

Inside this issue

Celebrating birthdays	2
Power of civilisation	3
The people of Jannah.....	7
Voice of Islam.....	11

Rocket Science

January 2021

Jumada al-Awal / Jumada al-Akhir 1442



In the name of Allah,
most Gracious, most Merciful

We are ten years old!

Al hamdu lillah! We started *Rocket Science* in January 2011. So, this issue marks the tenth anniversary of production.

To start with, *Rocket Science* was intended as a means of making the various bayans and khutbahs delivered at Rocket Park jumaah Friday prayers available to a wider audience. And this remains the major source of material for *Rocket Science*.

At that time, we produced *Rocket Science* as a monthly online publication, not knowing whether we would find enough to say to continue on a monthly basis. However, Islam is such an all-embracing religion that we have managed, month after month, to fill these pages with articles that we hope you find interesting.

So, welcome to our 121st issue!

Mount Albert Islamic Trust would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles to the newsletter, or helped in other ways in its production.

Of course, the people we thank the most are you, the subscribers and readers. If nobody read *Rocket Science*, there would be little point in producing it.



Our first issue, January 2011

Celebrating birthdays

With *Rocket Science* celebrating 10 years of continuous publication, it's an appropriate time to consider how we Muslims can mark birthdays.

Before examining the legal ruling regarding birthday celebrations, it is worth remembering a general principle: Islam strictly disapproves of imitation of the non-believers (kuffar). In a hadith recorded by Abu Dawud and others (ra), the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, "Whosoever imitates a nation is amongst them."

Imitation, which is prohibited, can occur in one of these two ways:

1. We do something *with the intention* of imitating the kuffar, meaning we do so because we want to be like a particular non-believer or non-believers. This is a danger for us living as a minority in a country like New Zealand; we may compromise our beliefs unnecessarily simply in order to be seen to "fit in".

2. We inadvertently imitate them by doing something that is unique and exclusive to the non-believers or is part of their faith.

There is a saying in English that "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." However, for us, it is to be avoided.

Remembering the above general principle, let us now look specifically at the Shariah (legal) ruling on celebrating birthdays.

If a birthday is celebrated by imitating the non-believers, in that customs unique to them are adopted, or acts that are unlawful in Shariah are committed, then there is no doubt of their impermissibility.

The lighting of candles on a cake that number the years of one's life and then blowing them out, playing of music, singing, extravagance, lavish spending and showing off are all unlawful, forbidden practices. Celebrating birthdays in these ways is clearly not permissible.

We can, however, take a birthday as an opportunity to humbly give thanks to Allah (swt) and show our gratitude for being blessed with one more year of life. Not everything that non-Muslims wear, eat and do is haram (unlawful). We can enjoy sharing a cake (without candles). Our children can have their friends around. We can enjoy some activities together. There is nothing wrong with that.

One final point: keep in mind at all times that our actions will be judged according to our intentions.



The power of civilisation

Allah (swt) says in the Quran (47:10-11), "Have they not travelled through the earth, and seen what was the end of those before them? Allah destroyed them completely, and a similar (fate awaits) the disbelievers. That is because Allah is the Maula (Lord, Master, Helper, Protector, etc.) of those who believe, and the disbelievers have no Maula."

All nations not only wish, but also work hard, sacrifice and strive, in order to be ahead of other nations. No nation wants to be at the bottom and behind others.

There are two different methodologies that nations use to achieve their goal of being ahead of others, and in fact leading others.

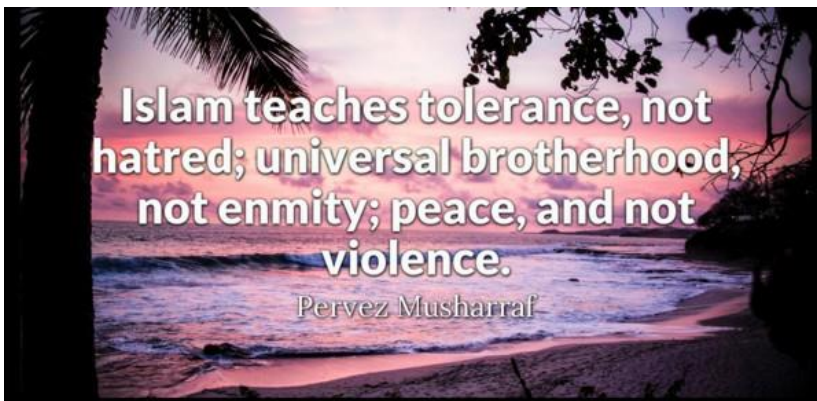
Some nations strive to do that by using the clean history they have, the message they have for humanity, the religion they believe in and the achievements they have served humanity with. Such nations strive to be leading others by what scholars call the "Power of Civilisation". A strong civilisation is strong in its religion, strong in its scientific heritage, ethical heritage, intellectual heritage and

