

17th March 2006

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Praise be to **الله**.

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our bad deeds. Whomever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whomever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

I testify that there is no God but **الله** to whom there is no partner

and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

"And it is He Who spread the earth and placed therein firm mountains and rivers, and of all fruits He has made in two kinds; He draws the night as a veil over the Day; most surely in these are signs for people who reflect" (S13, A3)



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA.

The topic for today's khutbah may seem unusual. It relates to an act of worship that is mentioned in the Quran a number of times. Unfortunately this act of worship has generally gone into decline, and in some communities, it has been lost altogether. This act of worship is known in Arabic as "At-tafakkur". This may be translated as "reflection" or "contemplation".

We are all aware of the main acts of worship that are obligatory in Islam, and we previously spoke about "Salat":

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا

"Surely prayer is a timed ordinance for the believers" (S4, A103)

We also all know the significance of this act of worship, and we do not need to indulge too much into that today. It is probably enough to remind ourselves of this following aya which depicts the state of those people who have ignored their Salat:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ
فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ عَذَابًا

"And after them there followed future generations who lost their Prayers and followed after lusts. Soon, then, will they face loss and destruction [on the Day of Judgment]" (S19, A59)

For those of us who are aware of the significance of Salat, it is very difficult to consider that there will indeed be people who willingly give up Salat. However, when we look at ourselves, and at those around us, it is somehow not so difficult to see how a Muslim can easily go down a slippery slope away from Allah. To keep to Salat in this society and to benefit from it requires a tremendous effort.

Some people who do not understand Islam well believe that acts of worship are there to exalt the creator. When we bow and prostrate to Allah, it is as if, God forbid, Allah^(SWT) gains from this. I did hear a while back a well known actor say "I will not worship a God that needs my worship". We Muslims believe that it is us who are in desperate need to worship. Worship is there for our own benefit. Worship in Islam uplifts our spirituality and our humanity. Worship in Islam is the perfect bond between our physical and our spiritual existence. Probably much more important,

Muslims believe that worship is our gateway to Allah. Allah^(SWT) warns and reminds us in surat Al-Hashr and surat Al-Furqan how important it is for us to remember Allah:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ

"And be not like those who forgot Allah and He made them forget their souls"
(S59, A19)

قُلْ مَا يَعْْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ

"Say: My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer" (S25, A77)

There should be no doubt in the mind of the Muslim that worship is an integral part of our existence. Worship nourishes our spirituality and gets us closer and closer to our creator. Various acts of worship help us with discipline, self control and patience. Some help develop our feelings of brotherhood and bring us closer to the joy and to the suffering of fellow humans. While some give us that unique close contact with Allah^(SWT). In fact a scholar once said: I know exactly when Allah is remembering me. Those around him were confounded, and then he said:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

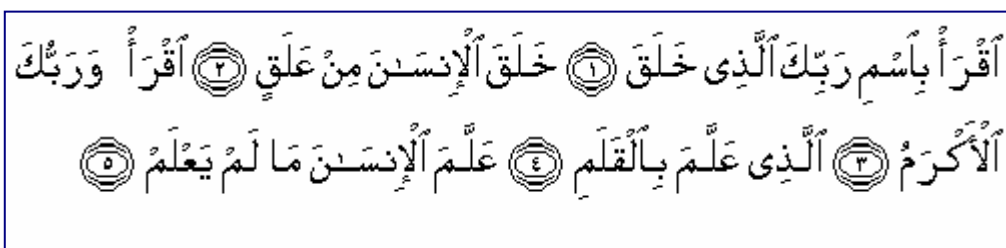
"Therefore remember Me, I will remember you" (S2, A152)

The benefits of worship and remembering Allah are immense, and we, the Muslims, need to know all the avenues open to us to remember Allah. One of these avenues is remembering Allah through "reflection, At-tafakkur".

We are all aware that we now live in a time when believing that we exist through creation is considered as an act of lunacy. There was a recent television program about a school in the north. Its head teacher is Christian, and naturally he believes in creation and stands by what is stated in the bible. He was lambasted by the program presenter for actually believing that the heavens and the earth were created in 6 days. His own words were, "you are an intelligent man. Are you really telling me that you believe that God created all this in 6 days". All the head teacher can say was "if it is in the bible, I believe in it". The flavour of the day seems to be evolution.

Those who believe in creation are considered narrow minded. They are considered non-scientific. They are considered unable to accept an argument and can only put their view point by saying "it is what I believe".

