

Muslim Teens: Today's Worry, Tomorrow's Hope

Ekram and Mohamed R. Beshir

Beltsville MD: Amana Publications, 2001. 253 pages.

This is the second book on parenting by the husband-and-wife team of Dr. Ekram and Mohamed R. Beshir. *Muslim Teens* addresses an issue of deep concern to all Muslim parents: how to keep one's children on the "straight path" when they reach the turbulent years of adolescence. The authors are professionals who have raised four daughters in Canada. Their daughters, now adults, have contributed to the book with insights from a teen's point of view, based upon their own experiences of growing up Muslim in North America.

The first two chapters draw a picture of teens and their environment. Drawing on Ekram's background in medicine and child psychology, these chapters describe the turbulent nature of puberty and the physical and emotional growing pains experienced by teenagers. The second chapter also gives an overview of North American teen culture, which should be required reading for all immigrant parents raising children in a culture that can be viewed as largely antithetical to Islam.

Chapters 3 to 6 provide a "road map" for raising teens and presents an overview of the aims and stages of Islamic *tarbiyah* (education, upbringing). They advise parents to start early and state that both parents should share a common vision of childrearing and set clear goals, such as spiritual conviction (not just knowledge of Islam) and enabling teens to develop strong and confident personalities. These chapters contain extensive quotations from the Qur'an and Sunnah to support what the authors say, thus enabling readers to gain a solid overview of parenting from an Islamic perspective. The authors also take some basic Islamic principles of social

interaction (e.g., controlling anger and not using offensive nicknames) and apply them within the context of the family.

Chapters 7 and 8 contain case studies of possible situations between families and teens. Readers are encouraged to write out answers to the questions asked, preferably with their spouses, and then compare their responses to those given by the authors. The authors use this tool in their parenting workshops. Chapter 9 provides tools, ideas, and detailed suggestions on organizing school and nonschool events and sample letters that parents can use as models for their own letters to teachers about various issues (e.g., non-participation in certain school activities). The book ends on an upbeat note, with an account in chapter 10 written by one of their daughters on some positive experiences of growing up as a Muslim in Canada (e.g., dealing successfully with hostile teacher attitudes or organizing an Eid party for school friends).

This is a very positive book, and one of its most attractive features is that it is obviously a family effort, produced by a family that has successfully raised committed Muslim children in the North American environment. The input of their daughters, who “survived” public school, is of particular interest and is very encouraging for other Muslim parents. However, since the authors themselves note that more Muslim boys than girls tend to stray, it would have been extremely useful to provide accounts of young men who grew up in North America and either stayed within or returned to the fold. Authentic voices from young Muslim men would be of great interest to parents seeking to raise teenage Muslim boys.

A few technical points also merit discussion. Throughout the book, the authors refer to the “prophet” with a lower-case “p.” It is obvious from the authors’ background and the context that no disrespect is intended, but to this reviewer at least, it seems inappropriate, based on the rule that a capital “P” should be used as a sign of respect. The authors use an idiosyncratic system of transliteration: “at-Termithy” instead of “al-Tirmidhi” and “Abu Zarr” instead of “Abu Dharr.” The transliteration reflects colloquial Arabic usage rather than correct classical Arabic. This could be rectified by following one of the standard transliteration systems, such as that adopted by IIIT. There are also occasional misspellings and odd usages of English. These are all matters that could have been avoided through better editing.

The book would have benefited from a more detailed list of contents and an index so that readers could easily access specific information. On the whole, however, this book is a valuable resource for Muslim parents, especially immigrants who may be unfamiliar with the issues faced by their teens, and for convert parents striving to give their children an Islamic

upbringing. The fact that the book is based on experience, and is not just a theory of how to raise children Islamically, is particularly valuable. It may be recommended for parents, teachers, youth workers, and anyone else who is concerned about the well-being of Muslim youth.

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