

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 verse 187 of Chapter two of the Holy Quran in Arabic and then he said:

Today is the twentieth day of fasting and it is the first day of what is known as *itekaaf* meaning seclusion in a main mosque for total devotion to Allah. Following the example of the Prophet of Allah, Hazrat Mohammad (saw) many Muslims will resort to mosques to fast and pray and be engaged in the remembrance of Allah day and night until the appearance of the new moon in about ten days. The coming ten days for these people will be days and nights of intense devotion with a view to have all sins erased. It is our hope and prayer that Allah, out of His Infinite Mercy accepts the sincere prayers of all Muslims around the world in the coming ten days which are full of blessings.

As you might recall the Holy Prophet (saw) has said that during the last ten days of Ramadan Allah grants protection from the fire of Hell. Those who wish to get this protection will have to work for it by increasing their devotions during the coming days. Usually for most people Ramadan fatigue starts setting in by the twentieth day. But that should not be the case at all. According to authentic hadiths when the last ten days of Ramadan arrived the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) redoubled his efforts in his devotions to Allah. Some hadiths about these last ten days are as follows:

- Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said, "With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet used to tighten his waist belt and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers." (Bukhari)

The tightening of the waist belt is just an expression used to show greater determination and no flagging of interest or enthusiasm. It means that he was more determined to do more in the last days of Ramadan than he did during the first twenty days. In fact the next hadith confirms this. It says:

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) used to strive more in worship during Ramadan than he strove in any other time of the year; and he would devote himself more (in the worship of Allah) in the last ten nights of Ramadan than he strove in earlier part of the month.” (Muslim).

So if for any reason one has been negligent during the first twenty days there is ample time to do good deeds and to reap the benefits during the last ten days. So anyone who might have been remiss during the first twenty days should not just say “next year we will do better”. There is plenty of time to do better now in this month. So let us be

determined to make ample use of the following days and night to show our devotion to Allah.

From other hadiths we learn that:

- A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) reported: "When the last ten nights (of Ramadan) would begin, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) would keep awake at night (for prayer and devotion), awaken his family and prepare himself to be more diligent in worship. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

We understand therefore, that the Holy Prophet (saw) did not content himself to doing these *ebadat* alone. He encouraged his wives to do the same. So should we try to do. Members of our household should wake up for this purpose. But there should be no obligation on anyone. It is voluntary and no one has been given any right to impose it on others. Once a person understands what is the purpose of his life he will do whatever is needed to accomplish its mission. Then by himself he will wake up to pray to Allah during the night being fully aware of the value of such prayers especially when he reflects on the following hadith:

"Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said, "When the last one third of the night remains, our Lord, the Glorious One, descends towards the lower heaven and proclaims: 'Is there anyone supplicating to Me so that I grant his supplication? Is there anyone begging of Me for anything so that I grant him his wish? Is there anyone who seeks My forgiveness so I forgive him?'" (Bukhari and Muslim)

We also understand from the hadiths that there is a night known as *Laylatul Qadr* during Ramadan and the Holy prophet (saw) has said that it is better than a thousand months. The Holy Prophet (saw) has advised us to look for this night during the odd nights of the last ten days namely on the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th. No one knows before hand when that particular night might be unless Allah informs him or her through revelation, or a dream or a vision. From a hadith we learn that once the Holy Prophet(saw) was told about it but when he went out to tell the people he saw two persons quarrelling and he forgot about the exact date of the event. Speaking about its importance he said: **"Whoever spends the night of *Laylat al-Qadr* in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward, will be forgiven his previous sins."** Only this small hadith should be enough to encourage each one amongst us to make a particular effort during the coming nights especially the odd ones to get all our sins forgiven. It is Allah's wish to save all of us but we should make an effort and do what is expected from us. The acceptance of prayers and Ramadan are closely linked and that is most probably why in the verse which I read at the beginning Allah says:

“And when my servant asks 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.’”

