

EID-UL-ADHA SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

26 OCTOBER 2012

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

Today is Eidul Adha, the greatest festival for all Muslims. So I wish Eid Mubarak to all of you. May Allah enable each one amongst us to understand the meaning of this Eid and to mould our life accordingly. The distinctive feature of this Eid is that animals are sacrificed after the two rakaat prayers done in congregation. Even in our small country Mauritius more than 3,500 animals will be slaughtered including cows, bulls, goats and rams. In Saudi Arabia after hajj, i.e. starting from today about 700,000 animals will be slaughtered by the pilgrims. Now, you can just imagine how many more will be slaughtered around the world by the 1.6 billion Muslims who inhabit the globe.

However although all these animals will be slaughtered with a view to pleasing Allah, yet Allah says in the Holy Quran

Lan yanalallaho lahoumoha wa laa dimaaoha walakil lanalahout taqwa minkoum.

meaning

Their flesh reaches not Allah, nor does their blood, but it is your righteousness that reaches Him.

Hence the slaughtering of animals is symbolic. It has no importance per se. Its importance comes from the fact that they should be offered with a righteous heart. Hence we can conclude that developing a righteous heart is the aim of the slaughtering of animals. This is an important point on which we all should keep reflecting and we should keep asking ourselves how far we are progressing in our attempt to becoming a righteous person. So during this day whenever you have a free moment take some time to reflect about your life and ask yourself how far Allah is important in your life and what concrete steps or actions are you doing in order to become a righteous person. You will have to check for yourself how much time you devote to prayers and religious practices like reading the Holy Quran and remembrance of Allah and how much time you devote to fruitless pursuits like watching stupid and immoral films, spending time chatting and playing games on the net. The more time you devote to God the more righteous you will become provided you are sincere in your pursuit.

Before delving more on the importance of this day I would like to say a few words about the organization of the Hajj. It is such a big if not the biggest gathering of the world that elaborate preparations are made to facilitate the movements of the pilgrims and to keep them safe during the five days of the hajj. If we examine the figures for last year (figures for this year are not yet available) we understand that there were about 2.5 million pilgrims who made hajj last year-1.8 million from abroad and 700,000-800,000 from inside Saudi

Arabia. The hajj quota for every Muslim country is 1,000 pilgrims per million inhabitants and the biggest contingent – 200,000 pilgrims – will come from Indonesia. For the safety of the pilgrims Saudi Arabia deployed some 63,000 security forces, including 3,500 anti-riot policemen backed by 450 armoured vehicles, while the civil defence deployed 22,000 forces and 6,000 vehicles. Some 1,500 CCTV cameras have been installed in and around Mecca's Grand Mosque and 29 police stations were be open to serve the holy places. In order to cope with emergencies 20,000 health workers were mobilized, five rescue helicopters also have been readied to serve the faithful. Furthermore 12,000 male and female guides known as "mutawif" help organize the pilgrims' stay. The Grand Mosque which is at the centre of Mecca, where pilgrims gather to pray and circle the cubic Kaaba building, covers 368,000 square meters and can hold more than 1.5 million people. The Kaaba rests on a marble base and is built from granite, and has a door made from 280 kilos (616 pounds) of pure gold. The black silk *kiswa* covering, made anew every year, is embroidered with holy phrases using 150 kilos (330 pounds) of gold and silver thread. Communications with pilgrims are done via millions of sms telling them how to properly perform the ceremonies. Moreover last year was the first time that the Hajj ceremonies were streamed via YouTube. My aim in giving these figures is that our young ones should know and be aware what really goes on during Hajj and they should use the internet and YouTube videos to educate themselves about this important festival and know more about it than we knew when we were young. Hence at an early age they will understand the spirit that should animate this festival rather than just practicing some rituals. May Allah open our heart to understand the essence of religion and not just its form.

But this is the high tech Hajj of today. How it all started? We should go back about more than 4 thousand years ago. According to Bible historians Hazrat Ibrahim was born in Ur modern day Iraq in the year 2188 BCE (Before the Common Era). However in the Holy Quran we are not told when he was born or where he was born. So some of the “facts” we know about his life come from the bible and some from the Holy Quran and some from the hadîth. Of course we give more credit to the Holy Quran than to the other sources. At first Hazrat Ibrahim was known as Abram. Later on Allah changed his name to Abraham meaning (father of a multitude). Just imagine this. He had lived till a quite old age but he was childless. According to the hadith he was eighty six when he fathered Hazrat Ismail. But prior to this age despite the fact that he used to pray for a son he did not get any. But Allah revealed to him that he would be made an Imam “*Inni jaaeloka linnaase imama*” meaning “I will make you a leader of men”. Today there are approximately 7 billion people on earth. Out of these there are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims and about 1.8 billion Christians and about 13 million Jews. It is almost half the population of the globe who venerate this great man and who say that they are his descendants. Allah said to him that he would be the father of a multitude and today we witness that these words of Allah was true because he is indeed revered by a multitude. Despite the fact that circumstances might have dissuaded him from believing in that promise of Allah , yet his heart was convinced and he waited for the promise of Allah to be accomplished and his second wife Hagar gave birth to his son Ishmael and later on to show Allah’s greatness his first wife gave birth to Isaac. But Allah tried him even more and he went to leave his son and his mother in the desert of Arabia. Where he left them at that time there was not even water and no means for subsistence but they survived and from them would come the Arabs.

