

Ramadan At The Holiday Season

There's a nip in the air. Holly has adorned trees and doors, the festive melodies of aguinaldos have echoed throughout homes, the scent of rows of evergreens have freshened musty street corners, and a huge menorah hovered over Fifth Avenue. But this annual holiday season is host to a special event. For the next few years, the lunar month of Ramadan will coincide with the traditional Judeo-Christian holiday season, and for this period all three of the great monotheistic religions will be commemorated at about the same time of year.

The month of Ramadan is a lunar month, and being that the lunar year is only 355 days, ten days shorter than the solar year, Ramadan comes ten days earlier every year, appearing to travel backwards through the calendar and the seasons.

Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed to the last prophet sent to humanity, Muhammad (peace be upon him), nearly 1500 years ago. During this month, Muslims are required to abstain from food and drink during the hours between dawn and

sunset. During the fast, Muslims are also encouraged to increase good deeds and acts of charity, and to avoid uncalled for displays of anger and all manner of inappropriate behavior.

This is a time for Muslims to learn self-discipline, and by enduring hunger and thirst, learn to empathize with the poor and destitute of the world who don't have the option of breaking their fast at sundown. This should prompt fasters to give in charity to relieve the suffering of those less fortunate.

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Muslims arise in the morning to have a pre-dawn breakfast called suhur. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) recommended eating suhur to ensure a bearable and productive fast. No food or drink is allowed during the fast which begins at dawn, approximately an hour and a half before sunrise, and ends at sunset. If one is sick, a menstruating woman, or a traveller, one is

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Al Qur'an: La Gloriosa Recitación

"Dir: Creemos en Alá, en lo que se nos ha hecho descender a Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, y las Tribus (de Israel), en lo que le fue dado a Moises y Jesús y en lo que fue dado a los profetas procedente de su Señor. No hacemos distinciones entre ninguno de ellos y estamos sometidos a El"

Sura La Vaca:

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"En el mes de Ramadan se hizo descender la recitación, el Coran, dirección para los hombres y pruebas claras de la Guía y del Discernimiento; así pues, quien de ustedes vea el mes, que ayune, y el que esté enfermo o de viaje que lo haga en otro momento, por el mismo número de días. Alá quiere para ustedes lo fácil y no lo difícil, pero quiere que completes el numero (de días) y que proclames la grandeza de Alá por haberlos guiados."

Sura La Vaca:

185

Jesús, hijo de Maria, en el Coran

"Y recuerda en el Libro a Maria cuando se apartó de su familia retirándose en algun lugar hacia oriente. Entonces se ocultó de ellos con un velo y le enviamos a Nuestro espíritu (Gabriel) que tomó la apariencia de un ser humano completo.

Dijo: Me refugio de ti en el Misericordioso, si eres temeroso.

Dijo: Yo sólo soy el mensajero de tu Señor para concederte un niño puro.

Dijo: ¿Como podría tener un niño si ningún hombre me ha tocado y no soy una fornicadora?

Dijo: Así lo ha dicho tu Señor.

Eso es simple para Mi, para hacerlo un signo para los hombres y una misericordia de Nuestra parte. Es un asunto decretado.

Sura de Maria:

16-21

Dijo (Jesús): Yo soy el sirviente de Alá. El me ha dado el Libro (el Evangelio original) y

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Confessions Of An Ex-Feminist

My name is Azizah Z-Pabon. I originally hail from Pittsburgh of a hearty Czech-German blend. My environment and upbringing was culturally white and nominally Catholic, and before I reverted to Islam in July 96, my friends and I, all self-proclaimed feminists, held ridiculous stereotypes of Muslim women, none of whom we had ever met, or had even attempted to speak with.

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We were convinced that we were the ones who were liberated in this male chauvinist world. We dressed any way we wanted, and complained incessantly when "slimy" men made lewd remarks toward us. To stop dressing the way we wanted, however sexy, was not an option. We simply resolved to set them in their places, and move on. We were comfortable in our clothes, and cursed American society and the porn industry for producing such pigs of men. We believed that they should have to learn to be respectful rather than we should have to change our dressing habits to protect ourselves from them.

One of our pet stereotypes was that of Muslim women having to walk 10 feet behind their husbands. When I met my future husband, I immediately confronted him with this allegation. I was sure that he would be as knowledgeable as my non-Muslim self about this highly feminist issue. A startling "Where did you hear that?" followed by a puzzled "Why would we not want our wives to be at our sides?" left my heart feeling a little squishy and my once-confident tongue silent.

We were convinced that you had to be black to be a Muslim, a debt we owe eternally to the Nation of Islam. Living in Pittsburgh, where blacks and whites are segregated to the best of the city's ability, we encountered many African-Americans calling themselves Muslims who were trying to sell us "The Final Call", while paradoxically expressing disgust for Caucasians and inter-racial dating. We saw, moreover, women of other colors, never white, dressed in what I know now to be proper Islamic clothing, but since they weren't black, we didn't know where they fit into the equation. Allah be praised, my sojourn in New York City has brought me into contact with Alianza Islamica, through which I have met Muslims from races other than African. I now understand the difference between Sunni Orthodox Muslims and assorted frauds and pretenders such as the Nation of Islam and the 5% Nation. I feel very welcome in this community, and

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everyone was supportive of my marriage to my Puerto Rican Muslim husband, Shukriy. Videos by my white Muslim sisters Nancy Ali and Aminah Assilmi helped a lot, too.

