

FRIDAY SERMON

14th June 2024

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By Allah's Grace, we are once more in the month of Zulhijjah. As you might already be aware, more than 1.5 million pilgrims are already in Mecca to start the hajj ceremonies as from today. Tomorrow is the Day of Arafat which is the peak of the hajj. This year's Islamic Hajj pilgrimage — which starts on June 14 — will not only be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the pilgrims but it will also be a physical challenge as temperatures will be above average.

According to published newspaper reports, the expected climate for Hajj this year will witness an increase in average temperatures of 1.5 to 2 degrees [Celsius] above normal in Mecca and Medina.

For Mecca, which is at the heart of the five-day Hajj pilgrimage, the increase likely spells an average temperature of around 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit). To mitigate the expected heat, all main squares in Mecca and Medina have been equipped with misting systems and portable water stations. Also, the floor of the Great Mosque in Mecca as well as surrounding tents will be air-conditioned, the Saudi authorities promised.

The Hajj pilgrimage, however, cannot be undertaken in air-conditioned environments only. Despite the heat, it involves up to 30 hours outdoors, including standing on the plain of Mount Arafat for one day between midday and sunset, and walking for several hours along the outskirts of Mecca on other days.

In turn, the kingdom's official platform for planning the Hajj, which every able Muslim has to undertake once in their lifetime, highlights that heat exhaustion is one of the greatest risks of the pilgrimage.

In 2023, heat had also soared to 48 degrees Celsius (118 degrees Fahrenheit). Around 8,400 Hajj pilgrims suffered from heat-related stress, the local *Saudi Gazette* newspaper wrote at the time. The actual number of cases, however, was most likely much higher as not everyone was admitted to clinics for suffering from heat strokes, exhaustion, dizziness or dehydration.

Furthermore, a study recently published in the Journal of Travel Medicine stated that Hajj pilgrims from less hot countries are 4.5 times more likely to die than locals who are more used to such high temperatures.

By Wednesday last, i.e., the day before yesterday at least more than 1.5 million pilgrims have already arrived in Mecca. More are expected, and hundreds of thousands of Saudis and others living in Saudi Arabia will also join them when the pilgrimage officially. On that day (Wednesday) more than 1700 buses were moving pilgrims from Medina to Mecca. All travel in official buses and along the way there are facilities available in case there might be problems for the pilgrims. Anyhow, the organization of the Hajj is quite high-tech and all is going well up till now by the Grace of Allah.

Concerning the animals imported for slaughter, they have been working on their inspection on arrival since mid-May 2024. About 400,000 animals have been imported and they have been inspected for disease and they have been regularly checked since their arrival to ensure that they stay disease free before being slaughtered.

Let us hope and pray that all goes well during these Hajj days in the blessed place of the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and may those who organize the holding of the Hajj do their best to ensure that everything goes well for all pilgrims until the Hajj ends. *Incha Allah. Ameen.*

Now, we revert to Malfuzaat Volume 10 of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) from where we left off last week. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) starts to talk about what is jihad. He said:

“If the tenets of jihad etc. are indeed the only distinction, then beware, it is an egregious error. You are, thus, not a friend of Islam but rather its enemy. You give a bad name to Islam.

Look, if I had understood that this was in reality the true intent of the Holy Quran, I would have left this country and chosen a place where I had all the amenities and facilities to implement such commandments, and I would have acted upon those commandments to my heart's content. But verily I tell you that this is not the intent of the Quran, as has, unfortunately, been understood to be the case by some ignorant mullahs [Muslim clergy].

The truth is that the Holy Prophet (saw) was faced with great challenges at that time. Many of his devout and dear friends fell prey to the sword and arrows of the cruel disbelievers. They tortured Muslim men and Muslim women in a variety of shameful ways and in the end, they hatched a plan to murder even the Holy Prophet (saw). They pursued him and set a bounty to kill him.

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was forced to hide in a cave. No stone was left unturned in pursuing him. It was only Allah's miraculous design that He saved him from their eyes even though he was right in front of them. God deceived

their eyes and saved His Messenger by lending him His special help. But when, finally, their tyranny exceeded all bounds and they were not satisfied even after expelling the Muslims from their homeland, Allah the Exalted gave this guidance:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَتَّلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا ۖ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ

Permission to *fight* is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged—and Allah indeed has power to help them (22:40)

God Almighty gave Muslims the permission to raise the sword. In this permission, God made it clear that the disbelievers were, indeed, tyrants and their mischief had exceeded all bounds, and the patience of the Muslims had been pushed to its limit. It was then that God decreed that those who had fought with the sword should be killed with the sword. God also decreed that, though the Muslims were just a few in number and weak, yet He was going to lend them His support because they had been transgressed against and He would have the disbelievers killed through their hand. Ensuing from this decree, the same few people—who had been considered worthless and abject, whom no one wanted to assist or support, and who had been severely oppressed and constrained by the disbelievers—came to be held in awe both in the east and the west. In this way, God showed to the world, by helping them, that Muslims indeed were subjected to wanton oppression.

