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# IWDM Study Library

# Interview of Tour to Saudi Arabia WDM

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din: I'd like to read a verse from The Holy Quran that I think will suit this occasion very well. It's Surah 49, chapter 49:13, and it reads, with the name, Allah, most gracious most merciful, "Oh mankind, we created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and we made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other, not that you may despise each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of G-d is he who is the most righteous of you and G-d has full knowledge and is well-acquainted with all things."

The reason I read this verse is because I think that it really fits this occasion very well, and this is good for all of us to know that Almighty G-d created all of us from a single pair. We are all brothers and sisters in human family.

Now, I would like to read a statement that was made by the members of the Muslim American delegation that went to Saudi Arabia. This was a statement made in thanks to their Saudi government. It says, "As members of the Muslim American delegation visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the Saudi Arabian embassy, we offer our most sincere thanks to the government and the people of Saudi Arabia for their tremendous welcome, and the Royal Treatment we received while in the Muslim nation. We realized that the efforts of Imam W. Deen Mohammed to propagate Al-Islam in America was the catalyst for bringing this visit about.

We are forever appreciative of his efforts to guide us toward the correct path of worship. The remarkable transformation of Saudi Arabia from a mostly desert kingdom into one of the world's leading industrial nations within a short period of time is truly one of the highlights of human history. The evolution of a complete university system from none to seven within the span of 33 years staggers the imagination. When realizing that each campus is now imparting knowledge to over 20,000 students in fields that range from chemical engineering to social sciences.

The warmth and graciousness of the Saudi people to us reinforces the example of Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, and shows the magnificence of our religion in every aspect of Saudi life. The resourcefulness of King Fahad, custodian of the two holy mosques to expand and embellish the Great Mosque of Medina and Mecca to provide greater service to the worshippers of Al-Islam is an example of leadership that should be emulated throughout the world.

Our receptions by the most learned and respected sheikhs of Al-Islam heads of government, education, and industry within the kingdom presented a unified front for progress with harmony having G-d-consciousness which is called in Arabic, taqwa, in the forefront of every endeavor."

Brother, Imam Mohammed, I want to start talking with you now because you're the one that's really going to give us the true picture of what went down on the trip. We're going to start showing some of the scenes that-- places where you all traveled. As we show the scene, perhaps you'll let us know what was taking place at that time. Is there anything that you would like to say though before we get to that?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Well, first of all, I would like to say that the visit to the kingdom that was opened to us by the Saudi embassy Prince Bandar of the Saudi embassy in Washington DC gave us an opportunity that I didn't expect in my lifetime. I couldn't have imagined that I would be given such an opportunity. I didn't know what was there. I hadn't seen or heard of the department's of the kingdom and exactly what is being done presently there in this day and time in the kingdom as a government. I'm speaking of Saudi Arabia as a government.

We know Saudi Arabia has a place for pilgrimage; we go there for pilgrimage every year. Muslims go there for pilgrimage which is the obligation, the fifth principle of our religion. I know of Saudi Arabia in that connection mainly and of the activities of Saudi Arabia through its religious institutions. Rabita is the head of education Dr. Abdullah Turkey, but this gave us an opportunity to see Saudi Arabia's life, it's culture, not only as institutions and the heads of those institutions, but we got a chance to see Saudi Arabia's life and culture.

It was a tremendous, great, astounding, cultural experience for us, as well as, a religious joy.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, I saw that on the faces of everyone that I met that was on that trip. You could see that. It had been quite an experience. Now, we got quite a few pictures here that we want to show, and get your comments on so we're ready to get to it. All right, there's the first one. Now, that's-

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, that's Crown Prince.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, crown prince. That's, in other words, a caption would be, Imam W. Deen Mohammed and the delegation are welcome to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud at Al-Murabba palace. Now, is there any comments you'd like to make on that?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, the crown prince is a second in position in Saudi Arabia. King Fahad was out of the country when we made our visit, so we were blessed to have the crown prince who's second in command to welcome us. He's welcoming our delegation.