The rumor that Muslim men could have as many wives as they wanted turned out to be only partly true, as long as they only wanted four. That's the limit. My girlfriends and I were raised to believe that we would have one husband, and live happily ever after in classic storybook bliss. We were not too excited about polygamy in light of our marriage dreams. Since we believed 95% of men were slimy and cheated on their wives or girlfriends anyhow, we didn't have any intentions of getting married unless we

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each met incredible exceptions to our rule.

While yet a novice and not fully versed in Islam, I would become anxious about polygamy every time PMS set in, a hormonal state which made whatever I was worrying about feel ten times worse. After several months, when rational thinking finally returned, I reasoned: Why tell a wonderful Muslim man who is, may Allah be praised, all that I ever dreamed of, and

who has yet to have even one wife, that I'm not sure about marrying him because I'm worried about his right to have as many as four wives? Allah be forever praised, I have a wonderful marriage, and will worry about polygamy when and if the time ever comes.

I have tried, if Allah has so willed, to give some insight into the wacky way some people perceive Muslims, in general, and Muslim women, in particular. I would also like to add that Muslim women should consider the thoughts I have just shared when they are being stared at in public by non-Muslim women. I used to look at Muslim women before I took my shahadah, my declaration of faith in the Oneness of The Creator and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and wondered if I would ever be able to "dress like that". I wondered how the heck they kept those scarves on their head! Sometimes the person staring at you might be considering Islam, and is looking to you for an example. Give the woman a smile instead of getting frustrated.

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excused from fasting, and can make up the day at some other time.

This unique convergence of the three great monotheistic religions at this special time of year occurs in approximately thirty year cycles. This is a unique opportunity for Christians and Jews to reflect on the message of that

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me ha hecho profeta.

Y me ha hecho bendito dondequiera que esté y me ha encomendado la oracion y la purificacion mientras vivo.

Y ser bondadoso con mi madre; no me ha hecho ni insolente ni rebelde.

La paz sea sobre mí el día en que nací, el día de mi muerte y el día en que sea devuelto a la vida.

Ése es Jesús, hijo de María, la palabra de la Verdad, sobre el que dudan.

No es propio de Alá tomar ningún hijo.

¡Gloria a El! Cuando decide algo, sólo dice: Sea, y es.

(Dijo Jesús) Y verdaderamente Alá es mi Señor y el suyo. Adoralo pues. Este es un camino recto.

Sura Maria:

30-36

other great religion, which claims over a billion of the world's inhabitants, and needs so vitally to be understood.

The Thermodynamics Of Fasting

Have you ever found yourself staring at a candle's flame, or a well-stoked fire? Remember the effect was nearly mesmerizing, even captivating, as you watched, with eyes transfixed, the candle's stately, understated brilliance, or the incendiary power of a raging blaze as its rends asunder its hapless kindling to its molecular core, scattering its atoms to the winds.

Our fascination with fire may reflect our primordial preoccupation with what it has come to symbolize for mankind: the guiding light of knowledge, the burning crucible of test and trial, and the ultimate penal nightmare. The word Ramadan comes from a word denoting excessive heat, and true to its linguistic roots, Ramadan is the fiery cauldron where people's souls are tried, the dross removed, and the spirits purified. It is a joyous month whose healing flame of hunger, thirst, and denial draws us ever closer to Allah, Divine Light of the heavens and the earth.

Warmth from a fire has come to symbolize life, and there is life indeed in this month of sacrifice and obedience. In essence, it is eternal life in the sacred incandescence of Paradise which is the primary object of this annual endeavor, a reward for pleasing our Lord, The Most High.

Those Muslims who deliberately refuse to partake of the blessings of this month, and stubbornly persist in eating and drinking despite admonitions, are imbeciles. The light of guidance is flickering out for them, and their souls, untouched by the fast's purifying flame, are encrusted with the vile accretions of disobedience. They perceive themselves as clever for finding creative ways to avoid the fast. Yet, as they sit devouring the meals the obedient have denied themselves, they do not realize that they have become combustible fools, renewable tinder for the last word in pyrotechnic displays: Hell.

Let us walk into this blessed furnace, and set the dial on "high". Let us pray that we come out well-done, and well-prepared to do our Master's will.

Our Belief

- * We believe in Allah, The One and Only True God, Creator, Master, and Lawgiver.
- * Allah, The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Tribes of Israel.
- * Allah, The God of Moses, David, Solomon, John the Baptist, Jesus, the son of Mary, and Muhammad, His last Prophet.
- * Allah, upon Whom all depend, but Who is in no need of anyone or anything.
- * Allah, to Whom nothing can be compared.

Nuestra Creencia

- * Alá es el Unico y Verdadero Dios.
- * Alá, El Dios de Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, y las Tribus de Israel.
- * Alá, El Dios de Moisés, David, Salomón, Juan el Bautista, Jesús, hijo de María, y Muhammad, Su último profeta, paz sea con todos ellos.
- * Alá, a Quien todos se dirigen para sus necesidades pero es independiente de todos.
- * Alá, El que es ni padre ni hijo.
- * Alá, a el Cual nada y nadie se puede comparar.

Somos...

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