humanitarian heritage. A nation with such a strong civilisation influences others and marches ahead with its civilisation.

On the other hand, other nations who also want to be in the forefront of nations try to do so by their own force, violence, injustice, exploiting others, etc. This is what scholars call the "Civilisation of Power".

There is a massive difference between the power of civilisation and the civilisation of power. A nation that leads by the power of civilisation is one that does so in the most beautiful ways and depending on one of the cleanest histories of nations. On the other hand, a nation that leads by the civilisation of power attempts to make a civilisation using their own power and force.

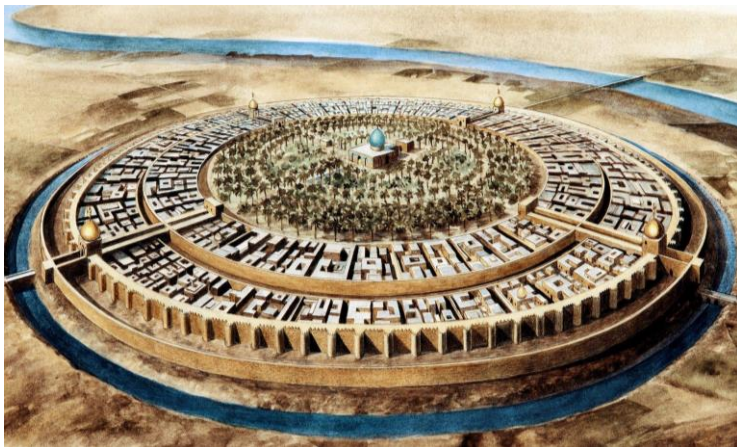
Let's have a look in history and see how nations have been in the forefront using their power of civilisation, and how others have been wiped from history because they wanted to be at the forefront using their own force and power, thinking that is a shorter way.



Egypt

The Romans at some stage decided to invade Egypt¹ although the Egyptians at the time were also Christian; but the Romans were Catholic Christians and the Egyptians at the time were Coptic Orthodox Christians. The Romans invaded the Egyptians and were cruel to them, despite being of the same Christian religion. That is because religion did not change the Romans, so they stayed cruel as they used to be when they were pagan. They were so brutal that they grilled the brother of the top patriarch as the patriarch himself had escaped. This is called the civilisation of power. Did that cause the Egyptians to become Catholic? The opposite is true, they were more determined to not change their religion.

At this time, the Muslim armies were coming out of Arabia, liberating the oppressed and ensuring justice was applied and humans were enjoying all of their rights like the right to choose their religion and whom they worship. The interesting thing is that Egyptians opened the gates to the Muslim army. After the Muslims liberated Egypt and the Egyptians saw the justice and equality the



Baghdad, before it was sacked

Muslims ruled with, the vast majority embraced Islam. About 90% of Egyptians today are Muslim. This is the power of civilisation. So the Romans' civilisation of power left no impact in the long run, while the Islamic power of civilisation has made a lasting impact that we can see today more than a millennium later.

Baghdad

The Mongols invaded the Muslim world and in 1258 reached Baghdad, which at the time had six million people. Imagine a city of six million people more than seven centuries ago. It was the capital of the world. The Mongols came with the intention to lead by the civilisation of power. They did not even have a proper religion; they were pagans and believed in brutality more than anything else. They killed and burnt and destroyed and had control. They had a reputation, even amongst Muslims, that they were unbeatable. But it was only two years later when Muslims defeated them in the battle of Ain Jalut². Many of the Mongols escaped and many were killed, and the rest embraced Islam. They could have escaped too, and they did not have to embrace Islam.

