



## Battle to save ancient Tana Baru Cemetery in Bo-Kaap

The battle to save the ancient cemetery in Cape Town took a dramatic turn when the Auction group Claremart told the Tana Baru Trust to back off from trying to prevent the sale of two portions of land regarded as sacred in Bo-Kaap. Claremart has forged ahead with advertising the land to be auctioned at the end of the month at a reserve price of R20million. This was met with outrage by the trust, saying the Tana Baru's historical significance resides in it being the first officially recognised Muslim cemetery in South Africa. The two plots constitute 20% of the cemetery. The trust had charged that the Claremart advert was misleading to potential buyers as it "fails to mention that the two even form part of a graveyard".

Claremart general executive director Andrew Koch said the trust "should really have reserved judgement before obtaining all the facts of the matter and all the content in the marketing. Despite the fact that part of the site is an old cemetery, the property is currently zoned for development and could be developed if council approve the new owner's development plan," he said.

Koch said the Tana Baru Trust spokesperson's statement that the land in question was unlikely to be approved by council was "a red herring and it is the council alone who can determine this". Koch said it appeared that the trust needed to take up their concerns with the current owners and not the agent representing the sellers. "Their concerns regarding the historical ownership can only be dealt with in



a court of law and my auction is not such a court," said Koch.

He said there was no need to advertise that there were graves on the site as this information was in their brochure. "We are not required to advertise or specifically disclose any aspect of any property which can be clearly seen when attending on site - which is the case with the existing grave sites. Nevertheless we have done so. Prospective purchasers who contact us during the marketing of the properties for auction are advised of this aspect of the land," said Koch. "While we are sensitive to the fact that part of the land is a burial ground, we also have to act as the agent for the private owner and attempt to sell the property as mandated to do so by

the sellers and as registered property agents."

Trust spokesperson Mohammad Groenewald said they would continue with efforts to stop the auction. He said the late Imam Samoudien had acquired the land in 1857 on behalf of his congregation for burial purposes. He said efforts were under way to declare the Tana Baru cemetery a national heritage site.

The Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies has thrown its weight behind the Tanu Baru Trust. In a statement, the board said: "It would be sacrilegious if through development part of this burial ground, a holy place containing gravestones marking the final resting places of many of the earliest Muslim scholars and imams, should be uprooted and replaced with an upmarket skyscraper."

## The Significance of the Lunar Month of Shawwal

During pre-Islamic times the lunar month of Shawwal was regarded as a cursed month and a month of ill-omen. Some people of that time even avoided getting married during the month of Shawwal because they believed that marriages during this month would not be blessed. As with most of the negative and pessimistic aspects of pre-Islamic society the Divine message of Islam came to change these wrongheaded beliefs and negative perceptions of human existence, including that of the month of Shawwal. Islam transformed these superstitious ideas and beliefs into positive life-affirming philosophies.

In this khutbah I would like to reflect on the positive significance of the lunar month of Shawwal and provide at least four (4) ways in which this month is important for Muslims.

**First**, in order to signify the incorrectness of the pre-Islamic belief that marriages contracted in the month of Shawwal was cursed, the Prophet Muhammad (May Allah's everlasting peace and blessings be upon him) chose to marry Umm al-Mu'min 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) during the month of Shawwal. The wrong belief of the pre-Islamic people that Shawwal was a cursed month of ill-omen was clearly disproved by this marriage since the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) marriage to Lady 'Aisha became a great beacon of love and affection for all married couples to emulate.

**Second**, one of the most meritorious aspects of Shawwal is that 'Id-al-Fitr is celebrated on the first day of the month. This joyous and festive day, celebrated by the Muslim ummah, is a day on which we give thanks to Allah, and celebrate our accomplishments of the blessed month of Ramadan. As Allah, the Sublime exhorts us in the Glorious Qur'an, in Surah al-Baqara, Chapter 2, verse 185: He (Allah) desires that you complete the prescribed number of fasting days And that you extol and glorify Allah for having guided you, That perhaps you may render thanks and gratitude unto Him.

