

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As you might all be aware, by the middle of next week we will all be in the blessed, holy and great month of Ramadhan. As per astronomical calculations the new moon will be born on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June around 3 o'clock UT. For us here it will be around 6 O'clock in the morning. For the moon to be visible here will be well-nigh impossible after the setting of the sun on Sunday. But in almost all places around the world it should be visible on Monday and *incha* Allah almost around the world Muslims will start fasting on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016. I take this opportunity to wish Ramadhan *Mobarack* to you particularly and to all Muslims around the world. This is not a wish that is extended just to be polite. It is a wish that every Muslim worthy of that name will indeed use this month of fasting to have all his or her sins that he or she might have committed up till now, to be forgiven. It is a wish that *incha* Allah each one amongst us will have plenty of time and occasions to pray to Allah to show how we really perceive Him to be our Master and that we are making efforts to be a true servant of His. It is also a wish that each one amongst us will do his or her best to read and understand and delve into the meanings of the Holy Quran so that by the end of the month we know much more of the teachings of Allah than at the beginning of the month. It is a wish that Allah will grant each one amongst us the opportunity to remember Him much or at least in a greater degree that we use to remember Him in other months. Let us hope and pray also that Allah will put an end to the misery and afflictions that are plaguing Muslims around the world.

As usual in the first sermons of the month we usually remind ourselves of the injunctions about the month of Ramadhan. So first of all we will start with the Ruku in the second chapter of the Holy Quran where Allah speaks about the need for fasting. He says:

184. O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ  
الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾

This is the verse in which Allah gave the first commandments about fasting. It is good to know that these commandments were revealed in the second year of Hijra (emigration to Medina) which took place in the year 622. So we may

conclude from this that the Holy Prophet (saw) had only about ten Ramadhan in his life time.

In the verse quoted above Allah makes it quite clear why Muslims are being prescribed fasting. The aim is that they should develop *taqwa* in themselves. And what is *taqwa*? We commonly translate *taqwa* as righteousness in English. But it is in fact God consciousness. That is an ever pervading perception that Allah is present and He is watching over us and that He is well aware of what we think and what we do or what we say. So we take Him as a shield against sins and all sorts of evil. By taking upon us the duty of fasting we are so to say making a statement. What is that statement? We are saying to ourselves that we, as human beings are ready to carry this burden that Allah has imposed upon us because it will help us to be more conscious of Him and to resort to Him more. Hence we do our best to voluntarily refrain from eating or drinking or having sex because Allah has asked us to do so. We show our willingness to obey Him. And Allah appreciates that His Servants obey Him.

Another point that is worthy of note in this verse is that fasting is not something new. Previous peoples to whom Allah sent His messengers were also prescribed fasting as a religious exercise. Here particularly mention is being made of the Jews and eventually the Christians. And we know from the Hadiths that the Holy Prophet (saw) used to fast as the Jews did prior to His receiving the commandments about Fasting.

Allah being our Creator is well aware of our strengths and our weaknesses. He does not ask of us what we cannot do. Under no circumstance does He overburden us. He knows quite well that going without food and drinks will be hard upon us. So He has not prescribed that we should stop eating for whole days and nights continuously. No. He has prescribed that we should fast only for a limited amount of time during a day, that is, from dawn to sunset and that also for a limited number of days (either twenty-nine or thirty) in a year. For young people even thirty days is too much because they are not used to it. But had Allah said that we should have fasted for two or three months during the year most Muslims would have done it because as humans we can do it. But Allah has shown His Mercy to us by asking us to fast as a religious duty for only one month during a year. We need to be grateful for that. We show this gratefulness by doing our best to fast with all its requirements with the aim of drawing nearer to Allah by becoming more aware of His Presence even if we do not see Him with our physical eyes. He says elsewhere(6:104) in the Holy Quran

104. Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware.

لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْإَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْإَبْصَارَ  
وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٣٤﴾

This is one of the most profound verse of the Holy Quran on which we should think to try to penetrate its meanings.

