

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Praise be to **اللَّهِ**.

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 **اللَّهِ** to whom there is no partner
and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا
رَبَّنَا فَاعْفُفْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾

"Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling us to Faith, 'Believe in your Lord,' and we did believe. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, and remit from us our evil deeds, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous" (S3, A193)



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA.

When I gave my previous khutbah, I imagined that by now the war in Lebanon will be over, the killing will finish, the Israelis will go back home and the Lebanese will start to build their shattered lives again. Little did I know of how savage our world has become? Massacres are taking place as we speak. One might say that the Israelis have not killed many this week with their aerial bombardment, but we all know of the humanitarian disaster that they have left. I believe that we do not need to remind ourselves of the savagery of the elected democracy of the state of Israel.

We watch on a daily basis what is happening in Lebanon and in the forgotten Gaza strip and it is no surprise that we now witness callous acts of murder by Israeli bombs, bombs that are made in the United States. Brothers and sisters, do not be surprised by what we witness. These inhumane acts have been enacted in history many times before, and will be enacted again and again. Let us not forget the atrocities of Cambodia, Rwanda, Algeria, the United States against the indigenous population, the slave trade, WWI and WWII, and the list is countless. Millions have perished in Siberia, in the concentration camps and in Cambodia. The inhumanity of humans can be bewildering and what we witness now is much of the same.

We keep on saying that as Muslims, we are going through a very difficult time. It is a time when our faith is tested in many ways and it is very easy for us to drift away from Islam and behave like everyone else. We hear how young Muslims can be disenfranchised, and in this process, they can be radicalized. Brothers and sisters, this process is not purely external but it also depends on our understanding of Islam, and for people like me, on our teaching of Islam.

In times like these we need a strong reminder of what our faith stands for. After my last khutbah, some brothers spoke to me and asked what can we do? We witness the suffering of our brothers and sisters and we stand here helpless. There is a lot of anger, a lot of frustration, a lot of sadness and inevitably a lot of hate. I have no doubt that many of us weep and cry when we watch the injustices in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, Chechnya and other spots in this world where Muslims are targeted. These brothers who ask what can we do, are similar to everyone here, we want to do something, we want to help but we feel helpless. In response to that, the topic for today's khutbah will cover a very beautiful part of the seerah which is relevant for us today and ISA, the khutbah will end with an advice about what we can do.

During the Makka period of the seerah, we are all aware of the year of grief when "Umm-Al-Mou'mineen" Khadija^(RAA) died, the uncle of the Prophet^(SAAWS) died, the Prophet^(SAAWS) was rejected by the people of Ta'ef and this all followed three years of boycott. This boycott was very severe to the extent that Banu Hashem along with the Muslims they were protecting were reduced to eating leaves. The suffering was tremendous, the loss to the Prophet^(SAAWS) was severe, and there were no victories to the

Muslims in sight. Somehow, Muslims today feel not too different. We keep asking, when will Allah expose falsehood and establish the truth on this earth.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلا إِنَّا نَصْرُ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٢١٤﴾

"Or did you think that you shall enter the paradise without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by suffering and adversity, and were shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When will the help of Allah come?" Surely, the help of Allah is near" (S2, A214)

We do ask, when will the help of Allah come? The Muslims now are at an all time low, and the Muslims then, along with the Prophet^(SAAWS) were suffering as well. Their loss was monumental.

But we need to ask a crucial question. How do we think, as Muslims, that the help of Allah will come? Are we waiting for the seas to open up and swallow the belligerent and the aggressors. Or will the skies open up and drown them while we are saved, or will there be "Tairon-min-sijeel" that will throw little pellets of fire and destroy those who transgress. Or will the angels come down from the heavens and fight those who sin against Allah? What do you think the answer will be?

The answer lies in a simple aya in the Quran, which we keep forgetting:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (S3, A110)

The message is clear. The victory of Allah will only come through us. It will only come through those who enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong and have an unyielding faith in Allah. It is through us putting this aya into practice that this world will be saved. The reason we are in so much distress is that we just cannot see ourselves ever able to change anything. And the reason for that is so simple. We are not the nation that enjoins what is right. Few simple examples; after three years of being in this Masjid, we still have people parking on the wrong side of the road, we still have people doing dangerous U-turns outside the Masjid, we still have people

talking during the khutbah, we still have people who do not keep to their prayers, and so on, and so on. So how can we better our world if we do not enjoin what is right.