So there is a promise from Allah, if we needed one from the Holy Quran, that He will answer our prayers. So when Hazrat Aisha(ra) asked the Holy Prophet what should be done if one sees the *laylatul Qadr* he replied that we should pray with the following words “*Allahoumma innaka afouwounne tohibbul afwa fa’fo anni*” meaning “Our Lord You are the Eraser of sins, you like to erase sins, erase my sins”. The attribute of Allah “*Afouwoun*” seems to be more important than “*Ghafoor*” which means “Forgiver”. With the manifestation of Allah’s attribute “The Eraser” the sin is obliterated completely from the book of actions. So for us, the coming days and nights are full of blessings and we should do our best to profit by them or else we will be the unfortunate losers. Our young ones especially should make a particular effort here. If they have not been doing *tahajjud* prayer they should start by praying even only two *rakaat* and improve to four to six and eventually to eight if possible. When one is young one can be quite enthusiastic about this *ebadat* especially if you have some problems in life. To seek solutions to your problem you will do almost anything. In Islam Allah tells you that He is the Solver of your problems and He tells you to come and ask Him. So what could be better? By the Grace of Allah many elders amongst us have travelled along this road and they know how powerful the prayers of Tahajjud are. Before us many good Muslims have gone by and they have experienced the effects of the *Tahajjud* prayer. So the young ones also should learn by personal experience and not be content to say that my father did this, my grandfather did that. When we experience the acceptance of prayer at the personal level we improve our conviction in Allah. And about this certainty/conviction Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has told us:

“O ye who seek the Lord, open your ears and listen! Take heed that there is nothing like perfect conviction which delivers you from sin; conviction gives you the power to do good; and conviction alone can turn you into a lover of God. Can you turn away from evil without perfect conviction? Can you hold your base impulses in check without the help of a sure light? Without this perfect conviction, can anyone bring about any real change in himself? Can you attain to any state of satisfaction and peace of mind without this perfect certainty? Can you at all win any prosperity without it?.... Always remember, therefore, that you cannot come out of the darkness without firm conviction, nor can you get the Holy Spirit. Blessed are they who have this conviction, and blessed are they who have been delivered from uncertainties and doubts, for they alone shall be delivered of sin; and blessed will you be when this great treasure of firm conviction is given to you, since on that day sin for you will come to an end. Sin and conviction cannot exist together.” (Noah’s Ark page 24)

Each one amongst us needs this perfect conviction in order to get rid of all sins. Namaz *Tahajjud* affords a unique opportunity in this matter. With the enthusiasm of Ramadan still on we should do our best to make this special prayer a part of our life whilst we are still young because if you delude yourself in thinking that there will be a more opportune moments tomorrow, you will be mistaken. The time to act is when you are young. Those who have delayed this important devotion have realized their “later” has become “too late”. So do not let what others are doing influence you. Do what we are teaching you because your parents and we have your best interests at heart. If your relationship with Allah becomes solid you will be able to navigate the rough seas of life quite easily. So do not let these important days and night just pass by as they used to. Make full use of them by upgrading the levels of your devotions. Be eager to know Allah and He will reveal Himself to you.

As we have said from the hadiths we learn that the Holy Prophet (saw) passed the whole night in prayer during the last days of Ramadan. One might think that this might be an exaggeration. If people are fired by enthusiasm sleep does not mean anything. We have seen how many young ones and old ones also have sacrificed their sleep to watch football matches during the world cup. So waking up at night or passing the night in prayer is possible and many have done it. These days we can watch on the net how the Saudis and others are praying almost ninety seven minutes of Tarawee prayers and then twenty five minutes of *Tahajjud* prayers in the morning. They do this during the whole Ramadan. We need to find creative ways to use available technology to help us to understand the Holy Quran while it is being read and maybe this might help us to stand up and read more of the Holy Book during Ramadan. Once I watched a documentary about a group of Christian monks who live secluded from the world on one of the mountains in Greece. I was quite surprised to see that they pray every night for about eight hours. So, if people believe in something, great feats can be accomplished. But we are not here to accomplish feats. We are here to become closer to Allah. He has given us the month of Ramadan as an easy means to accomplish this purpose and the remaining days are most blessed for this. May Allah help each one amongst us to do our best to take the path that will lead us to Him incha Allah.

During the last ten days we also understand from the books of Hadith that the Holy Prophet(saw) used to give a lot in charity. So we should try to do the same. Remember that *Sadaqatul Fitr* should be given before namaz Eid for all living Muslims and even a newborn. I suggest that you make your contributions early so that they might be distributed before Eid *incha* Allah.

May Allah give to each one amongst us the opportunity to spend the last days of Ramadan in doing everything that will please Him enormously incha Allah.