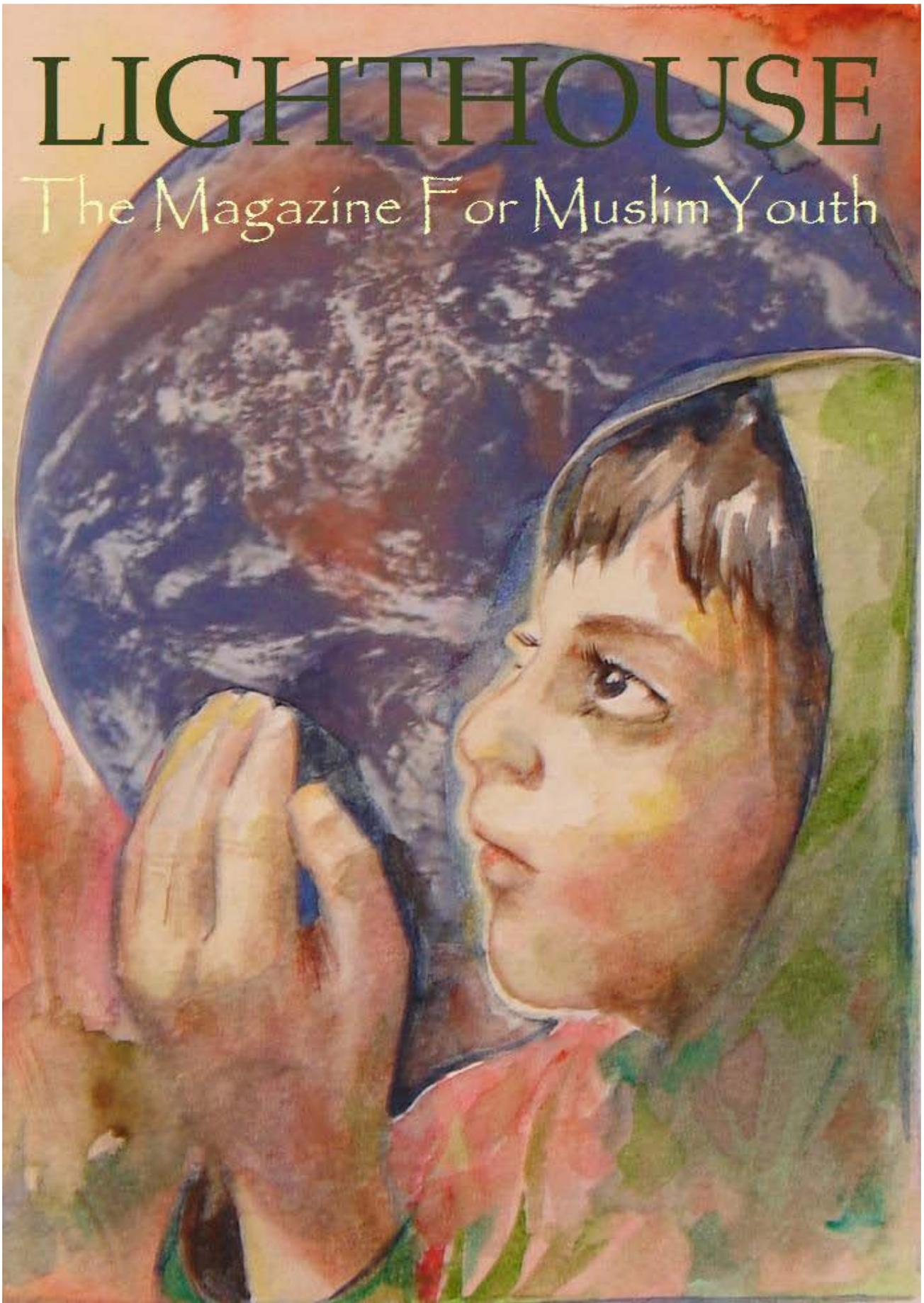


LIGHTHOUSE

The Magazine For Muslim Youth



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What do I do when I read the Quran?