However, after they realised the Islamic power of civilisation, they not only embraced Islam, but also when they left for their homelands, they established Muslim states that contributed massively to the Islamic caliphate. This is another example where the Mongols' civilisation of power had no impact on the long run, in fact the Mongols themselves became Muslim and submitted to the Islamic power of civilisation.

Crusaders

Another similar story is that of the Crusaders who invaded Muslim lands for 90 years. It is true that only small numbers of the Crusaders actually embraced Islam after the Battle of Hattin³ in 1187. It is true that most of the Crusaders went back to their homelands after they were defeated in the Battle of Hattin.

But the lasting impact of Islamic civilisation over the Crusaders is described in a 2001 book written by the German writer and doctor in religious studies, Sigrid Hunke⁴, entitled *Allah's sun over the Occident: Our Arabic Heritage* (*Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland: Unser arabisches Erbe* in the original German) in which she explains Muslim influence over Western values. She explains how the Crusaders went back with many Muslim traditions and practices in every walk of life, starting as she says with cleanliness. At the time, people in Europe used to rarely clean their bodies, and some believed in getting closer to God by staying dirty and not cleaning themselves. The Crusaders went back to their lands influenced by the Islamic power of civilisation which left a lasting impact on them until today, while their civilisation of power had no lasting impact despite invading Muslims for 90 years.



Prisoners

What else does history tell us? It is well known that humans like freedom and that people hate those who try to take their freedom from them and would fight them in every possible way.

What is interesting is that history is full of stories where a Muslim prisoner would be the cause for his jailer to embrace Islam after seeing how straight, ethical, pious and calm the prisoner is. The mean jailer embraces the religion of the prisoner.

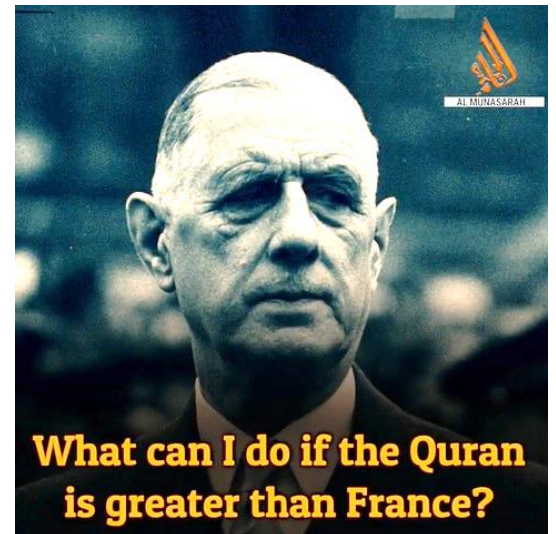
What is more interesting though is that, vice versa, a non-Muslim prisoner would be so impressed with the jailer that he would embrace Islam. This has happened not only in the past but even today. The French aid worker Sophie Petronin was imprisoned by some Muslim militia in Mali for four years, and when she was released and made it back to France in October 2020, she declared that she had embraced Islam and named herself *Maryam*⁵. Normally such a person who has been kidnapped and imprisoned for four years would hate those who imprisoned her, but the opposite is true here: she was so impressed with them and their religion and civilisation that she decided to embrace Islam instead. This is the power of civilisation in its best forms.



Sophie Petronin

The French, on the other hand, invaded Algeria for 132 years and while there, they kidnapped some Algerian girls and took them to France to raise them according to French values right from childhood.

After some years, the Minister of Algerian Affairs, Charles de Gaulle (later president) decided to show his success and how they had made these Algerian girls embrace the French way of life. The hall was full with French officials, ministers and the president of France. The great shock was when the girls came out to the stage wearing full Algerian traditional dress and hijab. It was like a bombshell on the stage. When the minister was blamed and ashamed, he defended himself saying, "What can I do if the Quran is stronger than France?"⁶ Once again the power of civilisation has beaten the civilisation of power.



Conclusion

So the power of civilisation is what lasts and the civilisation of power is a temporary thing that will not last forever, as it only survives while the oppressor is strong and the oppressed are weak, and this cannot be the case for ever.