Well, Islam is not like that. Islam does not accept blind faith based on ignorance. In fact Islam started by the words that defined what is important to Muslims, "knowledge":



"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a {clot}. Read and your Lord is Most Honorable. He Who taught with the pen. Taught man what he had no knowledge off" (S96, A1-5)

The word "read" is mentioned twice. The word "taught" is mentioned twice, and the words "pen" and "knowledge" are mentioned once each. This was the introduction to the message of Islam. It is a blistering message telling us to read, to write and to seek knowledge. Knowledge does not weaken the message of Islam, on the contrary, it only makes it stronger. In fact, Islam challenges us to look at all that is around us. It challenges us to study the earth, the atmosphere, the animals, the human being, the insects, the plants, the sun, the universe, time, and so on.

I think some of you may be aware that the Manchester Museum of Science has an exhibition on Islamic inventions. It is entitled "1001 inventions; discover the Muslim heritage in our world". It is running from the 8th March until 4th June. This exhibition is but a small token of the influence of Islam on those Muslims who understood what these ayas meant, and took on science with eagerness, and not with trepidation. At no time in the Islamic history was there ever a conflict between faith and knowledge.

If we now go back to the beginning of the message of Islam and to the topic of today's khutbah "At-tafakkur".

Most of us know that before the message of Islam, the Prophet^(SAAWS) lived in Mecca. He was married to Khadija^(RAA) and had four daughters. He worked in the trade for his wife, and was known to be trusted and hard working. In the few years before the revelation of the message, there were various occurrences that lead us to believe that he was gradually being prepared to receive the message of Islam. One of these occurrences is the fact that in the last six months before the revelation, the Prophet^(SAAWS) started to reduce his work and began to seek solitude.

We all know of the fact that the Prophet^(SAAWS) started to spend time in "Ghar Hira". In a recent program on the sirah, the presenter showed us where this little cave was. It was three miles away from the Qa'ba. It took one and half hours of climbing to get to it. It was hidden from view from the bottom of the mount. It was enclaved within three large boulders, and appeared almost like the little cave was hugging the person inside and the mount was hugging the little cave. The Prophet^(SAAWS) had a view of the Qa'ba from where he sat in the little cave, and had view of the land and of the sky.

That was the place where the Prophet^(SAAWS) sought solitude, and that was the place where the message of Islam was first revealed.

It is narrated that the Prophet^(SAAWS) would spend up to ten days in the cave worshipping. His daily agenda was worship. Khadija^(RAA) used to visit him and stay with him. At the age of 55 years, she would tackle this one and half hour climb to join her husband in his worship. The last six months before the revelation of the message were spent in this manner.

One needs to ask. What was it that the Prophet^(SAAWS) was doing? There was no Quran to recite. There was no Salat to perform. There was no fasting. In fact, the Prophet^(SAAWS) did not know that there was a message on its way. So, again, one needs to ask, what was it that the Prophet^(SAAWS) was doing? The obvious answer is that he was seeking the truth.

Like Ibraheem^(AS), the Prophet^(SAAWS) saw his people praying and prostrating to idols created by their own hands, and concluded that this does not make sense, it is not right. The problem was, he did not have access to the right answer. The Prophet^(SAAWS) sought the answers through contemplation, through "At-tafakkur". By the way, the Prophet^(SAAWS) was not seeking the message, because he did not know that there was one. He was seeking the truth.

He looks at the skies and he sees the heavenly bodies, the power of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the vast sky. Then he looks down at the Qa'ba and he sees 360 idols, created by men, sitting on the Qa'ba with people going around them and prostrating to them as if they held the reins of power and of creation. This did not make sense. These idols can never create a grain of sand let alone create the moon, or the sun. The Prophet^(SAAWS) spent days upon days contemplating and reflecting. Through that he was able to see what is clearly false, but even then he needed the guidance of Allah to seek the ultimate truth, and this eventually arrived.

Worship through "tafakkur" was done by Ibraheem^(AS) and by the Prophet^(SAAWS). It is an act of worship where we reflect on all that is around us and think, is it really evolution, is it really chance, is it really a big bang and nothing before. Even if we cannot come up with an answer, we still have to ask ourselves questions. What is it all about? How did I get here? What is my life about? What is my message in life? Is it true that it will all end when I die? Is it true that there is no higher level of justice? Can I really get away with it? Those who committed atrocities and were never brought to justice, have they escaped justice? Those who were harmed and killed by others, do we tell them tough luck? Does this make sense? I think there must be hundreds of questions that come to mind if we only take time to reflect, and if we do, does it all make perfect sense through evolution alone?