Before I begin, I wash up with my wudzu

As I clean my body, I clear my mind and prepare it to read the Holy words

As I open up the precious book

I say the name of ALLAH and ask protection from the mischief of the Shaitan

First I read in Arabic going slow

Making sure I say the words as well as I know

Then I read the meanings of that line

So I can understand the message in my mind

I love to read the stories of the people long gone

The lessons I learn are lots of fun

Even though they lived in olden times

The challenges we face are much the same

The stories of the prophets are good to know

I learn about the friends who were true to them

And about those who became bitter enemies

Most of all, as I read the Quran I pray

I pray for ALLAH to make me like the great people in the Quran

Not one of those who made mischief and were proud



The Quran tells me what Jannah is like

I wish for us all to earn those blessings

I promise myself to try even harder

The Quran tells me about the horrors of Jahannum

As I read I shudder and pray that I never have to see them

For what we plant in this world is what we shall find in the next one

May we all find beautiful gardens with rivers flowing. Ameen

As I read about the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

I think about his faith and his greatness and recite darood for him

And pray to become just like him

As I read about the cruel disbelievers attacking him

I think of how strong he was in defending Islam

I need to be strong too, just like him

When I read the Quran, I read as if ALLAH just sent me a message

And I listen with all my heart and pray as I read

For the Quran is a guidance and an answer to a prayer

We must all read carefully.

Remember what we read

Share what we know



CAN KIDS TEACH THEIR PARENT TO D.A.R.E.?

Drug Abuse Resistance Education is what the acronym D.A.R.E. is all about. This is a program presented by the Police Department for fifth graders around the USA.

It is aimed at helping these young people make smart choices as they enter middle school and face great peer pressure to use drugs and alcohol in order to be cool and fit in. The program informs kids about the great dangers of smoking, drinking alcohol, and using drugs such as marijuana. It teaches them how to stay strong when faced with peer pressure and how to influence others to make smart decisions. At the end of their D.A.R.E. classes, the fifth-graders write a D.A.R.E. report and pledge, saying that they promise to stay away from drugs, alcohol and



tobacco.

D.A.R.E. is an excellent program that teaches kids how to make smart choices and stay away from the harmful influences they are sure to face as they grow up. Drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse are worldwide problems that threaten our youth and often lead them astray. Many valuable lives have been destroyed by drunk drivers, alcohol overdoses, and drug addiction. When drugs, tobacco and alcohol do not kill immediately, they lead a person away from leading a pure life, towards all sorts of evils.

Sadly in many countries like Europe and America, parents do not realize that they are sending a double message to their kids. They are telling their kids to stay away from alcohol and tobacco while they do not abstain themselves. What happens when kids decide to stay away from drugs and alcohol and realize the great harm of these addictions, yet in their homes they see their parents drinking and smoking? In their culture they see ads for beer and alcohol as if it were as normal to drink, as drinking water. I wonder if many kids go home to their parents and ask them why *they* drink alcohol when it is so bad for them and can lead to so many problems. We all know that not only kids



have problems when they drink alcohol. Adults have serious problems as well and their families and jobs suffer as a result. In order to protect kids from the ill effects of drinking it is important to send the same message to the parents and D.A.R.E. them to resist the same things they are urging their kids to resist. Kids, dare everyone to D.A.R.E!

READERS! PLEASE WRITE TO US AND LET
US KNOW HOW YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.
ARE THERE PROGRAMS IN YOUR
COMMUNITY THAT HELP YOU?

PLEASE WRITE TO US
AND LET US KNOW. WE
NEED YOUR FEEDBACK TO
MAKE THIS MAGAZINE
EVEN BETTER.

OUR ADDRESS IS zamustang@msn.com

My dear Allah,
You are the
source of all
knowledge and
wisdom.



You can
influence the
hearts and minds
and help them
stay open.

Please help me
to inform others
about my faith
in the best
possible manner.

Please help us
all to
understand how
similar we
really are.

Please accept my
prayer. Ameen

With a Name like That

I wonder what my parents were thinking of when they named me, though I can pretty much guess. They were probably thinking tender, romantic thoughts of a little girl who would be a joy and comfort in their lives, who was graceful, beautiful and luminous as the moon, and so they named me Qurratul Ain Mahjabeen Bakhtiar. I love my parents more than anything in this world and I know they love me to pieces, but I have to state the facts sometimes. My parents are not practical people. They are dreamers, thinkers and wishers, simple people who hope things will turn out well even though they haven't planned all that much.

My father is a writer and my mother is a painter and both are beautiful, kind and loving parents but sometimes I think they were meant for a different planet. I am



living proof of their innocent faith in this world, or why would anyone name a child “Coolness of the eye, beauty like the moon, good fortune”? That is what my name means. It might have worked out in Pakistan, where my parents immigrated from, but in America it just makes me

an oddity.