1
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt_\(Roman_province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt_(Roman_province))
 2
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ain_Jalut
 3
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Hattin
 4
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign_Hunke
 5 Freed French humanitarian reveals she is Muslim.
www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/freed-french-humanitarian-reveals-she-is-muslim/2001631
 6
islamciv.com/2018/09/17/de-gaulle-what-can-i-do-if-the-quran-is-greater-than-france

Five characteristics of people of Jannah

In Surah Ali Imran (5:133-136), Allah (swt) states, "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous; those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men – for Allah loves those who do good; and those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except Allah? – and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath – an eternal dwelling. How excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)."

In these four ayats, Allah (swt) describes some characteristics of the people of Jannah, that can be summarised as follows.

1 People who spend both when it is easy and when it is difficult

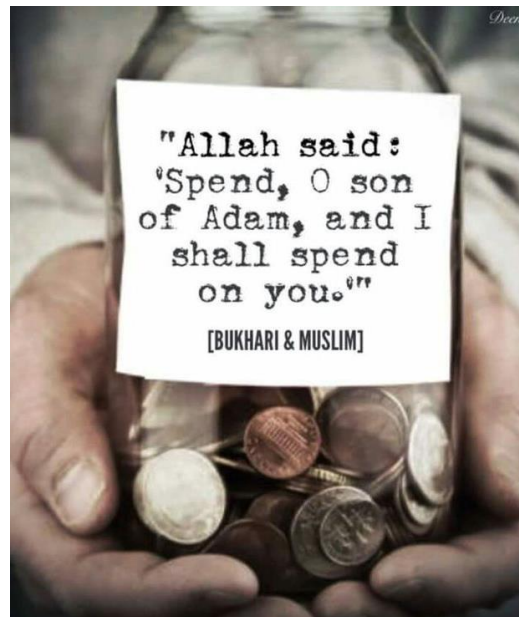
Spending when it is easy shows some gratitude. People tend to have this attitude when things are good. But when things are bad, people may fear that, if they spend, they are not going to get it back. So, insha Allah, when things are good, we will give.

But the people who really have taqwa of Allah know that Allah

mentions that whoever has taqwa of Allah, Allah makes a way out for him and provides for him from where he could not even imagine. Allah says that whatever good you spend, it will be refunded to you, and you cannot be wrong.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) also promises that money cannot experience loss, because of sadaqa. Remembering that promise, the people who give sadaqa will get the bonus in any form, and it can be seen in daily practice. So we have to have such confidence in Allah.

In short, giving for the sake of Allah is actually an opportunity to become more conscious of Allah's presence.



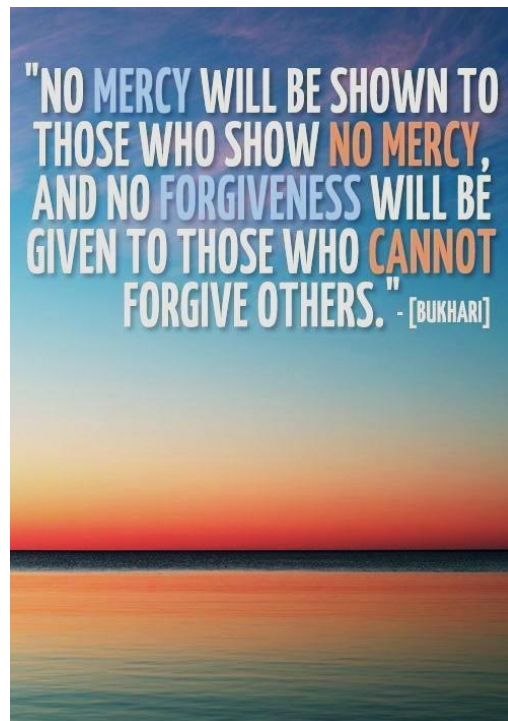
2 People who swallow their anger

What does "swallowing" mean here? When somebody is chewing with his mouth closed, another person can still notice that there is something in the mouth, but when somebody swallows what has been chewed, it won't be noticed anymore.

So there is one thing that "holds" your temper. You are angry but there is no sign of anger on your face, and people perceive that there is nothing wrong with you. And this should be done immediately and continuously.