The story of Abraham leaving his son Ismail and his wife Hagar in the desert is so moving that I have I to relate it often. So bear with me and reflect on this story. We read in Bukhari as follows:

Ibn Abbas(the cousin of Prophet Muhammad) narrate that the Holy Prophet said: The first lady to use a girdle was the mother of Ishmael (Ismail).She used a girdle so that she might hide her tracks from Sarah. Abraham brought her and her son Ismail while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaaba in Arabia today's Saudi Arabia under a tree on the spot of Zam-zam at the highest place in the mosque.

During those days there was nobody in Mecca nor was there any water so he (Prophet Abraham) made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward.

Ismail's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham, Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (except desert sand)?"She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has God ordered you to do so?"

He said, "Yes."She said, "Then He (God) will not neglect us," and returned.

While Abraham proceeded onwards and on reaching the *Thaniya* where they could not see him, he faced the Kaaba and raising both hands, invoked God saying the following prayers, "O our Lord, I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House (The Kaaba) in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly." "So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O God) provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks." (Quran 14:37).

Ismail's mother went on suckling Ismail by giving him her breast milk and (she was) drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty.

She started looking at him Ismail tossing in agony from the need of more milk to drink. She left him because she could not endure looking at him and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land.

She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody but she could not see anybody.

Then she descended from Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody.

She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times."

The Prophet (Muhammad) said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (Mount Safa and Mount Marwa).

When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively.

She heard the voice again and said, "O, (whoever you may be), You have made me hear your voice. Have you got something to help me?"

And behold, She saw an angel at the place of Zam-zam digging the earth with his heel (or his wing) till water flowed from that place.

She started to make something like a basin around it using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it."

The Prophet (Muhammad) added, "May God bestow Mercy on Ismail's mother, Had she let the Zam-zam (flow without trying to control it) (or had she not scooped from that water) (to fill her water-skin) (then) Zam-zam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth."

The Prophet (Muhammad) further added, "Then she drank (water) and suckled her (baby) child (by giving him her breast milk).

The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of God which will be built by this boy and his father, and God never neglects His people."

The House The Kaaba at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock and when torrents (of water) came they flowed to its right and left.

She lived in that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum passed by her and her child, as they (the Jurhum people) were coming through the way of Kada'.

They (the Jurhum people) landed in the lower part of Mecca where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around water and not leaving it.

They (the Jurhum people) said, "This bird must be flying around water, though we know that there is no water in this valley."

They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water and returned to inform them of the water. So, they all came (towards the water).

The Prophet (Muhammad) added, "Ismail's mother was sitting near the water."

They asked her, "Do you allow us to stay with you?"

She replied, "Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water."

They agreed to that.

The Prophet (Muhammad) further said, "Ismail's mother was pleased with the whole situation as she used to love to enjoy the company of the people. So they settled there and later on they (the Jurhum people) sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there.

The child Ismail grew up and learnt Arabic from them (the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum) and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst them."

Therefore the Hajj that we know of today had a very humble beginning with the settlement of Hazrat Hajra and her son Ismail in the desert and deserted valley of Mecca. From very humble beginning when there was no water and its inhabitants were only a mother and his suckling son today Mecca has become the most expensive piece of land in the world at about \$133,000 per square meter surpassing even Monte Carlo which is around \$47,500 square meter. This expensiveness in itself is not as distinctive as the fact that it is the sacred place where many of Allah's promises to His humble servants have been fulfilled. This is Allah's Grace. He does what He likes.

As time went by Ismail grew up rapidly within the Kaaba and together with his father Abraham they rebuilt the Kaaba. But Abraham had a dream in which he saw that he was slaughtering his dear son Ismail. This event is related thus in the Holy Quran:

“And when he was old enough to work with him, he said, ‘O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering thee. So consider, what thou thinkest *of it!*’ He replied, ‘O my father, do as thou art commanded; thou wilt find me, if Allah please, of those who are patient.’

And when they both submitted *to the Will of God*, and he had thrown him down on his forehead,

We called to him: ‘O Abraham, ‘Thou hast indeed fulfilled the dream.’ Thus indeed do We reward those who do good.

That surely was a manifest trial.

And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.

And We left for him *a good name* among the following generations

‘Peace be upon Abraham!’

Thus do We reward those who do good.”(37:103-110)

If we speak about the sacrifice on the day of Hajj we cannot fail to mention this incident. It shows us the readiness of these two great creatures to submit to their Lord. What a faith and what was that degree of servitude and certainty. We who have come much later in time can just marvel at the readiness of these two great personalities who were ever ready to sacrifice what they had as most precious for their Lord. Since that time the sacrifice of animals was established in commemoration of the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice his son and of Ismail to do the bidding of the Lord and to obey his father. But this practice went into oblivion and the birthplace of *tauhid* became the sanctuary of idols. But again in response to the prayers that both Hazrat Ibrahim and Ismail made while they were building the walls of the mosque, Allah raised Hazrat Mohammad^{saw} who was to wash idol worship for ever from Mecca and reestablish the Hajj as it was being practiced before with additional guidance from Allah.

The Holy Prophet Mohammad^{saw} performed the Greater Pilgrimage only once in his lifetime and that also the last year of his life. On that occasion he made a memorable speech which *inchallah* we will talk about in our Friday sermon of next week. Thus during this great day we remember and pay homage to these three great Prophets namely Hazrat Ibrahim, Hazrat Ismail and Hazrat Mohammad^{saw}. They have all played a great role in giving us the Hajj as we know today. Now it is our turn to try to imbibe the teachings of these great prophets and mould our life and that of our future generations to their example. May Allah grant us all to understand and practice the submission that will be pleasing to Him. *Ameen!*