What about the second part, "forbid what is wrong". There are so many things that are wrong in this society, and as Muslims, how much effort do we put in to better our society, our British society? There are problems of drugs, alcohol, indecency, criminal behaviour and so on and so on. As Muslims, are we ever part of the solution to a problem, or are we just part of the problem. So how can we expect the victory of Allah to befall us when we are not the nation that enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong. But now listen to the last part: "and believe in Allah".

Somehow, we will not be part of that nation if we do not have a firm belief in Allah. Is this relevant?

When we read the seerah, we learn that during this early period of extreme difficulty, the early Muslims were severely tested again and again in their faith. You may ask, well, what happened that will test their faith even more? The Muslims were tested again. They were tested by the events of Al-Isra' Wal-Mi'raj.

I think most of us will know something about this incident and there is a Surah in the Quran about the night of the Ascension:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ
مِنَ عَائِنَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

"Glory be to (Allah) Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Masjid to the Remote Masjid, whose precincts We did bless; so that We may show him of Our Signs: for He is the One Who hears and sees (all things)" (S17, A1)

Before we proceed, it is interesting that the forth aya of this surah should read:

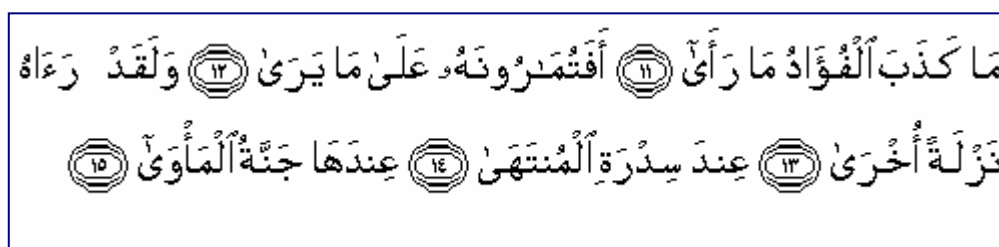
وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ
مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤﴾

"And We had made known to the children of Israel in the Book: Most certainly you will make mischief in this world twice, and most certainly you will behave insolently with great arrogance" (S17, A4)

Is what we witness in our time an indication of the second mischief in this world that this aya is talking about?

After the very harsh physical test that the Muslims endured, the event of Al-Isra' Wal-Mi'raj came to test them spiritually. The time of the khutbah will not permit a detailed account of the event, so let us go through some aspects of the Isra' Wal-Mi'raj.

It is suggested that the event took place on the night of the 27th of Rajab. Jibreel^(AS) came to the Prophet^(SAAWS) and woke him up. He asked him to do "tawaf" around the Ka'ba 7 times as the journey will start from the scared Masjid. The Prophet^(SAAWS) was told about the journey to the Remot Masjid "Al-Masjid Al-Aqssa" and then the ascension to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, can we just imagine this moment. Can we believe that our beloved Prophet^(SAAWS) did go on this journey in body and soul. Did the Prophet^(SAAWS) really ascend the heavens all the way, beyond the seven heavens. Do we believe that the Prophet^(SAAWS) did see paradise. Listen to what the Quran says:



The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart did not falsify that which he saw. Will you then dispute with him as to what he saw? For indeed he saw him (Jibreel) in his other form. Near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass. Near it is the Garden of Abode" (S53, A11-15)

After the Prophet^(SAAWS) completed his "tawaf", the Burak was waiting. There have been many myths about the Burak, with some orientalist claiming that it is a figment of the imagination taken from the Greek mythology of the unicorn. The description is that it was white and was bigger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. How fast will the Burak travel. The description is that his hoofs will strike as far as he can see. Imagine how far one can see. On a good day, we can literally see the horizon. His speed dictates that if he sees the horizon, his hoofs will strike there in a split second. It is almost a description of the speed of light. Are you prepared to believe that such a creature exists.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) rides the Burak and travels to "Al-Masjid Al-Aqssa" with Jibreel^(AS) as his companion. What do you think he finds there. The Prophet^(SAAWS) tells us that in the Masjid there was a magnificent large gathering waiting for him. The Masjid was jam packed. Do we know who was there in this gathering. It was all the messengers of Allah from the day of Adam to the last Prophet, Issa^(AS). Can you imagine that? Can you believe that? The Prophet^(SAAWS) asked Jibreel^(AS), who are these? He replies, these are all the messengers of Allah, from Adam to Issa^(AS).

