

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As has been announced by the Saudi authorities, the month of *Dhul Al Hijja* for this year started on Wednesday 22nd July and the day of Arafat will be on Thursday 30th July 2020. Here in Mauritius we will be celebrating Eidul Adha on Saturday next 1st of August. Prayer will insha Allah be performed in Darul Rahma mosque at 9:30AM. We request all to be on time.

The month *Dhul Hajj* is the last month of the Islamic Calendar. It has a very significant meaning for all Muslims around the world. Those who are fortunate to go for Hajj are able to commemorate the sacrifices of the noble family of Hazrat Ibrahim (as) including his wife Hajra (as) and Hazrat Ismail (as). They were the people who lived for Allah exclusively and were ever ready to make all sorts of sacrifices for His sake once they were convinced that He was expecting such sacrifices from them. If we go by the experience of the past years only, about 2.5 to 3 million Muslims are able to go for Hajj each year. Unfortunately, this year the number has been reduced considerably and only a few people from about 160 countries will perform the hajj under strict sanitary and security conditions. We pray that all goes well for them and that no harm touches them by Allah's Grace.

As far as the bulk of Muslims around the world is concerned, they celebrate this great Eid at home. Those amongst them who can afford it sacrifice an animal or participate with others in the sacrifice of a bigger animal after the Eid Prayer.

A relevant question that may come to mind is when the prescription for Hajj was received. There is disagreement among the scholars.

Ibn Hajar Asqalani, the greatest commentator of Bukhari, may Allah have mercy upon him, said in his book *Al-Fath*: "The majority of the Muslim scholars are agreed that the verse ordering people to perform Hajj was revealed in the sixth year after Hijrah. Allah says : "And complete the Hajj and 'umrah for Allah. But if you are prevented, then [offer] what can be obtained with ease of sacrificial animals. (Quran 2:196).

Other scholars like An-Nawawi and Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon them, are of the view that Hajj became mandatory on Muslims in the ninth year after Hijrah. The reason they put this date forward is the fact that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, performed only one Hajj (The Farewell Hajj) and that was in the year ten after Hijrah. Since Hajj becomes obligatory as soon as the person has the material means to perform it and can physically do so, these scholars think that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would not delay performing Hajj three years.

But the first opinion is the most preponderant one. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, delayed his Hajj till the year ten because Makkah was before that date the place of

pagans and atheists. It did not become a Muslim city until the year 8 after the Hijrah. The pagans used to perform Hajj in months other than originally intended until Islam re-established the proper times. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) performed Umra a few times. However, this is a piece of information that I am just sharing.

Now I will tell you a few hadiths about the merits of first ten days of the month of *Dhul Hajj*.

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (sallaAllahu ‘alayhi wasallam) said: “*There are no days on which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days.*” They said: “Not even jihad for the sake of Allah?” He said: “*Not even jihad for the sake of Allah, unless a man goes out himself for jihad taking his wealth with him and does not come back with anything.*” (Reported by Bukhari)

These days when almost the whole world is going through very difficult times because of the Coronavirus which is destroying lives all around, we are given an opportunity to do some good deeds that Allah will appreciate because His Prophet (saw) has said so. So, it is to our advantage that we try our best to perform as many righteous deeds as we can, as is within our means with the hope that Allah, out of His Mercy may accept them from us.

Before I say more about these “good deeds”, here is another hadith from ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported that the Prophet (sallaAllahu ‘alayhi wasallam) said: Ibn ‘Umar said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “There is no day more honorable in Allah’s sight and no acts more beloved therein to Allah than those in these ten days. So say *tahlil* [‘There is no deity worthy of worship but Allah: *La ilaha illAllah*’], *takbir* [‘Allah is the greatest: *Allahu akbar*’] and *tahmid* [‘All praise is due to Allah: *alhumdulillah*’] a lot.” [Ahmad, 7/224]

So, during the coming seven days we have the opportunity to do more that we usually do with the hope that Allah *Ta’ala* will appreciate them from us. First of all, I think we should all do our best to offer all our prayers as best as we can on time while being fully conscious of what we are saying, fully conscious that we are standing, bowing and prostrating in front of Allah and that He is watching us. Allah knows best how far we have progressed in feeling His Presence while we are praying. But we all should aim for daily improvement in achieving such a degree of concentration that we feel the presence of Allah when we pray. It is only then that through continued practice we will achieve some mastery by Allah’s Grace. So now is the opportunity to renew with taking time to pray and to seek Allah’s presence in our prayers.

Usually, we are able to do this only when we pray Sunnat *rakaats* or *nawafil*. So, we should try to do as much as we can in the coming days because it will benefit us enormously.

