

Masjid Tucson United Submitters International

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THE REMARKABLE CAMEL

Why do they not reflect on the camels and how they are created? [88:17]

Of all the animals mentioned in the scriptures—dogs, horses, birds, locusts, etc.—why did God pick the camel as the one we should reflect on? Because its creation is its own miracle. The camel is not always seen as a beautiful animal. But it is absolutely perfect for what it needs to do and where it needs to survive. This is a gift from God. Without camels, no one could travel in the deserts, so huge sections of the world would be not just difficult to live on, but completely unlivable.

All of the camel is practical for his survival and for his service to man. A camel's feet, although hoofed, have large pads that spread out in the soft sand to keep the animal from sinking in. His face is designed as protection from sun and sand. The thick eyebrows, heavy eyelids and thick lashes all keep out sand, and there's even a third eyelid that can close in heavy storms. The slit nostrils have special muscles which can close them against blowing sand. The ears have thick hair inside as well as outside to prevent dirt and sand from getting down inside the ear, and possibly causing infection.

A camel's hump is a lump of fat. This is used as a source of energy when food is scarce. The hump may actually shrink when no food is available, but the camel can live off it for many days. And it will reform perfectly when food is again available. Because food is so scarce, the camel must be able to eat anything (even the tents). The lining of the mouth is very tough so that the camel can bite and chew thorny cactus plants without harm to the mouth.

Most incredible is how the camel deals with heat and lack of water. First of all, camels have a low metabolic rate, so energy is used slowly. The body temperature has a wide range of normal. It may start the day at 94 and hit 105 in the heat of the afternoon. (Our normal temperature is 98 and at 101, we're sick). The camel is one of few animals that can sweat. The coarse body hair, which acts as a protection against the direct sun, also allows the camel this ability to sweat. Sweating is a more efficient cooling system than panting and less precious fluid is lost. Additionally, in its incredibly efficient way, the camel doesn't sweat until its body temperature is near the top of its range.

No other creature can process water in the same way. It does not lose water from blood, only from the tissue. Thus the blood stays properly thin enough to circulate and remove body heat. The camel will only drink when needed and only replace what's lost. If he lost 5 gallons over the last two days, he will drink 5 gallons and walk away. He may not drink at all in winter. And the camel can quickly replace all water lost—25 gallons in a very short time. Other animals drinking too fast can die from water intoxication.

So camels are truly remarkable animals. When we reflect on their creation, as God instructs us to do, we can't help but marvel at the ways God made them fit perfectly into their niche. May God help each of us to fit our own niche as well.

Lydia Kelley

Submitter Communities Worldwide

By God's grace, the submitter communities around the world are growing. We would like to mention some of these communities below to help increase the communication amongst the submitters.

Canada
Singapore
Hong Kong
Malaysia
Switzerland
England
New Zealand
Sweden
Nigeria

If you are in one of these countries, and would like the get in touch with the sub-

mitters there, please let us know. God willing, we will try to put you in contact with the submitter community in your area.

On a similar subject of communication, please help us keep our mailing list up-to-date. Let us know if you change your address or telephone number. Please also encourage the people in your community to be included in our mailing list. God bless you for all your efforts.

Bombay, India
Brisbane, Australia
Istanbul, Turkey

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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CHRISTMAS

HISTORY, HERSTORY, MYSTORY

The year was 1968. Our family had just moved back to Indonesia from overseas. We had spent four years away from the country when my father worked for a Government mission abroad. Now that we were back, I had to adjust to a new life in a small town. This meant having to make new friends, and even learning to speak the local dialect. I was starting my final year of junior high. It was also there that I got my first taste of formal Islamic religion class in public school. The only thing that I can recall from this particular episode in my life was that religion was not a fun subject at all.

God does not wish to make the religion difficult for you....He has placed no hardship on you in practicing your religion.... (5:6, 22:78)

Don't get me wrong, I loved school and had always excelled in it. It's just the image of this teacher, standing before the class supposedly teaching us about God, Most Gracious Most Merciful, with a big stick in his hand. He did not use it a lot, and certainly not on me. Perhaps because I was a new transfer student from overseas (which was a rarity in that small town), with an impeccable academic record. Except, that is, I never had had a course in Islamic religion.

Somehow, the image of this man with his stick turned me off completely. And I thought that religion was supposed to be easy to practice.

So here I was in this new town, at a new school, taking a completely new subject. I was determined to succeed in this class despite the 'strange' attitude of the teacher. I managed to memorize all the historic dates, the rules, the do's and don'ts, the permissible and the prohibited. Even the weird daily living habits of the seventh century people that we're supposed to emulate in this twentieth century. But one thing remained an obstacle: I could not, and would not endear myself to this teacher, unlike my attitude towards other teachers whose subjects I enjoyed learning. Here was this guy, telling us to memorize this or that *hadith*, and ordering us to come to the blackboard to write it down—in Arabic, no less! (For some reason he never asked me). When many of my friends would fail, he would embarrass them with his sharp words, and sometimes with his stick. How could I endear myself to a teacher, or a subject, like that?