Do you realize what this means. All the messengers of Allah gathered at once, from Adam^(AS) to Muhammad^(SAAWS). They are all of the same origin with the same message. Islam is the religion of unification. As a Muslim, I am a part of every society on this earth. I belong to every nation of this earth. Islam brings communities, societies and

nations together. When a Muslim behaves as if he or she is not part of their community, they are abandoning this clear message of Islam. How can we deliver the mercy of Islam by isolating ourselves from our communities.

As the Prophet^(SAAWS) arrives, they all stood ready for prayers. Who do you think was asked to be the Imam. Jibreel^(AS) calls the Prophet^(SAAWS) and asks him to lead the prayers in front of all the previous messengers. The Prophet^(SAAWS) is the Imam. What does that tell you? This symbolic prayer is a message to us that the responsibility of the welfare of this earth has been handed to our Prophet^(SAAWS), and in doing so, it has been handed to us. Are we able to realize the responsibility that this entails? We, the Muslims, are responsible for the welfare of this earth. We are responsible for recycling, we are responsible for speed limits, we are responsible for community watch, we are responsible for saving energy, we are responsible for the environment, we are responsible for health, we are responsible for a sound economy and so on. Do we feel responsible, and more to the point, do we act responsible? Do we act as if we are the Imams of this world?

Are we as Muslims acting as if we are responsible for the welfare of our communities, or are we acting as if we are those who are the recipient of this welfare. Remember this symbolic prayer with the Prophet^(SAAWS) being the Imam of all the messengers of Allah from Adam to Issa^(AS). Do you believe that this prayer did in fact take place.

What happens next. Well, if your faith has not been tested yet, wait for this. The Prophet^(SAAWS) ascends the seven heavens in body and soul. Do we really believe that? In the first heaven, he meets Adam^(AS). He sees Adam^(AS) looking to his right and sees a vast number of people and he smiles. He then looks to his left and sees another vast number of people and he cries. The Prophet^(SAAWS) asks why? Jibreel says, Adam^(AS), the father of all humanity, looks at his children on his right who are going to paradise and he smiles, but then he looks to his left and sees his children that are going to hell and he cries.

Brothers and sisters, we are all the children of Adam. The narration does not specify anything else apart from those going to heaven and those going to hell. Adam, our father is happy for all those who are going to paradise, and he is sad for all those who are not. Is there any doubt that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity. This encounter reinforces the belief that we are part of one human nation, the nation of our father Adam^(AS). When he cries for those going to hell, we should cry with him, and when he smiles for those going to paradise, we should feel happy with him. Can it be any clearer than that? It is our duty to endeavor to guide all to paradise, for all are our brothers and sisters, and we are the nation entrusted.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَ لَكُمْ

2nd Khutbah:

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

As the Prophet^(SAAWS) continues with the ascension, he meets Issa and Yahya^(AS) in the second heaven, he meets Youssof^(AS) in the third, Idrees^(AS) in the fourth, Haroon^(AS) in the fifth, Moussa^(AS) in the sixth and Ibraheem^(AS) in the seventh heaven. Listen to what Ibraheem^(AS) says to the Prophet^(SAAWS): Tell your nation from me that the soil of paradise is very fertile and its water is sweet. To plant a tree in paradise, all you have to say is: "Subhana-Allah, Alhamdu-Li-Lah, La Illah Illa-Lah and Allahu-Akbar". Ibraheem^(AS), the father of the religions of tawheed loves us, and sends us this message of paradise. If we want to increase our plantation all we have to say is: "Subhana-Allah, Alhamdu-Li-Lah, La Illah Illa-Lah and Allahu-Akbar".

Last time I planted some trees in my garden, it cost £10 a tree, and it took a few hours, and they are still having difficulty growing. Imagine, for the same time, I could have planted thousands of trees in paradise preparing for the day we all end up there ISA. Do you believe that the Prophet^(SAAWS) did meet Ibraheem^(AS) .

The Prophet^(SAAWS) described a few things that he witnessed in the heavens. This is some of what was recounted. Firstly, we are told that the heavens are squeaking with the weight of the angels. Throughout the heavens, there is not even room for one hands breadth. The angels are filling all the spaces tightly. What are these angels doing? They are praying to Allah. Some are standing, some are in "ruqu" and some are in "Sujood". All over the heavens, there are billions upon billions of angels praying to Allah. It is said that on the day of judgement, these angels come out of their state of prayers saying, oh Lord, we have not worshiped you as you deserve to be worshipped.