The other good deed on which we should spend some time is the reading of the Holy Quran. We should aim for understanding and not just reading. Our guidance from the Promised Messiah (as) is very clear. It is written that once, it was discovered that whilst studying and reflecting upon the Holy Qur'an the Promised Messiah (as) was intently addressing God prayerfully: **'O my Creator, this is Your message and I can appreciate it only if You teach me'**. Just imagine how much we should imitate him and recite this prayer often. Recently I came across the following prayer taught by the Holy prophet Muhammad (saw):

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي عَبْدُكَ ابْنُ عَبْدِكَ ابْنُ أَمَتِكَ
 نَاصِيَتِي بِيَدِكَ ، مَاضٍ فِيَّ حُكْمُكَ ،
 عَدْلٌ فِيَّ قَضَائُكَ أَسْأَلُكَ بِكُلِّ اسْمٍ
 هُوَ لَكَ سَمِيَتْ بِهِ نَفْسُكَ أَوْ أَنْزَلْتَهُ
 فِي كِتَابِكَ ، أَوْ عَلَّمْتَهُ أَحَدًا مِنْ
 خَلْقِكَ أَوْ اسْتَأْثَرْتَ بِهِ فِي عِلْمِ
 الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ الْقُرْآنَ رَبِيعَ
 قَلْبِي ، وَنُورَ صَدْرِي وَجَلَاءَ حُزْنِي
 وَزَهَابَ هَمِّي .

Transliteration:

Allahumma innii 'abduka wa ibnu 'abdika wa ibnu amatika, naaswiyatii biyadika, maadhin fiyya hukmuka 'adlun fiyya qadhaa'uka. As'aluka bikulli ismi huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw anlamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw anzaltahu fii kitaabika aw asta'tsarta bihi fiyya 'ilmi al-ghaybi 'indaka an taj'ala al-Qur'an rabbii'a qalbii wa nuura swadrii wa jilaa'a huznii wa duhaaba hammii

Translation :

“O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your female slave, my forelock is in Your hand, Your Command over me is forever executed and Your Decree over me is Just. I ask You by every Name Belonging to You which You Named Yourself with, or Revealed in Your Book, or You Taught to any of Your Creation, or You have Preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You Make the Qur'an the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety.”

This prayer is reported in Hadith book Musnad Ahmad and ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (r.a.) reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, “No person suffers any anxiety or grief and recites this prayer but Allah (s.w.t.) will take away his sorrow and grief, and give him in their stead joy.”

Similarly, these are the days when we should increase the number of *astaghfaar* that we recite every day. Last week, I spoke about this matter – you can revisit the sermon on our website. We should make it a habit to recite *astaghfaar* everyday as much as we can. When you do it, you will notice how great a help it is.

In the same vein, we should make it a habit to remember the favours of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) on us and recite Darood on him as we have been taught. The best Darood is the one that we read in *Attahyaat* in every prayer.

Of course, I have not mentioned all good deeds. Every one should do according to their capacity and use these coming days as a means to get as near to Allah as possible. May Allah help us all to use the coming days as an opportunity to do such good deeds and may He might accept them all from us.

In the end, I will say a few words about the sacrifice of animals on the occasion of Eid ul Adha. As good Muslims, we should understand and practice the teachings that we have received in the best possible way. Those who will participate in the sacrifice of animals should know that it is a symbolic act that we are performing. Its not at all an occasion to accelerate adrenalin production in our body and feel excited about the spectacle that is offered for everyone to see while carrying and discharging animals from lorries. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to reflect on the act of sacrifice itself. If we participate, we are showing our readiness to sacrifice our *nafs* (ego) completely for Allah's sake by submitting ourselves completely to Him as did Hazrat Ibrahim (as), as did his noble son Ismail (as) and his noble wife Hazrat Hajra (as). We are not being asked to do what they did. But as Muslims, we should understand that we should purify our own selves for our own good by putting into practice all the teachings of the Holy as exemplified by his noble Prophet Mohammad (saw). This purification of the ego is not an easy task at all. It takes time, it takes sacrifice, it takes efforts and great determination and perseverance. It is like voluntarily accepting death before being born again to a new life. That is why the Holy Prophet (saw) taught us that we should sacrifice animals and that they act as a vehicle that will take us to our destination. Sacrificial animals act as a means and nothing more. What Allah wants to see is our level of piety. So, we should all keep this well in mind.

We will end here for today. We will meet insha Allah next week. Let us all fill the coming days with great devotion to Allah by His remembrance, by reciting the Holy Quran, by praying additional nawafil prayers, reciting Darood and by asking forgiveness for our sins and by giving some charity as best as we can to relieve the distress of those in need. May Allah accept whatever we do in full sincerity to try to win His Pleasure. Ameen.