

FRIDAY SERMON

11 October 2013

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun read verses 97 & 98 of chapter 3 of the Holy Quran in Arabic and then he said:

Now it is known and Saudi Arabia has announced that *Yawm Arafat* will be on Monday 14th October and there Eid ul Adha will be on Tuesday 15th October. However, in many other parts of the world as well as in Mauritius Eid ul Adha will be celebrated on Wednesday 16th October. In view of some important commitments that some members may be having on that particular day, I suggest that we read Eid Prayer earlier so that we might be free for the other commitments. We will discuss the matter with all members after Jumma and you will be informed at what time exactly we will perform Eid prayer *incha Allah* on Wednesday next.

This year the number of persons attending the Hajj will be less than usual because of some expansion works that are going on within the precincts of the Kaaba. Consequently the quota for all countries have been reduced by 20% . Usually each country is given a quota of 1000 pilgrims for every 1million inhabitants. By this measure the greatest contingent comes from Indonesia which should have been around 211,000. But they have been granted only 168,000 because all quotas have been reduced this year by 20 % . Last year about 3,2 million pilgrims performed Hajj and about 1.75 million were foreigners and they came from 190 countries. From an article that I have read it appears that only about 57,255 foreigners attended hajj in 1920. Then it crossed the million number around 1995-6. Hence in view of the ever increasing number of pilgrims the Saudis are investing massively to increase the area of the Grand mosque surrounding the Kaaba by about 400,000 square metres. They expect that they will be able to accommodate about 2.2 million worshippers at a given time when all the construction works will be completed in 2015. All these works will cost them about \$30 billion.

The Saudis as guardian of the Holy Places, namely Mecca and Madina are doing their best to make the stay of pilgrims as easy as they can. In their present development plans they are also trying to increase the shaded area around the Grand Mosque so that pilgrims might be protected from the desert heat. These days they communicate with the pilgrims by sms which is almost instantaneous and greatly improves communication. As I said once before more than 700,000 animals are slaughtered during the days of Hajj. Because of some previous accidents that resulted in the loss of lives an important security apparatus have been put in place for the safety of the pilgrims. Last year about 168,000 security personnel were on foot during the five days of Hajj. If we reflect about it we will come to know that an enormous display of know how is needed to organize such a large gathering of human beings for a maximum of ,let us say ten days, if we include rest as well. There are also many volunteers from Pakistan and some other countries as well who go there to help the pilgrims during the days of Hajj. I am giving you all

these information so that you also might know what is going on during the days of Hajj. Out of love for all these Muslims we should pray that no untoward incident takes place during these sacred days of the Hajj.

When we speak about Hajj we speak about the Kaaba. Exactly what is the Kaaba? Allow me to give you some information about it taken from the Saudi website. It says:

“The Kaaba , a large stone structure constituting a single room with a marble floor, lies at the heart of the Holy Mosque (*al Masjid al Haram*) in the Holy City of Makkah. The Kaaba is Islam's holiest building. It now stands some 60 feet high and each side is approximately 60 feet in length. The Kaaba is the focal point around which the Holy Mosque is built. The four walls of the Kaaba are covered with a black curtain (the Kiswa) which reaches to the ground and is fastened to the Shadharwan with copper rings. The door of the Kaaba is set in the south-east wall, about seven feet from the ground. Inside, there are pillars, which support the roof. The interior is furnished with many gold and silver lamps. On the inner walls, there are several bands of inscriptions which record the many repairs done to the Kaaba. The Holy Quran makes it clear that Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ishmael were the true founders of the Kaaba , together building the holy shrine dedicated to the worship of the one true God. Five times each day more than a billion Muslims around the world turn to face the direction of the Kaaba to offer their prayers to the one true God. It is also, of course, the focal point of the Hajj when, once each year, some two million pilgrims converge on the Holy City of Makkah. Set in the eastern corner of the Kaaba is the Black Stone (*al-Hajar al-Aswad*). The Black Stone predates the birth of Islam but now, set in gold, forms an integral part of the Kaaba. In the course of the pilgrimage, the Hajjis will kiss or touch the Black Stone, not because the Black Stone is holy in itself but because it was kissed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad(pbuh)”

For those of you who are more interested I suggest you check on Youtube about the Kaaba and you will be able to visit its inside. It is an interesting experience. You should see the video. Besides there are plenty of good articles available on the net that tell us the history of this Holy Place. Those who can should read these articles. As I have just said the Kaaba is built of individual stones from around Mecca. But it has a special stone known as the Black Stone (*Hajre aswad*). This black stone has had some importance since immemorial time. Tradition says that it came from heaven. Although these days we might be reticent to subscribe to such a view, nonetheless it is not quite improbable that it is a meteorite or a piece of a meteorite that fell there. Since it fell from the sky people might have said that it came from heaven and this version remained prevalent through the ages. Many westerners have been studying the stone in order to find its origin. But up till now they have not been able to pinpoint its origin with accuracy. Allah knows best. Anyhow we learn that this stone had a particular importance even prior to the Holy prophet(saw) declaring his mission. We learn from Wikipedia the following:

“Muhammad is credited with setting the Black Stone in place in the wall of the

Kaaba. A story found in Ibn Ishaq's Sirah RasulAllah tells how the clans of Mecca renovated the Kaaba following a major fire which had partly destroyed the structure. The Black Stone had been temporarily removed to facilitate the rebuilding work. The clans could not agree on which one of them should have the honour of setting the Black Stone back in its place.