On a recent flight, I looked outside the aeroplane window and saw little clouds hanging in the middle of the sky over land. As a Muslim, I remembered the words of Allah in the Quran that state "we have made the clouds, and then drove it to dead land and brought life to it":

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَّتْ سَحَابًا
 ثِقَالًا سَقَنَّهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
 كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

"And He it is Who sends forth the winds bearing good news before His mercy, until, when they bring up a laden cloud, We drive it to a dead land, then We send down water on it, then bring forth with it fruits of all kinds; thus shall We bring forth the dead that you may be mindful" (S7, A57)

You look at these clouds and you think, where does evolution feature here? What was the cloud before it evolved into a cloud. This cloud could not exist if it wasn't for the atmosphere, if it wasn't for the sun, if it wasn't for the wind and so on. These clouds over land are miracles upon miracles of creation, for if it wasn't for them, there would be no life, and there would be no evolution. When there is drought, you don't see people looking to evolution for an answer. The first thing that people look for is clouds hanging in the sky. These people have no power over the sun and no power over the wind. When it comes to the simplest act of giving life, rain, we have very little if no power at all.

Another wonderful example of the power of the creator. Human beings have a very sensitive centre for balance. If anyone of us falls in any direction, you become quickly aware of it and act accordingly to prevent yourself from falling. How does this happen? Are you aware that one of the balance mechanisms lie inside the ear? There is a very small structure on either side that does the trick. What is amazing about it is that it is made out of three little circles. Three little circles are placed at 90 degrees to each other to cover for the three dimensions, so as which ever movement you make one of the circles will pick it up. That structure is buried deep in the skull and is probably no bigger than the pip of an apple. This is but one of thousands of little things in the body of a single human that blows you away when you think about it. The only word that comes to mind is not evolved, but **perfected**. How many rings and how many angles did we go through before we got three rings only at 90 degrees to each other. has it really evolved or was it really perfected?

وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ

"and He fashioned you and perfected your shapes" (S40, A64)

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ . الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا . أَمَا بَعْدُ :

This khutbah is about "tafakkur". From just two examples, we, the Muslims start to realise that in contemplation and in reflection, we actually get closer to Allah^(SWT) and not away from him. By seeking knowledge, by questioning and by contemplating, we get close to our creator. This is why in the Quran we are repeatedly asked to reflect and to contemplate. Indeed, in the Quran, we have the aya of "At-tafakkur":

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ
قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for people of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You; save us then from the torment of hellfire" (S3, A190-1)

Allah is telling us look around you and contemplate. Look around you and reflect. Is everything around us the product of chance or the product of evolution? Is it conceivable that this is what it is all about? Islam does not tell us believe because it says so. Islam tells us believe because when you think about it, when you reflect, when you contemplate and most important, when you seek the truth and knowledge, nothing else makes full sense.

In fact the call for reflection comes 13 times in the Quran:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

“And of His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves that you may find tranquility with them, and He has ordained between you love and mercy. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect” (S30, A21)

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ
اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

“Had We sent down this Quran on a mountain, you would certainly have seen it humbled, splitting asunder for the fear of Allah, and We set forth these parables to men that they may reflect” (S59, A21)

Brothers and sisters, Islam is wonderful. When you stand to pray in the hands of Allah you are performing worship, and when you contemplate about the world and the universe about you, you are performing an act of worship. What else gives you this? We start by giving praise to Allah, and we end by giving praise to Allah.

The act of contemplation has been an act of worship by the messengers of Allah in the past, and we need to encourage and redevelop this act of worship in our lives. Contemplation is hard work, and it is not a passive act. When you read a book on physics, take some time to reflect on the beauty of the laws of physics which were perfected by the creator. When you read about chemistry, the same. When you read about astronomy, biology, geography and so on, as a Muslim, take time out and reflect. Ask yourself questions. ISA, you will find that reflection and contemplation will get you closer to Allah. Rest in the knowledge that Islam is the religion of seeking knowledge, for in doing so, you are seeking your creator.

We end with this beautiful aya:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

"For among His Servants who truly fear Allah are those who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving" (S35, A28)