*) of our religion essential for some of us and important for many more. In a Heavenly faith like ours that has no structure of clerical authority, that places a premium on universal access to, if not interpretation of, divine Law, that, uniquely mandates our acceptance of diverse systems of deriving that Law simultaneously, to be a free and competent Muslim is to understand the basic issues involved in

defining the correctness of the common things we do.

Because we do travel frequently, praying Muslims have, at least, awareness of the concept of *qasar* (shortening obligatory salah) and *jam'* (combining certain obligatory salah). But those who know some of their rules (*ahkam*) ought to take a deeper look at their issues, the difference of opinions on them among Muslim legal scholars, and why they diverge. As for the few who know these things well, to refresh the understanding is ever a benefit for the believers.

First, *qasar* (shortening) and *jam'* (combining) are two separate exemptions that can apply to specific salah. The discussion of *qasar* is by far the more involved, so we will begin with it. It breaks down into five general issues:

1. The Technical Meaning of *Qasar* (Shortening)
  - a. Its historical establishment
  - b. Proof of its legitimacy
2. The Legal Rulings (*Ahkam*) of *Qasar*
3. The Legal Meaning of Travel
4. The Legal Meaning Residence (as opposed to travel)
5. Related Legal Concerns

### 1. THE TECHNICAL MEANING OF QASR (SHORTENING)

*Qasar*, in the terminology of the jurists, means that the salah normally performed in four rak'ahs are performed in only two by the traveler. These salahs, named by their watches, are *Dhahur* (early afternoon salah), *Air* (mid day salah), and *isha* (nightfall salah).

The proof that it is these salah which are to be shortened is the statement related by Aisha, may God be pleased with her, the wife of the Prophet, *salallahu alayhe wa sallam*:

When the salah was first prescribed, >>



# The Four Dimensions of You

## *Staying True to Yourself*

BY MICHELLE AL-NASR

One of the most important components of any relationship, most especially marriage, is knowing how to be true to your self.

So what exactly does that mean? How do we become *true to ourselves*?

Let's keep it real. Marriage is not only about honesty (although that is, perhaps, its most important aspect). More precisely, it centers on being genuine with one another, comfortable enough to tell your mate how it really feels.

That comes down to faith—believing in what you say (when, where and exactly how you experience it), a heartfelt conviction that you are secure enough in your husband or wife to be the person you are contented being. Voila! Your *true self*.

How strange that such a simple thing can be so immensely difficult for us. Almost everyone has their desperately silent scenarios. So here's a checklist of the four measures "of you" to help you remember in the tough times, with husband or wife, family and friend, who you really are.

1. The *not-being-true-to-you* dimension.
2. The *I-love-you-you-love-me* dimension.

3. The *someone-needs-to-be-your-Steadman* dimension.

4. The *keeping-it-real-for-real* dimension

### NOT BEING TRUE TO YOU

What is being untrue to yourself? It is to live in such a way that the outward face we put on for everyone else eats at the inside of your soul. You can *never* feel self-contented in this dichotomous condition. And "never" covers a

whole lot of ground, including at home with our own families. Steadily, the only case we ever know is when we are completely alone—and that doesn't mean we're happy.

But even an unhappy case in loneliness can start up the processes of alienation. Slowly we isolate ourselves from friends and family. We may stop attending civic events, cease social activities, withdraw from volunteer work—all of which seem to further our feelings of agitation. All we want now, and increasingly, is to be by ourselves, to have a little relief from play-acting and serving, to be comfortable in our own skins with no shows or charades—just as we are.

What's all this "going on" about being >>