My parents rarely argue with each other but it seems they disagreed over naming me so they gave me *both* the names. Of course I have turned Mahjabeen into M. my middle initial, but it always upsets my mom who chose it. “Please use your proper name, dear. It is so *artistic* and beautiful,” she always says, not realizing how hard it can be. Saying my name is one problem, telling people what it means is another even bigger one, but in this story I will concentrate more on the saying part. The meaning can probably wait to be explained as it has been waiting for eleven years and four months, for that is how old I am.

Picture this: My first day in fifth grade. We have a new teacher and she goes through our names making sure she is saying them right. After going smoothly through Eric Able, Jasmine Adams, Koyo Amani, Maddie Badline, she comes to me. The class has been distracted with some talking, whispering, shifting pencils

and crackling snack wrappers but now it is quiet. You could hear yourself blink, think or wink. All eyes are on me for another live edition of the, “What’s your name again?” show. “Kurrr RAT tel?” says Mrs. Thompson hesitantly and then looks up at me with a smile, “Can you help me say your name?” I curl my toes within my sneakers and look straight at her. “It’s Ko-ra-tol Aen” I say really slowly, “Kora tol Aen Bakh tee ur”. Jason and Adam snicker in the back and I can feel my face getting hot. (I wish I could change their names to Shahdi Khuwee and Cheechoki Malian.) Saying my name is hard because of the way words are pronounced in American English. In my name “Quratul”, the “Qur” and “tul” parts have a soft sound to them that is in between an “o” and a “u”. Mrs. Thompson tries again and she does better. I relax a bit and uncurl my toes. She writes something on a sticky note and sticks it on her desk. It’s probably a reminder on how to say my name and I appreciate her efforts. So many people don’t seem to try at all.

In second grade the teacher said he would call me Q. M. and did so till conference time came. I think my parents spent their entire twenty minutes of meeting time making sure the teacher knew how to say my name! In third grade, a boy named Tom called me “Quart” the whole year. I know it probably should not bother me as much as it does, but I can’t help it. Somehow it feels as if I am being treated unfairly if people mangle my name, as if I am less of a respectable person.

Over time I have noticed two types of “name-manglers”: The first kind is the hurried nurse who is calling me for a doctor’s appointment and getting knots in her tongue while she’s at it. She will be confused and apologetic and usually I am on the lookout and get up as she stands there figuring out what to say. The confused expression on her face tells me it’s my name. She is sorry for not getting it right and that makes me feel ok.

The second type of “name-mangler” does not bother and does not care. An example is our principal; a brilliant man with a Ph. D. and a wall full of framed accomplishments yet defeated by a NAME. He usually calls me KooorAT with complete authority and confidence as if a name like mine has to be disciplined for

it to achieve its goals. I am sure if my parents found out they would rush to my rescue and arrange a name-deciphering meeting immediately. I can see them in my mind, nervously waiting in the office, my mother twitching her lip slightly and blinking rapidly, as she does when excited or nervous. My father would probably be taking notes on a small black notepad he carries everywhere with him, lost in thought, pausing to smooth down his thinning hair every now and then. They would probably succeed in imparting the true pronunciation and the essence of my name by the end of their meeting and I love them for it, but I wish, oh I wish they had named me Anne instead!

I will tell you a secret. I learned from un-named sources that names can legally be changed at the age of eighteen. I had a plan and I was stashing money for it in an old slipper under my bed. But Mrs. Zeblinski changed my mind. She lives two doors down from us and is the neighborhood information centre. She has several small children and I have been a babysitter for them to add to my secret stash in the slipper. I was excited to hear she had brought her new baby girl home from the hospital and hopped over. She was rocking the baby on the swing in her front porch and got very excited when she saw me. She jumped up and kissed me on both cheeks!

“Ah, Qurratul Ain, I was waiting for you to come. Please meet your namesake: my little angel, baby Qurratul Ain Caroline Zeblinski.”

I suddenly felt faint and sank down onto the swing seat.

“Why the long face. Don’t you like her?” asked the kind Mrs. Zeblinski.

I blinked at the tiny pink bundle of new baby-ness, innocent and sweet, and as I imagined her explaining her name to everyone, my heart seemed to shrink.