Imam Ibrahim: That's wonderful. We'll go to the next scene. The next scene is when you were introducing the delegation to him, that's the picture there.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, that's right. I introduced each member of the delegation, 15 of us.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, sir. Okay, we'll go to the next one. The next one is-- now that's the brother that you were talking about a few minutes ago you were telling me about.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Director of higher education for the king of Saudi Arabia Dr. Abdullah Turki.

Imam Ibrahim: Right. Is any comments you'd like to make concern here?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, I do because, through him, we have now connection with the university, the main universities in Saudi Arabia. The Clara Mohammed school system, our private schools over here in the United States, well known by them, they have the number of schools, they have description of schools, and we are going to plan together how to improve the curriculum for all Clara Mohammed schools in the country. We get the benefit of working directly with Department of Education in Saudi Arabia for the improvements of Clara Mohammed school curriculum and for the general improvement of schools in America for the Muslim schools.

Imam Ibrahim: Imam, that's wonderful.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, as perhaps know it; two of the members of our delegation were also teachers in the Clara Mohammed schools in United State. They were teachers. One of the Imams was a principal. I would say at least half of the delegation was directly tied into the Clara Mohammed schools, our schools in the United States.

Imam Ibrahim: That serve the double purpose.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: That was the most important for a part of our visit, the most important opportunity for us was to get connection with the head of education there, Dr. Abdullah Turki, and with the Kingdom to get support for our schools, so that literature that they can produce for us that we can’t produce in Arabic and also in English will be available to us, and other assistance to our schools that they are considering.

Imam Ibrahim: That's wonderful. We've gone to the next one, you finish with that?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: Okay, the next one now. This is Judge Adam A. Shakoor, the vice mayor of Detroit Michigan, and I understand he was a member.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, he was a member of the delegation and he's also a member of our association of Muslims here in the United States. He is identified with our activities, he's present at all of our major functions as you perhaps know and he's the assistant to the mayor Coleman Young in Detroit and he has been a judge there in one court or another for, I think, perhaps five, six, seven years or more.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, sir.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Adam Shakoor.

Imam Ibrahim: Adam Shakoor.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: He also met the Supreme, he's the judge Adam Shakoor met with the chief justice over all the course system of Saudi Arabia.

Imam Ibrahim: Okay, we're going into the next one and let's see. The next one is Imam W. Deen Mohammed, second from left in a special meeting with world-renowned Islamic scholar Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Bin Bas.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: Second from right.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: The photo was not showing us the situation there, that situation was actually a situation showing us he's the head of the Supreme Council of Imams. He's the head of the supreme body of Imams in Saudi Arabia. You can tell he's an old man. I don't know how old, but I know he's over 80 and he's very youthful, he's blind. I think he's been blind for most of his work life-

Imam Ibrahim: Yes sir.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: - but it doesn't prevent him from working 16 hours a day. Would you believe it? He works 16 hours a day.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, because I've met him.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: We are there while he's at work. He's showing us how he conducts his work in the religion. He is listening to the problems in the religion that's being brought to him from different people. Now Saudi Arabia has a large number of workers who come there for work. Many of them come as Muslims, but some of them don't come as Muslims. Occasionally some person wants to come there and learn about the religion. He teaches non-Muslims and he counsel Muslims, he takes Shahada, he explains to them the faith. Those who want to become Muslims, he explains to them the faith and they make their declaration of faith before him, and he solves so many problems on that level.

Actually, his great work is done, as you know, with the large institutions-

Imam Ibrahim: Yes.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: - Islamic bodies throughout the world, but also in Saudi Arabia like with Rabita with the convening of world councils there in Saudi Arabia, and his advice is given throughout the kingdom for the cause Al-Islam and he had reached us here in America. I think of him as like my own father, our great uncle or something. He's that kind of a man, he meets you, he never stands above you, he talks to you as a brother, he speaks to you very frankly and very openly on the religion.

If he sees something in you that's a problem for the religion he will tell you right off, he'll tell you right away, he doesn't mind hurting your feelings. I love the man, he's open and frank and honest person right down to earth. But he holds such a high position. The highest position for an Imam in Saudi Arabia.

