

# Islam

## The philosophy and the traditions are often misunderstood

By Arlene Funk  
Special writer

Did you know that Muslims have reverence for Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ? Are you aware that Muslims hold sacred the city of Jerusalem, as do Christians and Jews?

The three monotheistic faiths — Christianity, Judaism and Islam — are joined under one God and message," said Imam Muhammad Karoub, 66, of Farmington Hills, a spiritual leader in the Islamic community.

Islam means "Submission to God." Those who believe in Islam are Muslims, meaning, in Arabic, "one who has given himself to God." Islam is a multifaceted religion, rooted in Jewish and Christian theology. Founded in 622 A.D. Arabia by the prophet Muhammad, Islam is based on an intense prayer life and acting to the will of God — Allah.

THE KORAN, the holy book of Islam, contains divine revelations and rules for daily life.

Few non-Muslims understand Islam, said Habib Shoroun Wine of the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills.

"Most people in the United States know little about any religion except Christianity," said Wine, 62, of Birmingham.

Wine has made numerous trips to Islamic countries. When he speaks to groups about his travels, "I find that people are sometimes amazed. They aren't aware of certain realities."

Islam claims 800 million adherents worldwide. Predominant in the Middle East, it also has followers in large portions of Africa, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Sizeable numbers of Muslims live in Turkey, the Balkan states and portions of the Soviet Union.

Around 4 million Muslims live in North America, said Nihad Hamed, of the Federation of Islamic Associations, based in Redford. The FIA is an umbrella group of some 40 Islamic organizations.

Approximately 160,000 Muslims live in metro Detroit.

"They come from all backgrounds and ethnic groups," said Hamed, 62, secretary-general of the FIA.

THE FEDERATION, founded in 1952, promotes the ethics and philosophy of Islam. It raises money to build mosques, distribute copies of the Koran and award scholarships. It

tries to promote good relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and to correct misconceptions about the religion.

Political concerns have taken prominence since the rise of Muslim fundamentalists such as the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran.

"It subdivided the community," said Hamed. "It has polarized the Muslim world and more polarization is coming."

Many local Muslims are native Americans. Karoub, who conducts prayer services and teaches Islamic law, was born and reared in Detroit. Others are naturalized American citizens, such as Hamed.

Muslims revere the prophets of Jewish and Christian scriptures. They believe Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet. They believe that Muhammad wasn't divine, but an instrument chosen to bring God's message.

"Islam is an accumulation of ideas drawn from Christianity, Judaism and Islam," Hamed said.

The Prophet Muhammad, at age 40, had a religious experience. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to him in a dream. The angel said Muhammad must preach the divine word of the one God. Revelations would come in a series of visions.

MUHAMMAD EXPERIENCED persecution in Mecca, where many people were pagans. He fled to Medina and formed an army. He eventually triumphed over his old adversaries in Mecca. Within 100 years, Islamic warriors and missionaries conquered much of the world.

Mecca and Medina are Islamic shrines. Jerusalem also is a holy city for Muslims. The Dome of the Rock, a shrine in Jerusalem, marks the place from which Muhammad ascended into heaven to receive instructions, according to tradition.

Muslims must follow the six Articles of Faith, outlined in the Koran. These include belief in God, the prophets, the scriptures and angels, all of whom have specific duties.

The Articles of Faith also decree a Judgment Day, when human deeds are weighed. And, finally, Muslims

believe in predestination. Human life is decreed by Allah. However, since humans cannot know their destinies they must make their own choices for good and evil.

When things go badly, Muslims may say "It is the will of Allah."

The Five Pillars of Islam outline religious duties required. These are: Reciting the Creed, or Declaration, that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet, praying five times a day, giving alms to the poor, fasting from dawn to dusk during the Holy Month of Ramadan, and, if feasible, making one pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, where they must perform certain religious acts.

THE TWO MAJOR sects are the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The differences tend to be in style.

"They all worship God, the one God of us all," said Karoub, who is also religious director of the Federation of Islamic Associations. "The Koran unites us. The five daily prayers are adhered to by both. In the final analysis, Islam is the umbrella for all."