They decided to wait for the next man to come through the gate and ask him to make the decision. That individual happened to be the 35-year-old Muhammad, five years before his prophethood. He asked the elders of the clans to bring him a cloth and put the Black Stone in its centre. Each of the clan leaders held the corners of the cloth and carried the Black Stone to the right spot. Then Muhammad himself set the stone in place, satisfying the honour of all of the clans.”

This incident might symbolize the work that the Holy Prophet (saw) would be doing for the Arabs. He was the one who knew how to reconcile their views. Allah knows best. Initially the stone was in one piece but with the passage of time and with touching and kissing it became fragmented. At present it is held together with a gold band. There are several fragments. Its picture can be seen on the net if you are interested. Some people have associated this aspect of the kissing or touching of the stone with idol worship. But such is not the case. We learn from books of Hadiths that when Hazrat Umar (ra) performed the Hajj he said in front of all assembled: "No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither harm anyone nor benefit anyone. Had I not seen Allah's Messenger [Muhammad] kissing you, I would not have kissed you.”

The stone is venerated but it does not in anyway form an essential part of the Hajj. The Stone has suffered desecrations and significant damage over the centuries. It is said to have been struck and smashed to pieces by a stone fired from a catapult during the Umayyad siege of Mecca in 683. The fragments were rejoined by Abd Allah ibn Zubayr using a silver ligament. In January 930 it was stolen by the *Qarmatians*, who carried the Black Stone away to their base in Hajar (modern Bahrain) and returned it 22 years later in 952. According to Ottoman historian Qutb al-Din, writing in 1857, Qarmatian leader Abu Tahir al-Qarmati set the Black Stone up in his own mosque, the Masjid al-Dirar, with the intention of redirecting the Hajj away from Mecca. However, this failed, and pilgrims continued to venerate the spot where the Black Stone had been.

Another point concerning this stone is that its exact size varies through the ages. According to those who have studied this matter and according to their recorded observations we understand that “in the 10th century, an observer described it as being one cubit (slightly over 1.5 feet (0.46 m)) long. By the early 17th century, it was recorded as measuring 1.5 yards (1.4 m) by 1.33 yards (1.22 m). According to Ali Bey(a visitor) in the 18th century, it was 42 inches (110 cm) high, and Muhammad Ali Pasha reported it as being 2.5 feet (0.76m) long by 1.5 feet (0.46m) wide.”(Wikipedia). Allah knows best it real size.

The structure of the Kaaba was originally made of stones. With the passage of time it has been rebuilt to take the shape that it has today. Can anyone today imagine that in such a place which is venerated by about 1.6 billion human beings worldwide , there was a time when idols were rampant and people venerated them. From the Holy Quran we learn from the verses that I read in the beginning that:

“Surely, the first House founded for mankind is that at Becca, abounding in blessings and a guidance for all peoples. In it are manifest Signs; it is the place of Abraham; and whoso enters it, enters peace. And pilgrimage to the House is a duty which men — those who can find a way thither — owe to Allah. And whoever disbelieves, *let him remember* that Allah is surely independent of all creatures. “(3:97-8)

The Holy Quran has not said Mecca. It uses the word “ Becca”. But we know that it means Mecca because of what follows. There are plenty of blessings associated with it. It is a guidance for the people. There are manifest signs in this place. It is the place of Abraham who is venerated by Jews and by Christians. Whoever enters it and does what Abraham did will be in peace. It is a place which will be resorted to as long as the world exist. The pact of God with mankind started from that place and it will continue till the end of time through that place. Everyone should know that if he or she believes in Allah , he does so for his own good. Allah does not need our belief in Him. Allah appreciates that we believe in Him or His representative. But Allah has no need for these beliefs. When a person believes and does good he does so for his or her own soul. Allah is totally independent of all of us. But since He has created us He cares for us and provides us with what will be good for us. This place is well known and revered today in the world because of Hazrat Ibrahim particularly and his sacrifices. However he has been made known to the world through our beloved prophet Mohammad (saw) who came to teach the world what exactly was that station of Abraham. It is through the Holy Quran that we come to learn more about this great Prophet of God. Incha Allah when we get some time we will talk more about this subject. May Allah grant to each one amongst us an unflinching faith like that of Hazrat Ibrahim and may such faith become stronger in our progeny incha Allah . Ameen.