

## Grand Mufti of Yemen, Sheik Ahmed Zabarah: A Muslim Dream of True Family

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*The Grand Mufti of Yemen receives lovingly prepared gifts from True Parents during a banquet at East Garden*

The Grand Mufti of Yemen, Sheik Ahmed Zabarah, led 40 participants in attending the Second Inter-Religious Youth Leadership Conference in New York from April 21 to May 31, 1991. Participants were selected through the ministry of education, the Grand Mufti's office, and the ministry of religious endowment, and represented the whole country geographically, religiously, and in age (from 17 to 84).

Originally the Grand Mufti was planning to attend the conference for only ten days. When he arrived with his wife and saw the detailed schedule of the conference, he changed his mind and decided to stay for 40 days. From the beginning, he expressed the desire that we open a Unification Movement center in Yemen. He said it is time for the Muslim world to receive Father Moon's teaching, and concurrently, for the Unification Movement to understand Islam. Through this, millions of Muslims would be connected to the Unification Movement.

The participants listened to three cycles of Divine Principle and heard Unification Thought and CAUSA lectures. The Fall of Man raised many questions because of the traditional respect the Muslims have for their parents. On the other hand, one participant, a judge, said this is the most logical explanation he has ever heard concerning the Fall.

After the third cycle of Divine Principle, the participants visited Washington DC, where they were inspired by Father's projects. Upon visiting the Yemeni Embassy and meeting with the Ambassador, the

Grand Mufti testified to the greatness of Father's works, especially in the religious world.

After the Unification Thought lectures about the ideal family, Grand Mufti Zabarah said he had learned how to better relate with his own family members. He was moved to hear that God's ideal is for man to become the dwelling place of the living God, and testified that Father Moon is not only a prophet or a savior in the traditional sense but he is a True Father, because he is taking responsibility for all humankind. He urged everyone to help Father Moon carry his heavy burden. He also encouraged the 40 participants to unite into one family. Through their unity, he felt they would be able to initiate many projects upon their return to Yemen.

The spirit world was very active during the conference. Five participants had significant dreams about True Parents and Jesus. In one dream a participant saw Father wearing a white robe and holding Muslim beads. Bright light was emanating from Father. On his right side stood ten men in a row, and on his left stood ten women.



*Father and the Grand Mufti of Yemen, Sheik Ahmed Zabarah, heartfully embrace at fast Garden*

Father gave three main points as guidance for our staff. The first was that the purpose of this conference was not to convert the participants into Unification Church members. This was great wisdom, because if the participants were to have returned to Yemen and left their traditional faith, they would have been isolated and might even have lost their lives. In accordance with this guideline, therefore, we emphasized the acknowledgement of True Parents, not the proclamation of True Parents.

Father's second piece of advice was that we teach them about the centrality of the family in building the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Even from the beginning of the conference we made it clear that this was not a church per se, but the Unification Family. The participants could relate to this concept without the sensitivity involved in relating to most Christians. The Arab people are very family-oriented. Through the Unification Thought lectures they could understand how we must perfect our love in all different directions, with the family providing the base for building the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The third advice given by Father was to show them the vastness of the Divine Principle. Muslims are usually very sure they have the truth, making it difficult for them to listen to any other theology. But as they heard the detailed explanations of God, humankind, the creation, the Fall and restoration, they began

to realize the comprehensive nature of the Principle, and to feel a desire to study more.

Although the Mufti is 84 years old, he has called Father "Father Moon" and Mother "Mother Moon." He gave the title of "Sheik" to Fritz Piepenburg (the original missionary to Yemen, who arrived there in 1975), although this title is customarily conferred only upon men of high religious learning. Other times he has referred to Fritz as "my son." At the United Nations Mosque, Grand Mufti Zabarah proudly announced to international diplomats that Reverend Moon had sponsored this conference.

Before we departed to East Garden, a participant rushed up to me and with an expression mixed with joy and anguish, asked, "Are we going for the Blessing Ceremony?"

Father extended much love to them during the banquet. He had actually caught the fish for their dinner himself. Mother showed her concern and love in overseeing all of the banquet preparations. True Parents were waiting at the door to greet them, radiating love and compassion. Mother was dressed in a beautiful long-sleeved blouse, showing her sensitivity to Islamic customs. The Mufti entered the door with arms outstretched to receive Father's embrace. They looked into each other's faces, smiling broadly.

Usually, Muslim women are not allowed to shake hands with men. Before visiting East Garden, I expressed my concern to the Mufti. His answer was that the women should shake hands with Father because he was their father. So upon their arrival they all did so.

After dinner, In Jin Nim moved everyone's heart by her presence, radiating an embrace of love as she sang "Amazing Grace". Then Father spoke, saying Yemen would be blessed because of these 40 people's participation in this workshop. The women especially were inspired when Father said that men were created for the sake of women. Usually in Yemen women are completely veiled and covered. They are unknown to others and maybe even to themselves. This time they were giggling and smiling while the men were in shock.

I believe Father's explanation of true love formed a dream in their minds, which they hope to realize one day. At the end he encouraged them to return home as better, more loving Muslims.

During the farewell banquet, the Grand Mufti conveyed to all of us the greetings of the president, the government, and the people of Yemen. He expressed his gratitude and joy, speaking highly of the Principle and the moral standard of the members. He appreciated our efforts to embrace people of all different religions, saying it was the duty of the Islamic world and especially Al-Azhar (the most famous Islamic university and religious authority in the Middle East) to incorporate Islam into the Divine Principle. He promised to convey his conference experience to the government and people of Yemen.

The participants presented several gifts to True Parents, including a traditional dagger (jambiya), worn by the religious nobility of Yemen. These people can trace their lineage back to the Prophet Mohammed, or people of high religious status. It is usually preserved by the owner as a family treasure and handed down from father to son.

As the banquet concluded, the heavens opened and rain fell to purify the ground. They departed as True Parents stood with umbrellas, waving until they were out of sight. As the bus pulled out onto the highway, one participant told me that in the midst of the emotions of saying farewell, he had forgotten his shoes at East Garden. History will record, as Moses took off his shoes to meet God, a Muslim took off his shoes to meet True Parents and never wore them again.