

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran, Imam Zafrullah Domun recited verses 186 and 187 of chapter 2 of the Holy Quran and then he said:

As expected a majority of Muslims in Mauritius and around the world started fasting for Ramadan of the year as from Sunday last. With the coming of Ramadan we observe a new enthusiasm in all Muslims, old and especially young and men and women to observe this most important commandment of Allah. All try their level best to forego sleep and to wake up to take the predawn meal (*sehri*) and many do leave the comfort of their homes and resort to the mosque for the *Fajr* prayer. Mosques become alive like beehives during these days of Ramadan especially the first days for Maghrib and Esha and Taraweeh prayers. This enthusiasm, this joy for devotions and the sanctity that can be seen during these days can never be witnessed in any other non-Ramadan days of the Year. That is most probably why some knowledgeable people of the past have said that Ramadan is the spring for believers, for worshippers. It is the time when everyone makes a special effort to observe the constraints that have been imposed on the fasting person and to devote more time to the worship of Allah, to His Remembrance and less time to frivolous pursuits.

At least for one month most Muslims do understand the importance that Allah should play in their lives. We can only hope and pray that such devotions become a part and parcel of their lives throughout the year and that the Muslim Nation takes its rightful place as a model and guide for all the peoples of the world fulfilling the following verse of the Holy Quran: **“You are the best people raised for mankind; you enjoin good and forbid evil and believe in Allah...”** (3:111). Unfortunately up till now and especially after the event of 9/11 in the USA many non Muslims especially do have a negative view about Muslims. In the verse just quoted and in many other verses of the Holy Quran Allah makes it clear that as Muslims we should become paragons of virtue and under no circumstance should we cause any harm to anyone. All Muslim groups will say that they stand for peace for justice for love. Unfortunately we see that those who make these declarations belie these statements through their own ugly actions. Plenty of such examples can be given. But this is not the purpose of our sermon of today. Even Jamaat Ahmadiyya mainstream has not lived up to this teaching. We all know that the definition of a Muslim as given by the Holy Prophet (saw) is “someone from whose harm committed either by the hand or by the tongue other Muslims are protected.” In other words a Muslim is someone who does not inflict any harm on other Muslims either by his hand or by his words. To declare the noble teachings of Islam is one thing but to put them into practice is something else. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has told us that there should be no contradiction between what we preach and what we practice. This is what we all should be aiming for. If we say we are Muslims we should display the real characteristics of a Muslim in our behavior not just in verbal declarations. As good Muslims we should live our month of Ramadan with great sincerity and do our level best to do what is expected of us and to avoid everything that might spoil our fasts. Fasting helps us to develop self control of the eyes, of the tongue, of the ears, of the hands and other parts of the body. We should reflect about how it can help us to develop God consciousness and we should strive to take a large measure of it in our lifetime. The journey in God Consciousness is a very

long one. If there is something that can help us enormously in this task it is the reading and understanding of the Holy Quran. The translation of the two verses that I have just read in the beginning are as follows:

"The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was sent down as guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present *at home* in this month let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, *shall fast* the same number of other days. Allah desires *to give* you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful. And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: 'I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.'"(2:186-87)

From this verse we understand that the Holy Quran started being revealed in this blessed month in the year 610 AD. Although it continued to be revealed little by little till the death of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) in 632AD, all the cumulative verses revealed during the period of 22 or 23 years were being revised by Hazrat Jibril on his yearly Ramadan visit to the Holy Prophet (saw). Hence there has been since the very beginning a close relationship between Ramadan and the reading or recitation of the Holy Quran. The Holy Prophet (saw) and the companions used to read the Holy Quran in prayers especially at night. Since the time of Hazrat Umar (ra) the Muslims have adopted the practice of reading Tarawee prayers during the night of Ramadan after Namaz Esha. Some read eight Rakaats and some read twenty Rakaats. Anyhow an attempt is made to read the entire Quran during all the nights of Ramadan by reading at least one part out of thirty parts every day. We see that this is a practice that is found in almost all places where there are reciters who can recite that much. Although one cannot deny that there are blessings in just listening to the words of the Holy Quran, I think that we should lay more emphasis on understanding it. So one may participate in Tarawee prayer out of love for listening to the verses but one should aim at understanding. For those for whom Arabic is not the mother tongue they will have to have recourse to translations. These days the whole Holy Quran is available on the net with translation in plenty of languages. One may download and listen and try to understand the translation that is given. These days we have facilities for reading and understanding that has never been available in the whole History of humanity. As good Muslims who are not against progress we should learn to use technology to help us deepen our knowledge of our Holy Book. In forty five minutes at most one can listen and understand one part of the Holy Quran every day. If we do so we will create our bond with the Holy Book and we will understand it better and this will help us to deepen our God Consciousness which is the real aim of our fasting. So together with fasting we should do our best to increase our knowledge of the Holy Quran.

