

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

This is the last Friday before the month of Ramadan for this year begins, which is also 1439 AH in the Islamic calendar. According to what I have read, the new moon will be born on Tuesday 15th at 11:48 UT, which for us is 15:48 local time. However, it is highly likely that this new moon will only be visible the next evening, namely Wednesday 16th, almost everywhere in the world except in New Zealand and Australia. Hence, it is very likely that we will start fasting on Thursday 17th or at latest Friday 18th May. Therefore, by Friday next week, we will be in the new month of Ramadhan which, as good Ahmadi Muslims, we welcome wholeheartedly.

We hope and pray that Allah, out of His Infinite Bounty, will enable each one amongst us on whom fasting is obligatory (*Farz*) to observe our fasts in the best possible way so that it might be pleasing to our Lord and full of mercy for us. Even for those who are not able to fast for any valid reason, we pray that Allah will shower His blessings upon them and that they are not denied Ramadan's blessings. No one will deny that once the new moon for the month of Ramadan is visible, there is great joy in the heart of almost all Muslims. One may have difficulty in understanding where such a joyful sentiment comes from. But we all know that it is there and we feel it even if we are aware that we would be facing some difficulties during this month through lack of sleep, not taking food at the proper time and not drinking anything between dawn and dusk. Yet in our hearts of heart we are happy that Allah, out of His Mercy has given us another opportunity to practice good deeds, to read the Holy Quran regularly, to be generous, to control our food intake, to be kinder with one another, to pray on time and to make additional prayers which are full with supplications seeking His Forgiveness for all the wrongdoings and the shortcomings in the practice of our duties as Muslims. We are happy that a new opportunity has been given to each one amongst us to right every wrong that we might have done, to pray with greater fervor, to manifest our love for one another and above everything to show devotion to our Lord whose infinite Kindness and Favours our minds fail to encompass. This is the month where Allah manifests more than in other days His forgiveness, His Mercy and His Protection from Hell. How stupid will it be on our part that we let go such an opportunity without taking the full measure of its uniqueness. It is my hope and prayer as well that Allah helps each one amongst us, nay all Muslims around the world of how great an opportunity

He has granted us to know Him better and to use all the avenues that will take us to Him.

We should all remember that Ramadan is one of the pillars of Islam. The other four, as you are well aware are (1) the declaration that Allah is One and Mohammad (saw) is His Messenger (2) Salat (3) the payment of Zakat for all those on whom it is liable (4) Hajj for all those who can travel to Mecca. We observe obligatory fasts in it for a few days i.e. either 29 or 30 days. So, if we declare ourselves to be Muslims, it is incumbent upon us to observe all the pillars of Islam as best as we can. Hence, we cannot avoid fasting unless we are sick or on a journey or it is too difficult for us. Once we are cured of our sickness or we end our journeys, we should replace all the fasts that we have missed. If we cannot replace the fasts we should pay what is known as *fidya*, which is the equivalent of the amount of food that we consume during one month. This payment is made to the authorities or directly to a poor person.

Recently, I found English translations of several statements of the Promised Messiah (as) concerning the month of Ramadan and how we should observe it on the internet. In view of their importance, I will share them with you during the course of this month so that you might be aware of the views of the Promised Messiah (as) on this important pillar of Islam. Under no circumstance should anyone think that we are not speaking about what the Holy Prophet (saw) said and instead focus more often on what The Promised Messiah said. The fact is that the Promised Messiah knew better what The Holy Prophet said and what he did not say. Allah sent him as an Arbiter for the Muslims. His opinion has more weight, not vis à vis the Holy Prophet (saw) but rather as someone who knew better what the Holy Prophet (saw) said. So, it is in our best interest to listen to him and follow him. For example, the Promised Messiah said:

“It should be remembered that the fast does not merely mean that a person should abstain from food and drink over a certain period. During the fast one should be occupied greatly with the remembrance of God. The Holy Prophet (saw) occupied himself greatly with worship during the month of Ramadan. During that month one should discard one’s preoccupation with eating and drinking; and cutting asunder from these needs should address oneself wholly towards God. Unfortunate is the person who is bestowed material bread and pays no attention to spiritual bread. Material bread strengthens the body, and spiritual bread sustains the soul and sharpens the spiritual faculties. Seek the Grace of God, as all doors are opened by His Grace.” (Speeches to Jalsa Salana (1906).