After difficulty there is relief. Indeed, after difficulty there is relief. (94:5-6)

I graduated with honors from that junior high, despite my less than perfect grade in religion. I was ready to start my freshmen year of high school in the capital city of Jakarta. I was looking forward to a new atmosphere. Compared to where I came from, Jakarta was—shall we say—more enlightened, more cosmopolitan. And my high school was one of the best high schools at the time. And yet, in my first

week of school I encountered that dreaded subject again: Islamic religion. I anticipated the class with apprehension, almost bordering on suspicion. However, when the teacher came into our classroom, she had a totally different air about her. She greeted us with a smile, and she did not carry any stick. What a relief, indeed.

Her name was Mrs. J, as I affectionately called her. To this day I still remember her, although she has long since passed away. Her peaceful persona, the gentle way she talked, everything about her was a total opposite of my religion teacher just the year before. She explained Islam to our teen age minds by quoting from the wisdom of God's own words in the Quran, true to the lesson that I learned much later in life, i.e. that God provides the best argument (6:149, 25:33).

One day, Mrs. J came in the class and as usual, took her seat in her special high chair. This was the Christmas season, and her topic that day was Mary's ordeal upon receiving God's words that she will carry a baby without being touched by a man. She started by reading from the Quran, Sura 3 (the chapter entitled 'The Amramites') verses 35 to 37, which described the birth of Mary and her righteous upbringing under the guardianship of Zachariah.

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Christmas *continued*

The wife of Amram said, "My Lord, I have dedicated (the baby) in my belly to You, totally, so accept from me. You are Hearer, Omniscient." When she gave birth to her she said, "My Lord, I have given birth to a girl" - God was fully aware of what she bore - "The male is not the same as the female. I have named her Mary, and I invoke Your protection for her and her descendants from the rejected devil." Her Lord accepted her a gracious acceptance, and brought her up a gracious upbringing, under the guardianship of Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah entered her sanctuary he found provisions with her. He would ask, "Mary, where did you get this from?" She would say, "It is from God. God provides for whomever He chooses, without limits." (3:35-37)

She followed this by reading from Sura 19, which is entitled 'Mary'. As she went on reading the chapter, the class became very quiet. Her voice mesmerized us, and her story brought us across continents to a completely different era. Somewhere in the lands of the prophets, two millennia before our own time.

Mention in the Scripture Mary. She isolated herself from her family, into an eastern location. While a barrier separated her from them, we sent to her our Spirit. He went to her in the form of a human being. She said, "I seek refuge in the Most Gracious, that you may be righteous." He said, "I am the messenger of your Lord, to grant you a pure son." She said, "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me; I have never been unchaste." He said, "Thus said your Lord, 'It is easy for Me. We will render him a sign for the people, and mercy from us. This is a matter already predestined.'" (19:16-21)

I was very familiar with the traditional Christmas story, having spent my first five years of education in private Catholic schools. Although it was somewhat surprising for me at the time that the Quran contained such a detailed account on Mary, what I heard from Mrs. J so far was in agreement with the Biblical account. She then continued with the story, which by now was describing the events of Mary's burden of pregnancy, and of Jesus' birth.

When she bore him, she isolated herself to a faraway place. The birth process came to

her by the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "(I am so ashamed) I wish I were dead before this happened, and completely forgotten." (19:22-23)

At this point, Mrs. J's voice started to crack and her eyes began to flow. Very soon, her eyes were not the only ones filled with tears in the room. Suddenly we all realized the pain that Mary had to endure, more so than from any Christmas story we had ever heard before. Slowly, Mrs. J continued on with the story. How Mary struggled with her difficulty willingly. And how, by God's will, the baby Jesus miraculously comforted his mother in times of need.

(The infant) called her from beneath her, saying, "Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided you with a stream. If you shake the trunk of this palm tree, it will drop ripe dates for you. Eat and drink, and be happy. When you see anyone, say, 'I have made a vow of silence; I am not talking today to anyone.'" (19:24-26)

Then it hit me. The Quranic account of what happened to Mary and Jesus had parted company with the traditional Christian version that we, and the world, had known. And yet, this Quranic narrative that came out through her story, or rather, history, was much more gripping, and even more astounding. Think about the hint of the ripe date palms as an indication of the time of year when Jesus was born. Rather than December 25, which was a carryover from the pre-Christian celebration of the Winter solstice, the actual Christmas must have been in late September or early October. That is the period when dates ripen in that part of the world, to the point where they fall off their palm trees. And why did people begin to celebrate Christmas anyway?