In short, look at any aspect and from any angle and see whether the Muslims of that time were the oppressed party or not? If God had not given permission to those few weak Muslims to raise their sword to defend their lives and had not permitted them to fight defensively even at that critical and dangerous juncture, should He have allowed them to be eliminated from the face of this earth? Under those circumstances, it was their right to defend themselves by any standards—religious or conventional. And yet, that has been the cause of criticism even to this day, and the bigoted and ignorant opponents refuse to forget. So now, do these people wish to renew these allegations and alienate people from Islam by advancing the concept of a bloodthirsty Mahdi? Look, the Holy Prophet (saw), has clearly stated vis-a-vis the Mahdi that he would bring an end to wars and that war would be an intellectual war.

The pen would carry out the work of the sword. The world would be conquered with spiritual insights, heavenly blessings, and miraculous Signs. And the ascendancy of Islam would be established through conclusive arguments and refulgent proofs and the true religion would be made to stand distinct by fresh prophecies from the unseen and Divine acts of support. It is not enough to say that we possess plentiful miracles from the past. You should know that you have nothing that exceeds the stories and fables mentioned in the manuscripts of the Hindus and the scriptures of the Christians and the Jews. If you present stories, they will be able to present far more impressive stories. If the standard of truth of Islam has been reduced to mere stories and fables, then you should know that this matter has been rendered dubious.

Islam is distinctive. God has always maintained an extraordinary quality in Islam and that is its ever-fresh Signs. Those who are fond of modern philosophy become somewhat displeased when they hear the word ‘Sign’. They question the need for Signs and Prophets in the search for the existence of God.

Remember, it is a weak form of conviction to deduce the existence of God from the intelligence and wisdom reflected in the solar system and the orderliness of the universe. This cannot fully satisfy the curiosity about the existence of God. It only proves the possibility, but it cannot be said with certainty that God does, in fact, exist. If these had been certain and definitive proofs, why would people become atheists? Many great scholars have written volumes, but their arguments are not irrefutable, and their proofs are not decisive. They cannot silence anyone, nor can a man attain certainty of faith through them. If a person were to formulate arguments in favour of the existence of God Almighty based on these matters, an atheist would present arguments in their refutation.

The fact is that all that can be proved this way is that ‘God should exist’ It does not prove that ‘He does exist.’ There is a huge difference between ‘should exist’ and ‘does exist’ , and the latter requires seeing for oneself. The second part that the Prophets have presented to prove the existence of the Almighty Creator is to prove His existence by means of mighty Signs and miracles, and through the display of His mighty power. This is such an approach before which all heads bow. In fact, many Arabs were atheists as we learn from the following verse of the Holy Quran:

إِنْ بَىٰ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

It is only here that we live our life. *Here* we die and *here* we live

(*Surah al-Mu'minun*, 23:38).

Were the uncouth, audacious, unrestrained, and bold Arabs reformed by him [the Holy Prophet saw] by the use of the sword? Was the sublime distinction and difference between their life before and after the advent of the Holy Prophet (saw) due to the fact that they could not compete with him in the use of the sword? Or was it just the moral teaching by itself that brought about such a pious change in their hearts? No, of course not!

Remember, the sword can conquer the palpable, but hearts can never be conquered by the sword. Nay, it was the light that reflected the countenance of God. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had shown them such miraculous Signs as if God had Himself made an appearance before these people. And seeing the glory and omnipotence of God, they brought about a pious change in themselves and adopted a life that detested sin.” (p. 399)

We will stop here for today. We will incha Allah continue next time. We will incha Allah meet on Monday next and pray Eidul Adha at 9:30am. I request brothers and sisters to

come on time. After the khutbah, incha Allah we will have a collective lunch to which you are all invited to partake incha Allah. Furthermore, we start reciting takbir as from tomorrow morning after Salaatul Fajr and we should continue after all Farz prayers until 13th Zil Hijja i.e., Wednesday 19th June after Salaatul Asr. We will see you all incha Allah on Monday.