

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Today is the last Friday of this year. In two days, it will end and another one will start. In almost all cultures around the world, following millennial traditions, people say goodbye to the current year and welcome the new year in their own traditional ways with plenty of merry making. For us Muslims, Allah has told us in the Holy Quran that the revolution of the moon and earth is here only to help us to compute time. Allah says:

Yas'alounaka anil ahilla qoul heya mawaqito linnaase wal hajje (2:190) which we translate as “They ask you about the new moons. Say ‘they are the means for measuring time and for the pilgrimage.’ In another verse we read

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ
شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ ذَلِكَ
الَّذِينَ الْقِيَمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ
أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً

The Translation of this verse is as follows:

“The reckoning of months with Allah has been twelve months by Allah’s ordinance since the day when He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. That is the right creed. So, wrong not yourselves therein. And

fight the idolaters all together as they fight you all together; and know that Allah is with the righteous. [9:36]

In previous cultures, most people used the Lunar calendar. But with advances in the understanding of the universe spanning some centuries, people have shifted to Solar years. As you are aware, Hazrat Umar established a new calendar for Muslims starting from the year of Hijra which began in the year 622 CE. According to that calendar, we are in the year 1439AH.

Unlike the Gregorian year which has 365/366 days, the Islamic year has minimum 354 days. This is because the Hijri Calendar follows the movements of the moon. The Hijri Calendar is consistently less by 11 days' comparative to the Gregorian. Prior to the Gregorian calendar, the main countries in Europe used the Julian calendar established in the Roman Empire in 46BC in the time of Julius Caesar. But this was adjusted in 1582 by Pope Gregory and hence the adjective Gregorian. Not all countries of Europe adopted it. Even England adopted it about two centuries later. But these days a majority of the countries around the world have adopted it and the most recent one is Saudi Arabia.

The similarity between the Islamic and Gregorian calendars is that both have 12 months of seven days in a week. The slight day variations are that the first day of the week is Sunday (*Yawmul Ahad*) in the former while Monday is seen as the first week day in the latter.

As such, for a Muslim these are not days of merry making. However, despite what we say people usually do what pleases them. You might recall that in the sixth condition of *Bai'at* Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has told us that we should "refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and one shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy

Quran; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the guiding principle in every walk of his/her life.”

Hence, as Ahmadi Muslims, we should do our best to understand and put into practice the teachings of the Holy Quran. Many might think that they know these teachings well. But that might not be the case. It is a task that requires lots of hours of study and not just reading. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has taught us that we should do our best to find our greatest pleasure in our Allah and nowhere else. Now if you think about this and you try to do it you will understand how difficult it is. But this is the teaching that gives meaning to our life. If we fail in this and succeed in all other walks of life, we would still be failing our life. We should reflect about this and about all the teachings that we have received and do our best to mold our life according to them. The success of a life well lived lies in our understanding of why we are here. May Allah help each one amongst us to achieve this *incha* Allah.

Before I end on this matter, I would like to say that these days we still have Ahmadi Muslims who think that it is ok to party out in what is called Reveillon on New Year's eve. Anyone who says that this has been approved by any caliph is, according to me, misrepresenting what the caliph may have said. Copying others in merrymaking is against the spirit of the teachings of Jamaat Ahmadiyya. Whosoever says that such practices are in line with our teachings simply shows their ignorance of these teachings. Within the Jamaat, from instructions that I have read or heard, we should use this junction of two years to examine how far we have advanced towards Allah or how much we have drifted away from Him. For us it should not be a time of merry making like others but rather a time for introspection and reflection.

