

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

By Allah's Grace, *incha* Allah, as from the beginning of next week a new blessed month of Ramadan will be coming to us. The Ramadan new moon will be born on Saturday 4th May at 22:47 UT. Translated in Mauritian time this will be around 3AM on Sunday 5th May. But this new moon will not be visible here in Mauritius nor in many places around the world on this Sunday. However, it may be seen with powerful telescopes in some part of the Middle East and Europe. Hence, weather permitting the new moon will be visible around the world on Monday 6th May and in most places, Muslims will start fasting on 7th May.

We, Muslim believers around the world, are being given a special opportunity to develop further righteousness within ourselves, to read and understand the Holy Quran and be inspired by its teachings, to give charity so that the poor might be relieved of their distresses, to be regular in our daily prayers, to offer *nawafil* prayers as well to get nearer to our Lord, to seek and practice forgiveness. These are just some of the benefits that the month of Ramadan comes with but it depends upon us to take them or to ignore them. As good and active Muslims, we are all expected to try to get as much benefits from this month as we can by following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his companions and Hazrat Masih Maood (as) as well. May Allah gladden our heart with the arrival of this month and may Allah help us to fulfill all the obligations that are expected from us to His full Satisfaction *incha* Allah. May He accept all our prayers in such a way that each one amongst us will be as sinless as the day when we were born at the end of this blessed month, *incha* Allah. Ameen.

Allah says in the Holy Quran “*Fazakkir in nafa’atiz zikra*” (87:10) which we translate as “Keep on reminding; Surely reminding is profitable” and “*sa yazakkaro man yaghsha*” (87:11) meaning “ he who fears will heed”. These are two verses from chapter 87 of the Holy Quran (*sabbe hisme rabbekal aa’la*) which the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) used to recite in the first *raka’at* of the Jummah Prayer. The Jummah sermon is there to remind the community of believers of their duties and responsibilities and these do not change. These duties and responsibilities are the same year in and year out. Hence, when we meet with a new month of Ramadan, we repeat almost the same verses of the Holy Quran and almost the same hadiths to remind our brothers and sisters about the fundamentals of fasting. And as these verses remind us, this repetition eventually profits he or she who fears and understands where they are going and what they need to do. So, we also we do the same. We try to remind ourselves and others about the importance of the month of Ramadan and how we should spend our days and nights in it.

So, we start with that famous hadith where it is reported that on the eve of a month of Ramadan, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

‘O people! An auspicious and blessed month has approached you. In this month, there is a night that is better than a thousand months. Allah has made it obligatory (*farz*) to fast in this sacred month. To offer prayer at night in its nights is Sunnah. If you do a good deed in this month, it will be equivalent to carrying out an obligatory (*Farz*) act in any other month and if you perform a *Farz* act in this month, it will be equivalent to carrying out 70 *Farz* acts in any other month. This is the month of patience, the reward of which is Heaven. This is the month of sympathy, and the believer’s sustenance is increased in this month.

In this month, the one who serves a fasting person with something to do *Iftar*, will be forgiven for his sins and his neck will be freed from the fire of Hell, and he will be rewarded the same as the one who fasted, without any reduction in the reward of the fasting person.’ The companions asked humbly, ‘*Ya Rasulallah!* Not all of us possess enough money (to present a meal to the fasting person) for *Iftar*.’ He replied, ‘Allah will give this reward to the one who offers a sip of milk, a date or a sip of water to the fasting person, and the one who serves the fasting person with a meal so that his stomach is full will be given water from my pond (*Kawšar*) such that he will never feel thirsty and will enter Heaven.

The first ten days of this month are mercy, the middle ten days are forgiveness and its last ten days are freedom from the fire of Hell. One who treats his slave leniently in this month (by not burdening him with heavy duties) will be forgiven and freed from the fire of Hell. In this month, there are four things which you should do in abundance, two of them will earn the pleasure of Allah for you, and you cannot do without the other two. The two which will earn you the pleasure of Allah are:

1. To testify that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah.
2. To ask for forgiveness.

The two which you cannot do without are:

1. To ask Allah for Heaven.
2. To seek refuge of Allah from Hell.’ (Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah, pp. 1887, vol. 3)”

So, keeping in mind this hadith we should do our best to try to practice all the good deeds that have been mentioned in it. Briefly these are to fast during the day and to pray at night and to multiply as many good deeds as we can

because their reward will be different and enormous compared to the same deeds performed in another month of the year. In addition, we should manifest sympathy for others and also exercise lots of patience. We should know that patience is not an easy virtue to cultivate. We need to be very careful because in a moment of inadvertence we may slip and be filled with regret and start repenting again.