She came to her family, carrying him. They said, "O Mary, you have committed something that is totally unexpected. O descendant of Aaron, your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother unchaste." She pointed to him. They said, "How can we talk with an infant in the crib?" (The infant spoke and) said, "I am a servant of God. He has given me the scripture, and has appointed me a prophet. He made me blessed wherever I go, and enjoined me to observe the contact prayers (salat) and the obligatory charity (zakat) for as long as I live. I am to honor my mother; He did not make me a disobedient rebel. And peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I get resurrected." (19:27-33)

There was no manger, nor any mention of the inns that were full. No mention of the visit of the shepherd and the three Kings from the East either. And, for that matter, no mention of Joseph, who in the traditional Christmas story was made a husband to Mary and hence would have acted as her protector from the people. Just Mary and her baby, alone and despised by all, risking her reputation and her life by daring to submit to God's will - to carry a baby, miraculously, without the benefit of having a husband. And who would be crazy enough to believe her? After all, she lived in a society where adultery - basically what she was accused of committing - was punishable by stoning to death, according to their Jewish law. Her only protector was God, who made the baby Jesus speak to the people in defense of his mother's innocence. What a heart-rending account, what a touching story!

Whether Mary was eventually married and bore more children was immaterial, as far as the birth of Jesus was concerned. The Quran, unlike the Gospel, did not mention any of this. In God's own proven words of the Quran, the true story of Christmas contained more important lessons. The lesson of Mary's exemplary submission to her Creator. The lesson that God will always protect His servants who are devoted to Him alone. And most importantly, the lesson that Jesus never had any part in his idolization beside God, so rampant especially during this time of the year. This lesson, ironically, is still found even in today's Gospel, for example the Gospel of John 20:17.

That was Jesus, the son of Mary; and this is the truth of this matter, about which they continue to doubt. It does not befit God that He begets a son, be He glorified. To have anything done, He simply says to it, "Be," and it is. (Jesus) also proclaimed, "God is my Lord and your Lord, you shall worship Him alone. This is the right path." (19:34-36)

Dr. Gatut Adisoma

(Dedicated to the memory of my teacher Mrs. J. The many stories that she read from the Quran, still vivid in my mind, gave me a different and beautiful picture of Islam early on. May God rest her soul in peace)

Notes on the 9th Annual Conference

The following is a summary of the talks given on the final day of the conference, on Sunday morning, July 17, 1994.

The first speaker of the day was Feroz Karmally. He began his talk by threatening to sing, and ended by whistling "Hopelessly Devoted to You." In between he spoke of his vision for a multi media version of the Quran for the computer, with sight and sound, animated illustrations. He spoke of ways to use the Quran as the source - you can then apply your opinion, your scholar's opinion, or the messenger's opinion. He added that messengers make mistakes in personal things, but not in what they preach - there are no examples of the latter in the Quran. Quranic definitions of idol worship involve giving power to the messengers, which can be manifested in many different ways.

Chester White talked about the Quran's function to deliver good news as well as warnings. He quoted 6:159 which criticizes people who divide themselves into sects. He also reminded us not to fall into the same trap, and that one way to do that is by being amicable to each other.

Parivash made several remarks on people's various attitude vis-a-vis the message of God alone and the Quran alone. She then concentrated on two groups of people who accept the Quran alone and Rashad as the messenger of the covenant. Among these are submitters who strive to find errors in Rashad's translation of the Quran, and others who consider that Rashad's translation is perfect without any mistakes. The first group may create doubts in other believers'

hearts, and the second group creates division caused by idol worship. In closing, she implored the two groups not to go to extremes. She also reminded us that since we all have the same road map, we should take the same exit which will bring us to our common destination.

Azhar Khan discussed the aspects of spreading the message through electronic bulletin boards. He explained how a computer in your house or office can be used to post messages that others can read and reply to, for as low as \$10 a month. Basically, one has to be hooked to a bulletin board that has a section on religion or Islam, and know how to send and receive electronic mail. He concentrated on Compuserve and its various tools and utilities one can use to post and retrieve messages.

Abdullah Arik was the final speaker and he closed the conference by first thanking God, the conference organizers and all the participants. He quoted Verse 8:17 reminding us that God is the doer of everything, but He gives the believers a chance to earn credits for all good works. He emphasized that our goal is to deliver the message, and deliver it more efficiently. There is so much work to be done, and not enough time to do all of it. Therefore we should work harder and not even think of bickering among ourselves. He closed his speech by quoting Verse 5:105:

O you who believe, you should worry about your own necks. If the others go astray, they cannot hurt you, as long as you are guided...

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