“Mrs. Zeblinski,” I said trying to keep my voice steady, “Why did you name her Qurratul Ain?”





“After you, of course!” she said, patting my hands. “I have always loved your name. Your mother explained what it means and ever since I have thought, if God gives me a girl this time instead of another boy, I will name her Qurratul Ain. It is a unique name, huh?”

I sighed and looked at her with great sorrow and pity.

“It is *too* unique, Mrs. Zablinski. Think of how difficult it will be for her to keep telling people how to say her name correctly. Kids will tease her and then she will get upset. *It gets very hard,*” I said in a trembling voice.

Mrs. Zablinski gently lifted my face up and wiped the tears from my cheeks. (Will I ever learn not to cry in public?)

“Yes, you are right Qurratul Ain. Life can be hard. But that hardness gives you character. I want my sweet baby to have a strong character like you, a girl who stands up for herself and is not afraid to speak up. She will be the coolness of my eyes, a comfort for me and everyone who meets her, *just like you*. She will be sensitive and understanding, *just like you*. Qurratul Ain is the best name and don’t you bother if it is hard. It has helped you. When you explain your name, you connect with other people, you make a statement that *you are you and no one else* and it is wonderful, huh?”



I smiled and nodded through my tears and gave her a hug. She smelt like a new baby herself. I tenderly kissed baby Qurratul Ain and ran home to count the money in my stash in the slipper. If mom was done with her latest painting of the moon, she might drive me to the mall to buy a present for the baby girl named after me. *My name makes me strong*, I kept whispering to myself, as I skipped downstairs, as light as a snowflake. I couldn’t stop smiling, because after eleven years and four months I had found out that my name was just right.

ASK AYESHA AND SHE WILL ANSWER YOUR WEIRD, WISE AND WACKY QUESTIONS

Dear Ayesha, why does the imam in *salat* stand on the left side, if a few people are praying in a line? It seems that everything else in Islam prefers the right side and the left is supposed to symbolize bad things.

“He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive — they are the basis of the Book — and others are allegorical. Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. And none knows its interpretation save Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord. And none mind except men of understanding. 3:7”

Dear Turned Around

You might be wondering why I'm quoting the verse from the Quran above in answer to your question. Well, it's because the answer to your question is not simple. Ok, Ok, it's because I don't know the answer to your question :) Well, at least not exactly. But I kind of know something that might help you make some sense of your confusion.

See, there are millions of Muslims all around the world; all kinds of people who speak all kinds of languages and do things all kinds of ways. In front of Allah though, we are all the same. He sees us all equally-- not by the color of our skin or the language we speak or whatever. **The oneness of humanity is important to all of us because it means that any Muslim, anywhere in the world is our brother or sister.** The things we do that have to do with Islam help us to remember this fact, because no matter what language you speak, we all pray in Arabic. No matter what way you do things in your regular life, we all pray the same way. We stand, sit, bow, prostrate, turning our heads to the right and then the left to end our prayer.



While all these movements have a certain meaning, worshipping Allah in every posture being one reason, the exact order in which we do things is more convention, I think. That means that even though we do all the postures because

we want to signify that Allah is remembered in every posture of our life, the fact that we stand before we sit is more an order given to us so that we will all pray in the same sequence. Allah gave this method of praying to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and the Prophet taught all of us the order. *Even though there are billions of Muslims in millions of places around the world, no one starts their prayer in prostration. We all start in a standing up position and then bow down and then go into the prostration.* We all do it the same way. The order probably matters less than the fact that we all know how to do it the same way because a certain order was designated.

So if you meet a Muslim sister from Kathmundu, she will pray with you in the exact same way as a Muslim brother from Jiangsu! One way to make this possible is the designation of the Imam standing to the left as a matter of convention. It was designated so that we would all know to do it that way.