Furthermore, this fasting is not for everyone. Those who might be on a journey and those who are sick are excused. For them Allah has given a relief. They should fast when they are not on a journey or when they are relieved of their sickness. Similarly, those who can fast only with difficulty Allah has granted an expiation – they should feed a poor person. Allah does not burden anyone beyond his capacity. For any person to whom fasting is difficult and he feels he has no capacity to even replace the fasts the expiation of feeding a poor person will suffice for his not performing this religious duty. However Allah says “*faman tatawwa’a khayran fa howa khayroullahou* which is translated as “ as for he who performs a good deed willingly , that is better for him”. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has commented on this verse saying that he who makes use of the expiation will have the capacity to fast in the future. We may also understand this part of the verse in the sense that by doing more than what is prescribed will be to the benefit of the doer. And in the last part of the verse Allah says “*wa an tasoumou khayrullakoum in kountoum ta’lamoune*” meaning “and fasting is good for you if you only knew”. This last portion of the verse is just a statement made by Allah the All-knowing. These days when overeating is the cause of many diseases especially in the developed world one might appreciate the depth of wisdom that may be found in these words. When the statement was made almost 1400 years ago most probably the early Muslims understood its meaning in the religious sense. But today with the advancement in knowledge many studies have been made to understand the health benefits of fasting and they are here to prove the correctness of the statement made by Allah so many years ago. The pangs of hunger have some benefits on our body and we should learn to benefit from them. Ramadhan affords us a unique opportunity to do good to our own bodies. We should make full use of this opportunity. Besides we also read from the books of hadith that the Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said “fast and you will be in good health”. These are words that we should think upon.

In the end I would like to give you some extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah which most probably we have not spoken about in our

sermons. They do not have a direct link to fasting but they give an idea what we should be looking for when we are fasting. He says:

“God has appointed knowledge and understanding as the principal means of obtaining a true concept of Islam. Though there are other means for obtaining such knowledge, like fasting, Prayer, supplication and carrying out all the Divine commandments, the number of which exceeds six hundred, yet the knowledge of the Greatness of God and of His Unity and of His attributes of Glory and Beauty is basic for everything. He who has a heedless heart and has no understanding of the Divine, cannot obtain the strength to observe the fast, perform Prayer, make supplication, or occupy himself with doing good. All righteous action is incited by understanding of the Divine and all the other means proceed from it and are its issue.’ (*A’ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza’in*, Vol. 5, pp. 187- 188 - *Essence of Islam*, Vol. I, pp. 203 – 204).

He says further:

‘A person who keeps fast should always have it in view that fasting does not simply signify remaining hungry. Rather such a person should engage in remembrance of God so that he can attain devotion to God and is able to forsake worldly desires.’ He said: ‘Fasting signifies this alone that man gives up one kind of bread, which is for physical sustenance and takes the other kind of bread which is a source of contentment for the soul. People who fast only for the sake of God and not as a mere ritual should stay engaged in *hamd* (glorification of Allah) *tasbih* (saying *SubhanAllah*) and *tahlil* (saying *la ilaha illa Allah*/there is no god but Allah) to have the other kind of sustenance.’

Speaking about why we should all aim to be friends of Allah he says:

“There are a lot of people in the world who live a vulgar and luxurious life: they crave for the worldly honor and wealth and properties. The whole of their life, they remain occupied in vain struggles and ambitions and they continue planning for it. They do it till the last breath of theirs. These people had also been given talents and had they used them properly; they would have attained to the truth: God has not acted niggardly towards anyone whosoever. Blessed is he who puts the talents, granted by God to their proper use. There are many people who, when they are told to fear God and obey His commandments, retort by saying: Are we going to be a *Wali* (friend of God). This kind of utterance is no less than heresy: it is thinking evil of God. It is only the worldly Governments that are short of jobs; that is not the case with God. Whoever has a true relationship with God can have His blessings that were vouchsafed to the Truthful in the past. God

has called His beloved people “*Wali*” and is it any difficult for Him to make *Walis*? Not at all. It is easy for Him to make *Walis*. What is required in this respect is that man should advance towards Him with sincerity and steadfastness. No difficulty should make him waver. When a man has true relation with God and he becomes pure and pious and gets himself away from all that displeases God then God also introduces a relationship with him and comes closer to him. But if on the other hand somebody goes farther away from God and adopts dirty ways of life, God does not care for him. He says:

*Falamma Zaghoo Azaghallaho qoloobahum*

When they became crooked, God proclaimed their hearts to have become crooked. (Malfoozat Vol. I, p. 335).

May Allah help each one amongst us to understand truly why we are here and what should we be doing to fulfill the aim of our existence. May Allah make the coming days full of spiritual blessings for all of us. Ameen!