In addition in this verse Allah makes it quite clear for all of us that He desires ease for us and no difficulty at all. This fast is for our own benefit. However, those who for some reason or other cannot fast, they may replace the fast on some other days or they may expiate it. Allah does not impose a burden on those who might find it so while they are fasting. But no one who does not have a genuine excuse should avoid fasting. Everyone should know it for sure that Allah knows each individual's situation quite well. No one can mislead Allah. In several places in the Holy Quran He tells us He will eventually enquire of us about our deeds. Allah says that those who have been sick or who have been travelling should complete the fast and exalt Allah for having guided them so that they might be grateful. Real guidance comes from Allah alone. No one has a monopoly over it. Allah guides those who are sincere with Him in mysterious ways. Allah does

not need the permission of anyone to guide any particular person. Yes, when out of arrogance some cut their relationship with someone because they think that they can dispense guidance Allah intervenes to show that He is the Ultimate Guide and He does what He pleases. In fact all Muslims should be grateful to Allah for having guided them to Islam. He says in the Holy Quran **“They presume to regard it as a favor to thee that they have embraced Islam. Say ‘deem not your embracing Islam as a favour unto me. On the contrary Allah has bestowed a favour upon you in that He has guided you to the true faith, if you are truthful.’(49:18).**Being guided is therefore a favour from Allah for which we should be grateful and Ramadan is an occasion to show this gratefulness.

In the other verse that I read Allah speaks about His closeness to all of His Servants. He says He is near. In another verse of the Holy Quran He says “We are closer to him than his jugular vein”. Whether we understand it or not we should all take it for granted that what Allah says is true and we should be on our guard vis-à-vis Him. We understand that during the month of Ramadan He is particularly close to His creatures and He listens to their prayers. To be properly guided we should respond to Him and we should believe in Him. In the month of Ramadan we have plenty of time to pray. By prayer we should not just understand the five daily prayers. By prayer we mean all the solicitations and pleadings that we make in front of Allah. Since He has given a promise that He will respond to our entreaties we should present them to Him and beg Him to accept them. So we should use the month of Ramadan for the presentation of special requests to Allah. He is the Provider and we should not be ashamed to ask Him anything. It is for us to ask and He will judge what He needs to give us. We should believe that He knows our needs better than us. We should take the time to reflect upon Allah’s greatness when we say “*Subhana Rabbi Al azim*” and “*Subhana Rabbi Al Ala*” and not just repeat these words like a parrot. We should take the time in our Ruku and Sajda to allow ourselves to become fully conscious to whom we have bowed our head. We should allow ourselves to be filled with a sense of humility and utter helplessness and make our entreaties to our Lord. If we do so definitely we will get responses from Him. It is my hope and prayer that Allah graces each one of you during this Ramadan with responses from Him *Incha Allah.*

In the end I would like to say a word about recent developments in the Middle East. As some amongst you might have heard someone has declared himself to be a caliph for the whole Muslim world. That person and his jihadists have control over a large portion of territory in Iraq and Syria. This group is an offshoot of Al Qaeda but they have dissociated themselves from them. This group wants to reestablish the medieval caliphate and wants to break the frontiers between the countries of the Middle East. The successes of this group have been so quick that it has taken many capitals around the world by surprise. The Iraqi army which had been trained by the Americans at the cost of \$25 billion was routed within days and they had to flee the battlefield. For those who follow world politics there is a great irony in this situation and it is a big challenge to the West especially America and its allies. Their misguided policies in Iraq to establish democracy has turned against their own selves and now they do not know what to do even after having spent more than one trillion dollars and having 4500 American soldiers killed and more than 200 thousands Iraqis killed. The events that are going on over there need to be followed because they are a great challenge to the western powers and the Gulf States. Allah knows best what will happen. Should we have time we will speak more about these events in the future. For the time being let us be thankful to Allah that we live in a relatively peaceful country and let us pray also for the Umma that Allah may solve its problems everywhere in the world.