3 Those who lovingly forgive people

Forgiveness can be of two types. Firstly, you can forgive people by insulting them: "Hey, you were mean to me that day, but I forgive you." This is a show of arrogance.



You may start a fight, for example: "What do you mean, you are forgiving me? It is me who forgives you."

So true forgiveness – the second type – happens in private. When you make dua for yourself, make dua for that person lovingly. It is by the mercy of Allah (swt) that Prophet Muhammad (saw) was lenient towards the Sahabah, even when some of them made him annoyed.

A bit earlier in Surah Ali Imran (3:159), Allah (swt) says, "If you are stern, they would have run away from you." The ayat continues, "So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the conduct of affairs."

4 Those who excel in their deen

In regard to previous points, it should be considered that sometimes we say things that we regret. Even if a person was blatantly wrong, how do you know he is still wrong? How do you know he did not make tauba? How do you know he did not change his mind?

Many scholars we see were once very different persons. But whatever they used to say or do years back is not how they behave now. A person may be close to Allah (swt), but if you are badmouthing him, Allah takes away your good deeds and hands them over to that person. In this way, you are actually doing a favour for that person.

Unfortunately, especially in acts of ibadah, the Muslim community gets so frustrated that people separate other people from mosques. It is not even a matter of compulsory duties, but their anger is so great that it is as if it were a matter of halal and haram. The tragedy is that their people are arguing over such petty things, while having more grudges at home.

5 Those who run towards forgiveness

Then Allah (swt) says something peculiar that really catches one's attention. He talks about people who earn Paradise, by telling readers to run towards forgiveness and Jannah. Allah mentions people who have committed some shameless act; it can be words, sight or any deed or anything which is shameless, done to fulfill one's lust. Allah talks about people of Jannah, and also mentions the ones who committed *fahisha*, and then He adds "or they wrong themselves".

Fahisha is something you do when you are overwhelmed by lust and *zulm al nafs* is something you do anyway, like backbiting, jealousy, lying, etc. These are the sins Muslims engage in, knowing that the acts won't benefit them anyway. So, Allah mentions those who indulge in such *fahisha* whether it is on the internet, television, billboards, the train, the workplace, etc.

Allah says that those people *simultaneously* remember Allah. This is a really tough thing to do. Imagine a student coming late to

class. What will he do next? Out of embarrassment, he avoids making eye contact with the teacher and quickly settles down, pretending to be part of the class.

So when we disappoint someone, we usually avoid contact with him. At that moment Satan plays his role. When we do anything shameless, who do we disappoint? Allah (swt).

So Satan murmurs, "Hey, after all those heady things you have done, you still call yourself a Muslim? Are you going to pray now, you hypocrite?" and we end up thinking that yes, since we are hypocrites, we should not stand in front of Allah. In this way Satan uses your sin to make you think that you cannot pray to Allah (swt). Then Allah says immediately that those people of Jannah mention Allah and ask for His forgiveness.

IT IS A FORTUNATE
PERSON WHO (ON
THE DAY OF
JUDGEMENT) FINDS
IN THEIR RECORD
MANY PRAYERS FOR
GOD'S FORGIVENESS.

Aisha bint Abu Bakr (Wife of Prophet Muhammad)

Allah adds, "Who is going to cover their sins except Allah? Where you are going to go?" Even a child, when beaten by his mother cries and tries to find shelter or protection from her. And here we are talking about Allah (swt), our ultimate Protector and Sustainer.

So where else would we have to go? By this explanation, we can infer that even after committing sins, we still have hope and we can ask forgiveness for our sins. But then Allah (swt) says, "They do not persist in what they have done."

This is something important to understand. You have done something wrong and then you made astaghfar and pleaded that you are not going to do it again. But at the back of your mind, you are telling yourself that probably you may do it again in a couple of weeks.

If you are such a person who thinks, "Let's make tauba," and sometime later you again repeat that cycle of doing sin and then making tauba, then this does not apply to you.

But on the other hand, there is another type of person who genuinely mentions Allah and has a lot of fear. However, being a human, sometimes he again indulges in some sin, but it does not happen because at the back of his mind he is not prepared for it. It happens just accidentally. Then he should again make astaghfar and should not persist in his sin.