**Third**, the month of Shawwal is also significant because it marks the onset of the hajj season. Allah, the Sublime, declares in the Glorious Qur'an in Surah-al-Baqarah, Chapter 2, verse 197: The Hajj/Pilgrimage shall take place during the well-known months

In a prophetic tradition (hadith) recorded in the authentic collection of Imam al-Bukhari, the companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), informs us that the Prophet Muhammad (May Allah's everlasting peace and blessings be upon him) declared that the well-known months referred to in this Qur'anic verse (ayah) are the lunar months of Shawwal, Dhul Qa'idah and the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah.

These three lunar months were well-known to the pre-Islamic Arabs as the months during which the hajj took place. This was known since the days of Prophets Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon both of them) and the Glorious Qur'an reaffirms their significance. The month of Shawwal is thus the first of the three months named as "Ash-hur al-Hajj" (the months of hajj).

**Fourth**, the month of Shawwal is the only other month in the Muslim calendar in which fasting is recommended. According to a well-known prophetic tradition (hadith) recorded in the collection of Imam Muslim, related by the companion, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) the Prophet Muhammad (May Allah's everlasting peace and blessings be upon him) advises us as follows: "Whosoever fasts during the month of Ramadan and then follows it up with six days of fasting of Shawwal will be rewarded as if he or she had fasted the entire year" (Narrated by Imam Muslim)

In his explanation (sharh) of the meaning of the above hadith the famous thirteenth century hadith expert Imam al-Nawawī (d.1277) observes: Scholars have explained that it is like observing a year of fasting because the reward of one's good deeds are multiplied tenfold. Therefore fasting the month of Ramadan is like fasting for ten months and fasting six days in the month of Shawwal is like fasting for two months. The above interpretation is based on a corollary hadith related from Thawbān that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The fast of Ramadan is like observing ten months of fasting. Fasting six days of Shawwāl is like observing two months of fasting. This together is like fasting throughout the year." (Sahīh Ibn Khuzaymah (2115) and Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-Kubrā (2860)

According to the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools of Islamic jurisprudence (madh-habs) it is preferred that these days be fasted consecutively, i.e. the six days immediately following the celebration of 'Id-al-Fitr. According to Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal however one may choose to fast on any six days of the blessed month of Shawwal, as neither practice is preferred over the other. This is also the prevailing view (jamhur) of many contemporary Muslim scholars on the basis of the evidence.

There are also a minority of scholars who hold the view that the sunnah fasting days of the month of Shawwal should all be postponed until later in the month and not close to the day of 'Id, which is a time of celebration and feasting. They prefer fasting the three days in the middle of the month (ayyâm al-bîd) along with the three days right before or after. This is the opinion of Ma'mar and 'Abd al-Razzâq.

There is considerable flexibility in all of this and we can choose to follow any of these approaches. I encourage those of us who have not already adopted this prophetic recommendation (sunnah) to consider doing so in the remaining days of this month of Shawwal. Fasting in the lunar month of Shawwal provides us with a wonderful opportunity to follow up on our great spiritual accomplishments of the month of Ramadan and it cultivates in us the discipline of voluntary fasting (siyam al-tatawwu').

As we have experienced during the month of Ramadan, fasting is one of the best forms of worship and spiritual disciplines, which purifies the individual, nourishes our souls and draws us closer to our Creator. Voluntary fasting (siyam al-tatawwu') has an even greater

effect since it is undertaken by the free will of the believer. This is why the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) loved fasting so much.

Furthermore, it is my considered view that the practice of fasting in Shawwal could also serve as a wonderful way of assisting those who may have missed some fasts during Ramadan, as a result of illness, menses or traveling, to make up for their lost days. It is highly recommended to fulfill the qada or missed fasts of Ramadan as soon as possible, since this is an obligation and debt owed to Allah and this takes precedence over voluntary (sunnah) fasting. It is no wonder that one of the Prophet's wives, Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) recommended to members of her family that they fulfil the qada or missed fasts during the month of Shawwal. It is therefore praiseworthy to do the qada fast during the month of Shawwal.