Imam Ibrahim: I see. I tell you something else I was thinking of as you explained. I think of how some of us who have small handicap, not as serious as blindness and many times we get depressed and give up some people.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Certainly.

Imam Ibrahim: I think this is a very good example for people. To encourage people.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes. In many areas of life, not just in religion, people respond to all those things, they respond the same way. Some people take a setback as a setback; other people take the setback as a challenge. Yes, and they become greater after. There's a movie out now about the fellow who wrote a story of himself, Down All The Days, I think it's called. I can't recall his name now, but it's a very touching story. He didn't have use of his limbs, he wrote the story-- he couldn't write and no hands to write with. He wrote his book with one toe. My Big Toe, that's the name of the movie.

Imam Ibrahim: I know about that.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: My Big Toe. You know about that?

Imam Ibrahim: They showed him on television one time. How amazing it was.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: He's an example of what you can do.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Even though it seems like you put out a business completely.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. You know I haven't seen many of those things and I also have an experience meeting the sheikh that you're speaking of, the old man. When I had my stroke, that helped me because I've seen people overcome so many things worse than what happened to me and I thought that it would be a shame for me to give up.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes. That author name is Brown, yes. This fascinating story, but we have a lot of fascinating stories in our own community.

Imam Ibrahim: That's true.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: You are one of them.

Imam Ibrahim: Alhamdulillah. Thank you very much. Let's get to the next picture. Now, this reception was held at the Muhammed Ibn Saud University, with our host Dr. L. Turki. The facility here shown is the water tower of the Riyadh, the water tower of Riyadh. That was a meeting that you all had in that particular room.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, we visited many ultra-modern facilities in the kingdom and Riyadh is one of the beautiful cities. I read where a western writer said of Riyadh, that is the cleanest city in the world, by his judgment. The cleanest city in the world. I wouldn't be surprised if it is, it was the spot of despondence, very clean city.

Imam Ibrahim: When I looked at that picture, right there, and they said that was on a water tower.

Imam W. Deen: Not exactly a water tower.

Imam Ibrahim: Okay.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It's the facility there; the water tower is there in the area.

Imam Ibrahim: I see, okay. That's beautiful. The next picture is you and the Muslim American Delegation are giving a tour by Doctor Baqir Abdullah Al Baqir, director of the King Fahd University.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes. We were warmly received by all the heads of department of education and government and also industry. This is just one of the many scenes that was shot as we were making the tour around the country.

Imam Ibrahim: Okay, the next scene, I'm going kind of fast now-

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: - because of time. The next scene is Imam W. Deen Mohammed on Saudi National-- Now, that's what I really want to talk about, they had you on television

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: They told me that every day they followed you, they followed your activities, the way you went around.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes, they were with us every day. I don't think we were in television every day, but they were with us every day. But we were on television at least, I would say a third of the time, a third of the day that we spent there, I'm sure that there was something on television, announcing what we're doing in the Kingdom. That's right. The reporter for our paper, the Muslim Journal, brother Sabir he shot that right off television.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, I saw that. One other thing I have to mention is, you know it seems to me, and I have to say this and I hope the world hears it. It seems like it's a shame that you go to Saudi Arabia and you're recognized all over the world, but here in our country, where they very seldom put anything about you on television, and you're doing a tremendous work to help the whole society. This is the truth.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Maybe somebody's doing us a favor.

Imam Ibrahim: Something's got to happen. Some changes have to be made.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It's got to be maybe somebody is doing us a favor.

Imam Ibrahim: Maybe you are right. Okay we're going to the next one. Now, this is the stadium that they built, their stadium. It's a large stadium.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Oh man, tremendous. Something should be brought out here right now.