Now I will share with you some more extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah with the hope that it will help and guide us all to the best ways that we should adopt to live our lives in the shadow of Allah's Mercy. The Promised Messiah said:

“God exists even now, as He did in the days past; His powers too remain the same as they were in the past; and He is still as capable of showing signs as He was before. Then why should you be satisfied with stories and fables alone? (In other words, why should we content ourselves with what others say about Allah. We should rather embark on the journey where we know with certainty that Allah exists because He has shown us proof of His existence. In this way, we have personal experience of the existence of Allah and we do not content ourselves with what others say.) The Promised Messiah continues: “Dead and destroyed is the religion which contains nothing more than stories of miracles shown in the past; and dead are the people on whom God does not descend in grace and mercy, whom the Divine hand itself has not come down to purify. As a man is drawn towards the joys of this world when he sees its attractions with his own eyes, similarly is man drawn towards God when he comes to know with perfect certainty that the spiritual joys are even sweeter. The appeal of Divine beauty takes such a hold on his mind that everything else appears to him of no more value than mere trash”.

If we pause and reflect on this last sentence, we might at first not agree with it. But when we make progress in approaching Allah, we will find that what is said here is pure truth. But for this change to happen we need to be eager to examine and search the truthfulness of this statement. In the Holy Quran, at

many places Allah says that the life of this world is nothing but a sport and a pastime. But most people are so engrossed in this world that they will not agree. It is only when we truly embark on the path to Allah that such truths are revealed to our heart. He continues: "Man is freed from sin only when he comes to know of the power of God, and of Divine retribution, on the basis of a firm conviction. Ignorance is the root of every fearlessness, and no one will be found devoid of the fear of God even to the least extent who partakes of Divine knowledge. When a householder knows that a dangerous flood is advancing on his house or that it has been surrounded by a fire on all sides, he will at once flee from it. Then how can you dare to leave your ways of life unaltered after your belief in the existence of God, in Divine retribution and reward, has hardened into a firm unshakable conviction? Therefore, open your eyes and carefully study the Law of God operating in the universe. Do not be like rats which only go digging and descending into the earth: be like a dove capable of flying into the heavens, which feels happy only when it is flying in the pure air of the loftier regions. After taking the *bai'at* of repentance at my hand, take care that you do not remain unaltered in your former sinful ways. Do not be like a snake that remains as much of a snake after it has shed its skin as ever it was before, remember death, which approaches you every moment, though you remain unaware. Do your best to purify yourself, for a man can attain nearness to what is purity par excellence only when himself he becomes pure, as far as possible."

Now we will read about the means to achieve this nearness to Allah. The promised Messiah says:

“But the most important question is how to win the blessings. To this question God Himself has given the answer, He says: “*Wasta’inou bis sabre was salaat*” i.e., “Seek help from God with prayer and perseverance”. What is salat? It is a prayer addressed to God in true humility of spirit and the fullest awareness of His purity, His praiseworthiness, His Holiness, coupled with a burning desire on the part of the devotee for Divine forgiveness, and for blessing on the Holy Prophet. Therefore, when you stand up for prayer, do not, like ignorant people, confine yourself to the prescribed Arabic text, for the prayers and the *istighfar* of many people is only formal, with no reality in it. When you stand up for prayer, do not, like ignorant people, confine yourself to the prescribed Arabic text; over and above the prayers found in the Quran, which is the Word of God, and in the Hadith, which is the word of the Holy Prophet, address your petitions to the Lord in your own language, with heartfelt humility which should leave a lasting effect on the mind. In prayer lies the remedy for coming tribulations. You have no idea what the coming day has in store for you, Therefore, ere the day dawn, pray every time that for you it should be a day of blessings and peace. ”

These are the teachings that we have received as a legacy. The onus is now upon us to show that we can rise to the occasion and do our best to live these teachings in our daily lives. We ignore these teachings to our own peril because ordinary human beings cannot really know what is in their best

interests. Allah knows and for our own benefit, He has sent us His noble teachings in the Holy Quran through the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). Many people think that they know better but we Ahmadi Muslims should content ourselves with following what the Promised Messiah has bequeathed us. We need to take what he has given us and make the best of all his teachings. May Allah help us to find eagerness in our heart to journey towards Allah. In all humility, I can tell you that it is the journey of a lifetime and one that should be taken in order to make the best of your life. May Allah grant each one amongst us better opportunities to do good in the coming years, *incha* Allah. Ameen.