

Professor tweets Quran for Ramadan

by [Cathy Lynn Grossman](#)

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(RNS) Ramadan, which begins with a sunup-to-sundown fast Monday (Aug. 1), calls on the Muslim faithful to immerse themselves in scripture -- ideally by reading the entire Quran.

In 2009, Hussein Rashid, a professor of Islamic Studies at Virginia Theological Seminary, noticed rabbis using Twitter to highlight snippets of Torah text to celebrate Shavuot, when Jews say Moses received God's word at Mount Sinai.

"I saw they were creating a virtual way to pray and study together, and I thought it would be fun to invite a few friends to tweet the Quran for Ramadan. By the next year we had hundreds posting at #Quran and it will be even bigger this year," he says.

The Quran is the 22-year record of what Muslims believe is Allah's revelations to the Prophet Mohammed. The goal of using Twitter is to engage Muslims and non-Muslims alike in exploring and discussing the text, Rashid says.

"What verses speak to you when you read the Quran this day? That's what we're looking for. The way we engage with scripture is always changing as our lives change. We can ask each other questions. We can explore parallels with other religions," he adds.

As next month's 10-year-anniversary of 9/11 nears, Wajahat Ali, a playwright and attorney based in San Francisco, expects many Muslims will share "our reflections and our resilient faith."

Ali says, "I expect lot of people will tweet from Chapter 49:13: `Oh Ye who believe, we created you of different nations and tribes so that

you may know one another.' It's very tweetable and it expresses a way of moving forward with different communities of faith. We share common values but retain our own unique values."

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat of Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, Mass., who blogs as the Velveteen Rabbi, was one Rashid noticed tweeting for Shavuot.

"I wish we lived in a world where people wanted to have random conversations about Torah at the coffee shop or standing in line at the ATM, but on the Internet you can. And it's fabulous fun to see what people choose. The Torah is condensed wisdom you can unpack and unstuff over time," she says.

The Jewish Publication Society, which promoted #Torah as a top Twitter trend, also created a template for nabbing 140-character chunks of the five books of Moses.

Summing up scripture with Twitter wit will take author Jana Riess four years. In October 2009, she embarked on Twible (rhymes with Bible) -- once-a-day tweeting the entire Bible, chapter by chapter, 1,189 chapters plus a summary tweet for each of the 66 books.

"There are other Twitter summaries of the Bible that are much more ambitious. I'm just entertaining. Laughter is hugely important in the Bible, even when you take it seriously, which I do," says Riess, who has a doctorate in religion.

She was surprised to find that long-suffering Job, the man tested in every way by pain, loss and false friends, was among the most "spiritually nourishing" books to tweet.

She started with, "#Twible overview of Job: I'd tell you about Job, but man, my boils are itchy. Also, my kids all snuffed it & G's AWOL. Waaaaah. Why me? Why?"

And six weeks later came to: "#Twible Job 38: G makes unexpected cameo appearance; goes mano-a-mano w/ Job abt creation: "Where were you,

punk, when I created the earth?"