

FRIDAY SERMON

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As you might well be aware the moon for the beginning of the new month of Muharram for the new Islamic year 1448AH was visible on Monday 15th June in the middle East and on Tuesday 16th June in Mauritius. Hence for us here the new Islamic year 1448 started on Wednesday 17th June. Neither in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(saw) nor in the time of the four righteous caliphs was there any celebration associated with this event. Hence, we should always refrain from any sort of merrymaking on the mere change of dates of the year.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَيَّامِ فَلْيَبَيِّنْ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجَّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَأَتُوا الْبُيُوتَ
مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

They ask thee about the new moons. Say, 'They are means for measuring time for *the general good of mankind* and for the Pilgrimage.' And it is not righteousness that you come into houses by the backs thereof; but *truly* righteous is he who fears God. And you should come into houses by the doors thereof; and fear Allah that you may prosper. (2:190)

فَالْيُ الْأَصْبَاحِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

He causes the break of day; and He made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for reckoning *time*. That is the decree of the Mighty, the Wise. (6:97)

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۚ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

He it is Who made the sun *radiate* a brilliant light and the moon *reflect* a lustre, **and ordained for it stages**, that you might know the number of years and the reckoning *of time*. Allah has not created this but in truth. He details the Signs for a people who have knowledge. (10:6)

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۚ وَ
كُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَصْلَانُهُ تَفَصِيلًا ﴿١٣﴾

And We have made the night and the day two Signs, and the Sign of night We have made dark, and the Sign of day We have made sight giving, that you may seek bounty from your

Lord, and that you may know the computation of years and *the science of* reckoning. And everything We have explained with a detailed explanation. (17:13)

All these verses help us to understand that movement of the Sun and the moons are signs of Allah and they help us to reckon time and nothing else. Allah has put them in motion for our benefit. As he says in the following verse:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ﴾ (١٩١)

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding;” (3:191)

Who are these people? Allah says in the following verse:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ بَدَأً بَاطِلًا سُبْحَنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾ (١٩٢)

“Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and *lying* on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth: “Our Lord, thou hast not created this in vain; *nay*, Holy art Thou; save us, then, from the punishment of the Fire.” (3:192)

Now to come back to the subject of the transition from one year to the other Allah tells us the following:

﴿إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا وَلَا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُفَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (٣٦)

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)

Now a bit of history.

The *shias* observe the beginning of this month in meetings where they recount the events of Karbala where Hazrat imam Hussein(ra) with about 72 of his companions were mercilessly murdered. In addition, some of them re-enact those sad moments in ceremonies which one can see on the net. On the other hand, the majority of the Sunnis they fast of the 10th day of Muharram.

The background of Muslims fasting in the month of Muharram is reported in Ahadith as follows:

In a hadith it is reported by Hazrat Abu Huraira that:

“The Holy Prophet^{sa} once passed by a group of Jews who were observing a fast on the Day of Ashura. The Holy Prophet^{sa} inquired, “What is the significance of this fast?” They replied, “It was on this very day that Allah saved Moses^{as} and the Israelites from drowning, and Pharaoh was destroyed. On this day as well, Noah’s^{as} Ark came to rest upon Mount Judi. Both Moses^{as} and Noah^{as} observed a fast on this day as an expression of gratitude to Allah.” Upon hearing this, the Holy Prophet^{sa} said, “I am more entitled to Moses^{as} than they are.” He then observed the fast himself and also instructed his Companions to fast on the Day of Ashura. (*Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal* [Beirut], Vol. 2, pp. 359-360)

But we also learn from Hadith Bukhari that Hazrat Ayesha (ra) reported:

“Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) ordered (the Muslims) to fast on the day of 'Ashura', and when fasting in the month of Ramadan was prescribed, it became optional for one to fast on that day ('Ashura') or not.” (H 2001)

Concerning the background of the introduction of the calendar in Islamic History we learn from experts in these matters that before the Hijri calendar came into use, Muslims used a range of important events in Muslim history, for example, Am Al-Fil, the year in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, to demarcate time. But, seventeen years after the Prophet’s migration and in the third or fourth year of the succession of Khalifa Umar ibn al-Khattab, a complaint was made by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, an official in Basrah (Iraq), regarding a lack of consistent dates on the correspondence he received. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari sent a letter to Khalifa Umar, asking him to develop for a new way to calculate dates.