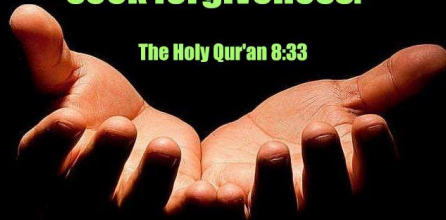
Allah (swt) speaks in Surah an-Nisa (4:17): "Allah has made tauba mandatory for people who do any evil thing out of ignorance, then they make tauba soon after over and over again."

Then Allah also mentions that tauba will not be accepted from a kafir when he makes it at the time of his death. And such a tauba is equivalent to that of a person who insists on his sin while making tauba.

So when we are seeking forgiveness we have to be sincere. May Allah grant us the ability to make astaghfar. May Allah make us from the people of Jannah and make us among those who will be rewarded. May Allah put us to work for His sake.

**"And Allah will not
punish them while they
seek forgiveness."**

The Holy Qur'an 8:33



Voice of Islam

VOI delivers the message of Islam based on the teachings of the Noble Quran and the Sunnah (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).
VOI television is broadcast on APNA TV (Freeview channel 36)(10.30 am Sun). In order to save costs, it now only broadcasts on APNA TV. However, Voice of Islam programmes are available on YouTube.

3 Jan

Quran: 107: 1-7. Small kindnesses.
Animation clip 14: Lessons from Surah Al-Maun.
Lecture: Meeting with Allah. AR McCarthy.
Issues related to Muslim women 10: Final wrap up. Safiyah Ally.
Clip: Come back to Allah before it's too late.

10 Jan

Quran: 107: 1-7. Small kindnesses.
Animation clip 23: Asking God for success in life.
Lecture: Reputation & image in Islam. Omar Suleiman & Abdul Nasir Jangda.
Raising kids amidst racism and hate.
Belief is rational 01: Proofs of existence.

17 Jan

Quran: 107: 1-7. Small kindnesses.
Animation clip 24: Attitude of the young generation.
Lecture: Reflecting on the signs of Allah. Abdul Nasir Jangda
Belief is rational 03: Does God exist?
Clip: Change starts from you.

24 Jan

Quran: 107: 1-7. Small kindnesses.
Animation clip 25: Better or best?.
Lecture: Taqwa - God consciousness. Saad Tasleem.
Q&A 04: Why were we created? Shabir Ally.
Documentary: Scientific facts of the Quran - Lying & sinning.
Clip: The wrong motives. Mufti Menk.

31 Jan

Quran: 107: 1-7. Small kindnesses.
Animation clip 26: Coping with emotional and psychological trauma.
Lecture: Seeking serenity through patience. Saad Tasleem.
Belief is rational 02: DNA intelligence design.
Clip: 10 important points to reflect on. Abdul Hakim Quick.
Q&A: Gospel of Barnabas - is it real? Shabir Ally.

Watch VOI online, or order a free copy of the Quran: www.voitv.org



Abdul Nasir Jangda



Saad Tasleem

Credits

Rocket Science is a monthly newsletter produced by the Mount Albert Islamic Trust.

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Why attend Rocket Park jumuah?

Prayers are held at the **Senior Citizens' Association building, Rocket Park, New North Road, Mount Albert.**

- ✓ Central location
- ✓ Plenty of free parking
- ✓ Facilities for ladies
- ✓ Heating and air-conditioning
- ✓ Bayan (religious talk) before jumuah prayers
- ✓ All bayans and khutbahs in English

NB We are only open for Friday prayers – not for the five daily prayers.

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Back issues of *Rocket Science*

Missed an issue of *Rocket Science*? All our monthly issues are available online at the Mount Albert Islamic Trust website: www.mtalbertislamiccentre.org

SwT, saw, as, ra

SwT: subhanahu wa ta'ala "Glory to Him, the Exalted" (when mentioning Allah)

saw: salallahu alaihi wassalam "May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him" (when mentioning Muhammad)

as: alaihis salam "Peace be on him" (when mentioning other prophets)

ra: radi allahu anhu/ha/hum "May Allah be pleased with him/her/them" (when mentioning members of Muhammad's family, companions, etc)