

The Mosque At Basking Ridge: A Morality Tale? (Part 7)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Busy as ever, Mr. Chaudry has been inviting non-Muslims to visit the Islamic Center, and after the service, in an adjoining room, Chaudry and the Center's imam took their questions:

Why were the women and men separated for prayers? Does the Qur'an prohibit women from driving? What's the deal with sharia, and is it practiced in America? They answered each query patiently, providing some basic theology with a leavening dash of humour. A warm feeling of fellowship inflated like a soap bubble.

Do you think these were the right questions – the most important questions – to ask? And how do you think they were answered? No doubt with something like this: “Women and men are separated for prayers because men will naturally be distracted by seeing females; it's the same reason that women choose to wear the hijab, so as not to tempt or distract Muslim males.” As for bans on driving, no doubt Chaudry was delighted to explain: “No, no, only in Saudi Arabia was there such a ban, and even that is no longer in force, so that those islamophobes who claim Muslim women are constrained and subservient to their menfolk are just not paying attention. Non-Muslims, I am sorry to say, seem to be greatly misinformed about Muslim women. They are in every walk of life. Doctors, lawyers, financial analysts, reporters, foreign policy experts. Did you know that Muhammad's first wife, Khadija, was a canny businesswoman? No, very few people know about her – it's hardly ever mentioned.” (N.B.: Khadija as a businesswoman

is a staple of Muslim propaganda.)

And “what’s the deal with sharia” will undoubtedly elicit a response like this: “As you know, one of the charges islamophobes like to make is that Muslims are trying to impose their law – Sharia – on everyone in this country. Let me answer with an emphatic ‘No’ and with a question of my own: where, in this country, in what state or what city or what town, has anyone tried to impose this much-feared Sharia? The answer is ‘nowhere.’ It’s a completely absurd charge. In fact, of the 57 member states in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, guess how many actually apply classical Sharia law? Fewer than ten, but since these include Iran and Saudi Arabia, countries always in the news, fear of this Sharia law is greatly exaggerated. Don’t worry – there won’t be any chopping off of hands in Basking Ridge.” (Laughter)

“I live nearby, and I’ve driven by this Islamic Society any number of times,” said one woman. “And I always wondered, what’s going on in there?”

“Making Islamic bombs!” Chebli [a Muslim woman and member of the Islamic Society] interjected, eliciting a big laugh.

“What we’re doing,” she went on, “is we’re dispelling the mystery.”

Was the “mystery” dispelled? What exactly did the non-Muslims learn of significance about Islam? Did they learn, for example, that in saying their five daily prayers they curse the Kuffar seventeen times a day, as Robert Spencer has repeatedly explained:

In the course of praying the requisite five prayers a day, an observant Muslim will recite the Fatihah, the first surah of the Qur’an and the most common prayer in Islam, seventeen times. The final two verses of the Fatihah ask Allah: “Show us the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast

favoured; not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.” The traditional Islamic understanding of this is that the “straight path” is Islam – cf. Islamic apologist John Esposito’s book Islam: The Straight Path. The path of those who have earned Allah’s anger are the Jews, and those who have gone astray are the Christians.”

Did they learn a single verse from the Qur’an during that Islamic Society open house? Possibly one verse: “There is no compulsion in religion.” (2:256) And one hadith where Muhammad, returning home from battle, says that “We have returned from Jihad Asghar [lesser jihad] to Jihad Akbar [greater jihad].” This hadith has no source, but that has not stopped Muslim apologists from constantly citing it when they try to convince non-Muslims that “Jihad” is the struggle to be a good Muslim.

“There was a strong feeling in the mosque, a feeling of peace,” said an elderly Jewish man. “I was crying, because there was this beauty to all of it.”