Ramadan gives us an extraordinary opportunity to reform ourselves and experience has taught many of us that the prevailing atmosphere of Ramadan is not found in any other month of the year. Our heart is really inclined to doing good deeds and we do our best to stay away from all sorts of sins. And in Ramadan we have a great opportunity to supplicate Allah. And we would also be wiser if we devote lots of time to it than to any other activity. In view of the importance of supplications, we will say a few words about what Allah says in the first chapter of the Holy Quran about this important subject of supplications and keeping in mind what He says we do our best to profit by His Words especially in the month of Ramadan.

First of all, especially when we are praying alone either *sunnat* prayers or *nawafil* we should we should repeat the words “*iyyaka na’bodo wa iyyaka nasta’een*” which are the first words of supplications that we find in the Holy Quran. We should clearly understand the words “Thee alone do we worship and from Thee alone do we seek help and let them seep into our mind and our heart. Feel that you are in front of Allah and you are addressing Him. Understand equally the first four attributes namely “*Rabbil aalameen, Al Rahman, Al Raheem and Malik yawmiddeen*” and bear in mind that you are addressing this Lord who possesses these great attributes and you are supplicating Him. Say the words with humility in the heart and if you are overwhelmed by emotions, don’t mind it and keep reciting the words. We

understand from the example of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the most recent example of the Promised Messiah (as) that such supplications have the power to transform individuals and to solve many problems by Allah's Will.

Within a few minutes it is difficult to say all that has to be said about supplications to Allah. That is why I always say that we should each develop a taste for Islamic religious knowledge so that we might all be aware of what is expected of us and how we should respond. A relevant hadith on this matter is the following:

“Verily, the parable of the guidance and knowledge with which Allah the Exalted has sent me is that of rain falling upon the earth. There is a good piece of land which receives the rainfall and as a result there is abundant growth of plants, then there is a land hard and barren which retains the water and people benefit from it and they and their animals drink from it, then there is another land which is barren and neither is water retained nor does any grass grow. The likeness of the first one is he who develops understanding of the religion of Allah and he benefits from that with which Allah sent me. The second is one who acquires knowledge of religion and teaches others. The third is one who does not pay attention to the message and thus he does not accept the guidance with which Allah sent me.”

Our choice should be the first and we should spend lots of time in trying to understand our religion and put it into practice. Let us finish with one or two extracts from Hazrat Masih Maood (as). He said:

“Allah the Almighty starts and ends the Holy Quran with a prayer. Surah *Fatihah* is a prayer and Surah *Al-Nas* is also a prayer. This infers that man is weak and without the blessings of Allah he can never become pure. Until man receives the help and succour of Allah he or she cannot progress in piety. Only those are saved from the lure of this world, upon whom, God Almighty

bestows His grace. However, one must bear in mind that the grace of God Almighty begins with supplications so one must also pray for this.”

He says further:

“It is clearly stated in the Holy Quran that [Arabic] '**Surely, success does come to the believers, Who are humble in their Prayers,** ' (23:2-3). That is to say that those believers are successful who display humility in their prayers. They submit with utmost humility and meekness and are overwhelmed with the state helplessness. Only then is the door to success opened to them through which the love of the world subsides, as two loves cannot coexist in one place. The Promised Messiah (as) writes: [Persian] *That is to say you desire God and you desire this base world too, but this is a mere thought which is impossible to attain and foolishness. You cannot have both.* Of course, if you desire God, then God has the capacity to grant you the blessings of this world; but if you only pursue the desires of this world, then you cannot find God.”

'Blessed are the prisoners who never tire of supplication, for they shall one day be freed. Blessed are the blind who are not listless in their prayers, for they shall one day see. Blessed are those lying in graves who supplicate to God for help and succour, for one day they shall be taken out of their graves.'

So, let us all welcome this month of Ramadan wholeheartedly and let us all do our best to fast, to seek forgiveness and mercy from Allah in such a way that this month transforms us so that we might become a being who is in complete obedience to Allah when the month ends, *incha* Allah. I pray and hope that Allah will grant each one amongst us and all Muslims in general a month of Ramadan that will be truly *Mubarak* in the sense that we will receive plenty of blessings in it, *incha* Allah. Ameen.