Now comes the part of the question where you asked about the left side symbolizing bad things and the right the good. Well, I think that idea comes from verses like this one:

On the day when We shall call every people with their leader: then whoever is given his book in his right hand, these will read their book; and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly. 17:71



The idea of this verse is that Allah is recording all the things we do in life in a book. If there are mostly good things in this book because we did more good deeds, we will be handed the book in our right hand. However if there are mostly bad things because we did a lot of bad deeds, we will be handed the book in our left hand. Let's refer to the verse at the very top now. **In the Quran, Allah has told us that some verses in the Quran are allegorical. This means that a word or idea, e.g., the left side, is only used to get a point across and it is symbolic. It's not exactly meant to be taken word for word.**

If you think about it, that makes total sense in a lot of verses that talk about Heaven because how can we possibly know what the world after this life is like? We will probably not even be perceiving it with the same kinds of eyes and ears, and hands that we have now. **So when Allah tells us about it, He makes comparisons to things in this world that we might understand.** So when He wants to convey that everything we do leaves a lasting impression forever, He tells us it is all written down in a book. It's probably not literally a book because that

book would weigh a million tons if it held all the deeds of a person's



life! How HUGE would the library have to be that holds all the books of all the people from all times? Would you use the Dewey Decimal system to find the books? Would there be a card catalog? If we take things literally they can seem silly! How would my itty bitty hand even hold my book?

Just as verses describing heaven and hell are symbolic, the use of the right hand is also symbolic. It probably comes from the things we use our right hand for in regular life. By convention, the Prophet (pbuh) showed us that clean things, like eating food etc., should be done with the right hand. Dirty things like washing ourselves in the toilet and picking our nose should be done with the left hand. We shouldn't mix up the hands because we may not have gotten our left hand totally clean before we went to eat. We can spread germs and get sick if we eat with a dirty hand. Even if we wash our hands after going to the bathroom, we sometimes can't scrub off all the germs. Think about back in the day when the Prophet was alive, it's not like they had hand sanitizer or running water! Everyone was as clean as they could be, but using the left (dirty) hand to eat with, could still have caused some germs to spread. So one hand was designated for clean stuff and one for dirty stuff. Since 90% of the world is right handed, it sort of makes sense that this is the hand we are supposed to use to do the things that require more skill like eating. However, this doesn't mean that the left is automatically bad. After all, Allah made 10% of us left handed. This is just a physical trait, like the color of our skin. Allah doesn't care to distinguish between us based on our physical form. He loves us based on our deeds and it is our deeds that make us good or bad, not our shapes. Maybe that is why Allah made the imam to stand on the left side while people prayed in a line, to show that the left is also honorable and it is our deeds that matter the most.



So we should be people "*of understanding*" as the Quran asks us to and realize that if we focus on these little things, like if the right side or left side is bad, instead of more important things, like whether our actions are good or bad, we will lose sight of what our religion is all about: a way of living life that will amplify the good things inside us, create love in our hearts for our brothers and sisters, and bring us closer to Allah, the most Perfect source of all good.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR BELOVED PROPHET

When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had passed away, people would visit Hazrat Ayesha in order to find out how he lived his life. Her answer to them would be to tell them to read the Quran to find out how the Prophet (pbuh) lived his life. What this meant was that he followed all the Quranic commands. So basically his life was the Quran.

In the Quran Allah says, “And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it and trust in Allah; surely He is the Hearer, the Knower.” (8:61). **Our Prophet did not like to fight and tried his very best to solve problems with peaceful means even if he or his followers had to suffer.** He would follow the commands of Allah at all cost. The only time he would fight was if he and his followers were attacked first. And then the fight would be in self defense. How could Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) do otherwise, for the religion he brought to the world from Allah was the religion of Islam, and the very word "Islam" means "Peace".

Our Prophet (pbuh) was the most perfect of Mankind. Subhan Allah! He had such endearing habits, one cannot but love him. **He was very humble and did not like proud or rude behavior.** He was always ready to defend the weak and the poor. Almost all his companions in the early days of Islam were poor and oppressed. He was a very simple person and his way of life reflected that. His house was simple and modest, built of clay, palm leaves and trunks. His food consisted mostly of barley bread. Sometimes he would go without food or only fill his stomach with a date or two. Even when he became the virtual king of Arabia he chose to live the life of a humble poor person. He would sit on the ground when eating and sleep on the ground too with a simple mat serving as his bed. When his clothes were torn he would patch them himself and also mend his own shoes.



Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) socialized with his companions as one of them, talking, listening, smiling and displaying a sense of humor. Sometimes he might join in their laughter to cheer their spirits up. He would visit them when they felt sick and prayed for them. If someone shook hands with him, he would not unclasp his hand till the other did it first. And he was always the first to greet even those younger than him. These were but a few of his most beautiful qualities. We are so lucky to have him as our role model. May Allah help us to follow him, so that we can become good Muslims living peacefully in the world. Ameen.