So, from this brief extract we understand that during the month of Ramadan we should all increase our devotion to Allah. Increase does not mean carry on as before. It means making additional efforts to pray with greater concentration with a view to better understand what we are reciting and not perform these acts perfunctorily or just for the sake of doing it. Here we should remember the words of the Promised Messiah which we have so often quoted from *Kishti Nuh* where he said:

“How unfortunate, indeed is the man who does not know that he has a God who has power over all things. Our Paradise is our God. Our highest delights are in our Lord. We have seen Him and found in Him loveliness of every kind. This treasure is worth having even if it is at the cost of one’s life. This jewel is worth purchasing even if the price is one’s whole self. O ye who are devoid, run to this spring for it will slacken your thirst. It is the spring of life that shall save you. What am I to do? And how can I impress this glad tiding upon your mind. With what drums should I go crying in the streets that This is your God, so that all should hear! And with what unguent am I to treat the people so that their ears might open to hear.” (p12)

I have quoted this extract several times because I personally think that it shows us the Promised Messiah’s understanding of Allah. Allah is everything. He has power over everything. This is our faith and it should sustain us in our daily life. He has initiated a jamaat so that they might know what he knew. However, people may join the Jamaat but they do not care to do what is necessary to discover that treasure. Most roam about in life being totally oblivious of the fact that Allah is there and one should establish a solid and enduring relationship with Him. Allah sends us the Holy month of Ramadan so that we might focus our attention on Allah more than we do in the other months or days of the year. This is what the Promised Messiah advised his followers to do. So once again, in our life, a time has come where Allah will manifest His Mercy upon us more than He usually does. Let us take this opportunity to do some good that will greatly benefit us incha Allah here and in the hereafter. May Allah enable us to fast in such a way that it is acceptable to Him and may He hear all our prayers.

Commenting on the verse of the Holy Quran where it is said “*Shahro Ramadan allazi unzila fihil qur’ano*” which means “This is the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed”. The Promised Messiah (as) further said:

“That indicates the grandeur of the month of Ramadan. The Sufis have written that this month is great for the enlightenment of the heart. Blessed visions are frequently experienced in this month. Prayer purifies the self and

fasting enlightens the heart. The purification of self means that one gets away from the lust of the Nafs-e-Ammarah (the self that incites).” It distances us from it. “The enlightenment of the heart means that [the] door of blessed visions opens up for us to see God.”^[9]

To the Promised Messiah, without blessed visions or revelations from Allah, one cannot get complete certainty concerning the existence of Allah. When someone fasts the doors for such visions are opened and one can become more convinced of the existence or presence of Allah. One needs this certainty to advance towards Allah. Allah grants such experiences to whomsoever He pleases.

When I was in my twenties, we used to be present at the Dar-us Salam mosque in Rose Hill almost daily. I had the opportunity to discuss religious matters with the chief missionary of the time. We read Tarawih and even stayed to chat with those who were in the mosque for *Itekaf*. Once I asked the missionary if in our literature there was someone who has related something about the *laylatoul qadr*. To the best of his knowledge, he said that someone close to the family of the Promised Messiah once said that he saw some light on one such night or something to that effect. So, this always puzzled me that no such experience has been published about *Laylatul Qadr*. Eventually I read or heard in a Jummah sermon that the time or the moment that Allah forgives someone is his night of Destiny as we usually translate *Laylatul Qadr*. In the early years of my marriage, during the 1980s, once during Ramadan I prayed a lot in the later part of the night and was sitting on my bed reciting “*Subhanallahi wabehamdehi subhanallahil azim*” meaning “Pure is Allah to whom all praise is due; Pure is Allah the Great”. Suddenly the following words were revealed to me and I kept repeating them “*Naghfir lakoum khatayaakoum*” meaning “We forgive you your trespasses”. From that time until now by Allah’s Grace I have had several such promises of forgiveness from Allah. Very often these words of forgiveness came during the last nights of Ramadan.

So, when Hazrat Masih Maood (as) says that Ramadan opens the door for spiritual bliss, by Allah’s Grace, some of his followers do have such experiences to put forward to prove that his claim was true. So, anyone who sincerely seeks Allah or seeks forgiveness their sins should use the opportunity that they are given in the month of Ramadan to consolidate their relationship with Allah with a view to be sincerely devoted to Him and they will see that Allah will shower His graces upon them. By Allah’s grace I have related many such experiences or even revelations received in my sermons which are on our website at www.jaam-international.org. One can read them over there. I have not said this to boast about my spiritual experiences but

rather to speak about Allah's favours upon one follower of the Promised Messiah in these days. Allah has power over all things. We need to know this and internalize it. This knowledge, this insight should become part and parcel of our own self. With perseverance in Allah's path *incha Allah* we will meet Him and we would be happy with this meeting. Does He not tell us in the Holy Quran "*Wallazina Jaahadou fina lanahdiyannahoum soobolana*" which means "Those We guide those who strive in our path to our way". May Allah help each one among us to know this path of Allah and to stay on it till death *incha Allah*. Ramadan Mubarak to you all and to all Muslims who might read this sermon. More on Ramadan next week *incha Allah*.