Although some 80 percent of the world's Muslims belong to the Sunni sect, at least half of local Muslims are Shiite, due to heavy immigration from Lebanon.

The Sunnis elect their leaders, while the Shites invest their leaders with an aura of spirituality. The Shites also tend to be more "traditionalists," according to Karoub. For example, the late Ayatollah Khomeini was a Shiite.

The split dates to political differences over who would succeed the

Prophet Muhammad. Karoub said. Those differences have continued. "Ethnicity is pervasive," Karoub said. "People tend to worship with their own."

Each Friday, Muslims go to the mosque for congregational prayer. The mosque is characterized by its rounded dome and minaret, a slender tower from which the mufti's piercing voice traditionally issued call to prayer.

Mosque means "place of kneeling." Muslims remove their shoes before entering the mosque and wash before saying prayers. The imam leads the prayers, which always are spoken in Arabic. Muslims must pray facing Mecca.

MEN AND women pray in separate sections. Worshipers recite their prayers either standing, bowing, prostrating themselves or kneeling on prayer mats.

Islamic law also has influenced Muslim lifestyle. Gambling, alcoholic beverages and eating pork are forbidden.

The Koran allows men to have up to four wives; provided they can treat all equally. However, Muslims are subject to local laws. In practice, it is unusual for a man to have more than one wife in many Muslim countries.

Orthodox Muslim nations such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, forbid the mingling of sexes in public. Women in these countries must be covered completely, including veils when appearing in public. Other countries are not so strict.

The Birmingham Temple's Wine has visited Muslim countries and re-

gions of the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan and Soviet Central Asia.

Wine enjoyed visiting with local people on those trips. He usually communicated in English and French.

"I was eager to learn about the local culture," he said.

WHILE SOME Muslim nations are prosperous, others are poverty-stricken Muslim countries which never have experienced the industrial and scientific revolutions are "intensely conservative," with more regimented lifestyles, Wine said.

"It makes it more difficult to communicate religious differences," Wine said. And, in view of present world conditions, "it's dangerous not to have this information" about Islamic beliefs, he said.

Religious fundamentalism — Christian, Jewish or Islamic — disturbs Wine. During a visit to Egypt, he witnessed demonstrations by fundamentalists who regarded the government as "too liberal."

It was frightening," Wine said. "People who are fundamentalists believe they have the entire truth." Hamed and Karoub also are worried. Both voiced fears about the economic and human toll of a prolonged war in the Middle East.

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## Area actress appears in Shakespeare play

Rhonda Furman, daughter of David and Patricia Furman of Farmington, appears in "Love's Labour's Lost" at the Bonstelle Theatre. She is a graduate of Farmington High and a senior at Wayne State University. Shakespeare's first comedy is playing at the Bonstelle for two weekends, March 1-10.

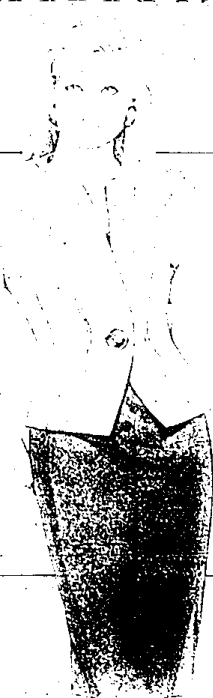
Furman was most recently seen in the Bonstelle's production of "Anything Goes" and is a member of the WSU "Movin' Theatre" dance ensemble. She also appeared this past summer in "Fame" and the "Farewell" at the Cherry County Playhouse Children's Theatre.

In "Love Labour's Lost" Shakespeare reflects the attitudes, foibles and gossip of contemporary London society in his day. This genial, good-natured satire was originally written to amuse an aristocratic London elite, however, as with all of Shakespeare's works, he transcends mere topicality and presents universal and timeless themes that appeal in any age.

Tickets are \$8 or \$6 for students, senior citizens and WSU alumni. Special group and student rates are available. For reservations and information, call the Bonstelle box office at 577-2960.

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