Imam Ibrahim: That's the indoor stadium.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I have to bring this out. It should be known that Saudi Arabia is one of the few Muslim nations that have, in the past and presently had maintained with the United States, good relationship, good diplomatic relationship, and not only that since recent developments in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis coming into oil and taking charge of their own industries and things, they have formed a partnership or kind of a partnership for industrial development and technology in the kingdom, and as American citizen and as a Muslim, I felt very special.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I think we should say that.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: What you see there in the photos, there's nothing but just a microscopic view of what's going on in the kingdom. You'd be amazed. In fact, it's more than amazing; it's like in a dream. You can't believe it. I visited Saudi Arabia in '67 and in '72 or '73 I think it was. It was the place where you found most of the desert and some old constructions. You couldn't call it. It was really almost a barren land but now when you go there you see, as the statement from the delegation said, you see one of the most modern countries in the world.

Imam Ibrahim: Brother Imam, our time has run out on this program and I'm going to have closeout right away but thank you so much.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Well, we have to have another program.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes. Just a minute wait a minute. We got a little more time than I thought. Let me come with this next thing. Now, this is the next picture. That's a picture of a mosque. You remember that one?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: There are so many mosques in Saudi Arabia and it's at a distance. I do vaguely remember that-- I'm not sure whether that's near the airport or not but there's a very huge facility like that near the airport where I can see acres of land. There just hundreds of mosque like that in Saudi.

Imam Ibrahim: It's very beautiful. Brother Imam, there was something that I kind of overlooked at one point. I think it's very important that I bring this up and I'd like you to come in on it. In the picture that was shown where the crown prince was welcoming you to the kingdom. I made a caption here of what he said to you this is what he said. He said, "We are happy to have you visit us here in the kingdom. We thank Allah that we are meeting with you here because Saudi Arabia is a country for all Muslims. We are so pleased with the accomplishments of Imam Mohammed and all our Muslim brothers in America." I thought that was a wonderful comment.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: I just want to see if you could give us a little more about this.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes. I would like to add that the crown prince also mentioned the attacks upon the diplomats of the kingdom. The assassination of two of their diplomats by terrorists recently. He made the statement that I think is important for us here as it is for Muslims all over the world. He said our hands are tied by our religious leaders who tell them exactly what the religion requires of them in such situation. He said we cannot deal with the retaliate in kind, he said we cannot retaliate in kind.

That is, as I understood it that they can't just do any violent act assumed the role of terrorists themselves though they're the victim of terrorists. I think that speaks for the obligations in our religion to hold us to human behavior.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: The same principle condemns terrorism and terrorist tactics in the world. People who hear what happens in the international world by a person who identifies as Muslims in the way of terrorism they get confused and they think that maybe our religion is not too strong against such behavior but our religion is very strong against that behavior. The crown prince made a point of telling us that at our first visit with him.

Imam Ibrahim: As a matter of fact, Brother Imam, I remember a verse in The Holy Quran, Allah Almighty G-d says, "Don't let someone who treats you unjust calls you to swerve from justice.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: To be-- from justice and from human behavior, from decent behavior.

Imam Ibrahim: That's really something good for our society in America to know that we can't always do exactly what people do to us.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: No. As a representative of our religion, we have to make it clear that people who behave like that are acting outside of their religion and the religion is strongly against such behavior.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. Exactly. I want to read this now. We never did make any comments on this but I read this verse at the beginning. It fitted this occasion seemingly so well. I want to read it again. If you have any comments to make on it please do. That's the one about Sura 49:13 where says, "Oh, mankind. We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes. That you may know each other not you may despise each other verily the most honor of you and the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you". It seems to me that really fits that statement you said you made. That fits perfectly.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Well, certainly our prophet, peace be upon him, Prophet Muhammed, he said also that the most useful of you to mankind, the best of you is the most useful of you to mankind. The Muslim is obligated by his holy book and by the life example of the Prophet to not only accept all people as one humanity or one human family, but we're also obligated to want to do good by all people. The best of us is the one who's best in its service to humanity that's what the prophet said.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes. Our time is run out, Imam, but that also speaks to the universality of our religion.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Certainly it is universal.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes. Dear beloved people, I want to thank you very much. My time has run out. Brother Imam, I want to thank you as always for being on the program. It's an honor to have you here.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Well, it's my pleasure and a great honor.