By encouraging the entire family to fast in solidarity with women and others who may have qada fasts to make up, it would be a wonderful gesture so that such family members do not feel alone in making up their lost days. Moreover such a gesture would surely help in strengthening our family bonds.

**In conclusion**, since the month of Shawwal is the start of the hajj season, it is also a time during which we bid farewell to our relatives and friends who have decided to respond to the invitation to undertake the sacred journey of the pilgrimage (hajj). Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time. We pray and make du'a that Allah, the Hearer and Acceptor of all sincere supplications and grant the pilgrims (hujjaj) a safe journey. **Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar, Claremont Main Road Masjid, Friday 22 June 2018**

## Edris Khamissa - a unique professional and eternal optimist



Educator, life-skills expert and internationally recognized motivational speaker, Edris Khamissa said that while he was an "eternal optimist" – he is in fact very concerned because South Africa has become fragmented, judgmental and intolerant of other people's views.

Speaking during a wide-ranging interview on Radio Al-Ansar's talk show, 90 Minutes, he added that many Muslims live a life, which is insular, and isolationist.

While people in many countries around the world are making great strides, South Africans are falling back. There is great concern about the lack of progress in a country which no more than two decades ago was being hailed as a "modern miracle" having emerged from a very dark history.

Many thought leaders have applied their minds to what is going wrong in South Africa and people looking for answers and probably solutions inundate Mr Khamissa.

He has addressed the issues on various platforms, at times in front of massive crowds who turn up in large numbers to grasp some knowledge from a man who in a matter-of-fact-manner has attracted the attention of many.

"We are not eloquent ambassadors of Islam. Instead of celebrating excellence, we applaud mediocrity. Our institutions have a dearth of dynamic leadership. Often when one is appointed to a position of leadership in our institutions, even after a rigorous process, the irony is that this qualified individual is not given the autonomy to make it into a dynamic one. Custodianship is not understood. Let me emphatic it does not mean ownership. We need to redefine success. We need to lead such a life that that we develop a legacy which outlasts time," he said.

Speaking about the lack of unity in the Muslim community, Mr Khamissa said that the future of any people lay in their ability to live, work and integrate peacefully and meaningfully.

Referring to the Cape Accord, which has attracted much attention, he said that the public reaction suggested that there were some dissenting voices. He was concerned that this has become a news item in the mainstream media He added that any genuine effort to unite the hearts of the believers should be lauded.

Addressing the youth, he said, "Do not become a spectator. You have a lot to offer. With your creativity, help adults to find solutions to the problems the world finds itself with at this given time.

"Learn from the mistakes of adults and also understand that we are mortal beings. Ensure that you connect with your parents and give them the dignity they deserve.

"There are two kinds of tears, one of sadness and then there are tears of regret which you shed realizing that you did not accord your parents the respect and dignity they deserved," said Mr Khamissa.

Then turning the subject to the high rate of divorces and that "marriage being a danger zone in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he said that people often asked him why there are so many divorces.

"Most can be attributed to immaturity of the couple on one hand and the very unflattering example of their parents. We need to do the following: Pre-marital counseling must become mandatory. There should be no nikah until they have attended pre-marital counselling sessions.

"Every effort must be made to enhance the self esteem of our children. One of the most critical attributes for a couple that expect to make a home is emotional intelligence. Sadly we know how to disagree, but we do not know how to disagree agreeably.

"A highly emotional intelligent person is one that is positive, resilient, they do not suffer emotional melt downs. Nor do they over react and most importantly they are responsive and sensitive to each other," he said. Regarded as a "unique professional" in his field, which is so diverse that he is often called to host workshops in youth, curriculum, self, business and personality development.

Mr Khamissa who has studied at the University of Durban - Westville, Unisa and other institutions said that people couldn't go through life without increasing their knowledge. His down to earth approach without any fancy frills and no holes barred approach in dealing with social issues has earned him the status of a "specialist" by those who seek his counsel.

He is off to Johannesburg to run a workshop on leadership, before embarking on engagements abroad. Mr Khamissa has run workshops and hosted seminars in many countries including South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, Australia, United Kingdom, United States

**Farook Khan - 90 Minutes - Radio Al-Ansar, Friday 22 June 2018**