That “elderly Jewish man,” so moved at the sight of all that peace inside the mosque, with the Muslims prostrate in prayer, that he found himself crying at the “beauty of all of it,” might be given something else that should make him cry. Let him read Robert Spencer’s devastating summary of anti-Jewish verses in the Qur’an, and of what Qur’anic commentators have written, even up to today, about the Jews:

The Qur’an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah’s power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78);

staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah's beloved people (5:18); devouring people's wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more.

The classic Qur'anic commentators do not mitigate the Qur'an's words against Jews, but only add fuel to the fire. Ibn Kathir explained Qur'an 2:61 ("They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah") this way: "This Ayah [verse] indicates that the Children of Israel were plagued with humiliation, and that this will continue, meaning that it will never cease. They will continue to suffer humiliation at the hands of all who interact with them, along with the disgrace that they feel inwardly." Another Middle Ages commentator of lingering influence, Abdallah ibn Umar al-Baidawi, explains the same verse this way: "The Jews are mostly humiliated and wretched either of their own accord, or out of coercion of the fear of having their jizya [punitive tax] doubled."

Ibn Kathir notes Islamic traditions that predict that at the end of the world, "the Jews will support the Dajjal (False Messiah), and the Muslims, along with 'Isa [Jesus], son of Mary, will kill the Jews." The idea in Islam that the end times will be marked by Muslims killing Jews comes from the prophet Muhammad himself, who said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone

behind which a Jew will be hiding will say. 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" This is, not unexpectedly, a favorite motif among contemporary jihadists.

Not just contemporary jihadists, but modern-day mainstream Islamic authorities take these passages seriously. The former Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, who was the most respected cleric in the world among Sunni Muslims, called Jews "the enemies of Allah, descendants of apes and pigs." The late Saudi sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Sudayyis, imam of the principal mosque in the holiest city in Islam, Mecca, said in a sermon that Jews are "the scum of the human race, the rats of the world, the violators of pacts and agreements, the murderers of the prophets, and the offspring of apes and pigs."

Another Saudi sheikh, Ba'd bin Abdallah al-Ajameh al-Ghamidi, made the connection between Jews now and those living "at the dawn of Islam": "The current behavior of the brothers of apes and pigs, their treachery, violation of agreements, and defiling of holy places ... is connected with the deeds of their forefathers during the early period of Islam—which proves the great similarity between all the Jews living today and the Jews who lived at the dawn of Islam."

Another visitor to Chaudry's Islamic Center, a woman, was deeply grateful to him: "I think occasions like this really help us all to understand what Islam and being a Muslim is all about. And my biggest concern right now is what is happening to this country with our current president."

What did she now "understand" about "what Islam and being a Muslim is all about"? Does she have an inkling of what the texts of Islam teach about Infidels? Or that Jihad, as violent warfare, is commanded by 109 verses in the Qur'an? Has she learned anything about Muhammad and the raid on Khaybar, Muhammad and Saafiya, Muhammad and Asma bint Marwan, Abu

'Afak, Ka'b bin al-Ashraf, Muhammad and nine-year-old Aisha?
Don't be silly.

*The imam then said to his visitors: "America does not belong to any president. America does not belong to any religion. **This is our country.**" Chaudry sought to defuse the sudden tension. He said he looked forward to welcoming more groups to visit, and learn, in Liberty Corner [the older residential part of Basking Ridge].*

"Inshallah," he said, "when we have our own mosque." The triumphalism, both of the imam and of Chaudry himself, was palpable. The imam's "America does not belong to any religion. This is our country" even caused a "sudden tension" among visitors, which Chaudry "sought to defuse."

And that concludes the upside-down morality tale of Basking Ridge, where zoning ordinances, and 39 public hearings, and the articulate will of the people, all came to naught, while Muhammad Ali Chaudry played the victim of bigots to great effect. Not only has his mosque been given the go-ahead, but thanks to Obama's Department of Justice, the taxpayers of Bernards Township, in which Basking Ridge is located, have had to pay Muhammad Ali Chaudry the colossal, and quite unnecessary sum, of \$3.5 million. A few were glad, but many lamented.

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