Khalifa Umar debated the issue with his advisors. Some suggested that the date of the Prophet’s birth should mark the beginning of a new calendar, whilst others suggested the date of his death. However, the majority agreed that the calendar should begin with the date of his migration. Khalifa Umar then consulted the Prophet’s revered companions, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali bin Abi Talib, and they agreed.

After all the discussions, Khalifa Umar announced that the year in which the Prophet Mohammad migrated would mark the beginning of the **Hijri calendar**. The calendar would begin with the first of the month of Muharram and end with the month of Dhu Al Hijja. Consequently, 622 AD (the year of the Prophet’s migration) became the first year in the Hijri calendar. So, this is how we got a Hijri calendar.

Now we will finish by reading some extracts from Hazrat Masih Maood’s(as) writings about the holy Prophet Muhammad(saw).

“I always wonder how high the status of this Arabian Prophet was, whose name was Muhammad, (thousands of blessings and peace be upon him). One cannot reach the limit of his high status and it is not given to man to estimate correctly his spiritual effectiveness.... He is the

fountainhead of every grace and a person who claims any superiority without acknowledging his grace is not a man but is the spawn of Satan, because the Holy Prophet^(saw) has been bestowed the key to every exaltation and he has been given the treasury of every understanding...I am nothing and possess nothing. I would be most ungrateful if I were not to confess that I have learnt of the true Unity of God through this Prophet. The recognition of the Living God we have achieved through this perfect Prophet and through his light. The honour of converse with God, through which we behold His countenance, has been bestowed upon me through this great Prophet. The ray of this sun of guidance falls like sunshine upon me and I continue illumined only so long as I am adjusted towards it.”

“Now under heaven there is only one Prophet^(saw) and only one Book. The Prophet is Muhammad^(saw), the Chosen One who is higher and more exalted than all Prophets and is the most perfect of Messengers and is the *Khatam-ul-Anbiya*’, and the best of men by following whom we find God Almighty and all the veils of darkness are lifted and the signs of true salvation are witnessed in this very life. The Book is the Holy Qur’an, which comprises true and perfect guidance and effectiveness, through which knowledge and understanding of the Divine are obtained and the heart is purified of human weaknesses; and being delivered from ignorance, heedlessness and doubts, a person arrives at the stage of complete certainty.”

“That light of high degree that was bestowed on perfect man was not in angels, was not in stars, was not in the moon, was not in the sun, was not in the oceans and the rivers, was not in rubies, emeralds, sapphires, or pearls; in short, it was not in any earthly or heavenly object. It was only in perfect man whose highest and loftiest and most perfect example was our lord and master, the Chief of the Prophets, the Chief of all living ones, Muhammad, the Chosen One^(saw). That light was bestowed on this man and, according to their ranks, upon all those who bore the same colour to some degree.... This dignity was found in its highest and most perfect form in our lord and Master and our Guide, the immaculate Prophet, the righteous one, testified to by the righteous, Muhammad, the Chosen One (saw)”

So as far as we are concerned, we should do our best to learn more about the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) by studying the Holy Quran daily and the books of Ahadith as well as best as we can so that we might know for sure what is expected of us as Muslims. The guidance is available and we should be determined to live our life according to this guidance. Allah has sent us Hazrat Masih Maood(as) who has revived the noble teachings of Islam and that is why we quote him so often in our explanation of Islam. May Allah grant each one among us the wisdom of Islam and may we live our life by these noble teachings by His Allah’s Grace. Ameen!