We tend to hurry our two raqa's and get on with life thinking that we have accomplished our prayers, yet these angles pray throughout their existence and then proclaim: oh Lord, we have not worshiped you as you deserve to be worshipped.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) then hears the voice of paradise saying: Of Lord, where are my dwellers. I have been prepared and I am waiting for my dwellers.

Will we be among those who paradise will call for?

The Prophet^(SAAWS) then smells a beautiful sweet scent in the heavens and asks what is this scent. Jibreel answers that it is the scent of the hairdresser of the daughter of Pharaoh. The story of her is that she believed in Allah, and worked as the hairdresser of the daughter of the Pharaoh. One day, the comb fell from her hand, and instinctively she said: (Bissmi-Llah) as most of us would say instinctively. The daughter of the Pharaoh looked at her and exclaimed, do you mean my father.

The woman could not hold her belief back any longer and said no; it is my Lord, your Lord and the Lord of your father. The daughter tells her father what this woman says, so he calls for her and asks her; am I not your Lord. She says my Lord is Allah. So he decides to teach her a lesson. He brings her four children, and sets a fire blazing, and asks her again, who is your Lord. She replies "Rabbi wa Rabbuka Allah", my Lord and your Lord is Allah. So he throws her first child in the fire. He asks her again, and she answers the same until it came to her forth child who was still an infant in her hands. So she grabs hold of him as any loving mother would do, having witnessed her other children thrown in front of her in the fire. Her infant miraculously speaks and

says "mother, hold fast, for you are speaking the truth". At this moment, the Pharaoh orders them both into the fire.

The Pharaoh thinks that the matter was settled. He was the Lord, and he proved it in the most brutal way. But Allah tells us, no, this is not how it works. There is a reward and there is a punishment. It does not end on earth. In recognition of this woman's faith in Allah and her endurance, she fills the heavens with a beautiful scent until the day of judgement.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) then sees people given good meat and rotten meat, and they take the rotten meat and eat it. They are there eating what is rotten and leaving what is good. The Prophet^(SAAWS) asks who are these people. Jibreel answers these are those who commit "zina", they prefer to leave what is "halal" and take what is "haram". Then he sees people with copper nails scratching and bleeding their faces. These are those who slander people and spread mischief against innocent women.

Finally the Prophet^(SAAWS) arrives to **سِدْرَةَ الْمُنْتَهَى** .

He looks behind him, and sees Jibreel in his glorious angelic form once again, bowing humbly at this point and saying I cannot go beyond this point but you can. What the Prophet^(SAAWS) sees beyond this point is indescribable for the beauty and majestic of what he saw cannot be described in words. Suffice to say, if we want to see what he saw, we know what we have to do. It was at this point that prayers were prescribed, the only act of worship to be prescribed in the heavens.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) then descends the heavens, returns to the Remote Masjid, rides the Burak and returns to Makka. As he arrives back, his bed was still warm. This was the most magnificent of all journeys that has ever taken pace in the history of mankind, and in it was the most important meeting that has ever taken place on earth, between the Prophet^(SAAWS) and all the messengers of Allah.

So, what is the big deal? Well, does the Prophet^(SAAWS) tell his companions what he has just witnessed. They have just had the most difficult ordeal. They have suffered tremendously, and now this. Will their faith be strong enough to believe it? There were no victories in Islam yet, and they were no more than 300.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) meets Abu Jahl. He recounts all that has happened and asks Abu Jahl, what should I do? Should I tell my companions about it? Abu Jahl thought, fantastic, this is my chance to show how implausible Muhammad is. He told the Prophet^(SAAWS) if I gather everyone, would you tell them what you have just told me. So there you have it, Abu Jahl, the staunchest enemy of Islam, was actually gathering the people to listen to the prophet. Once the Prophet^(SAAWS) gave an account of Al-Isra' Wal-Mi'raj, the response was staggering. Many initially could not believe what they have just heard, but their faith carried them through. Some were too weak, and they simply renounced Islam, while Abu Bakr said, even before hearing from the prophet, if he says it, it is true.

Now to us. Are we strong in faith, that when difficult events bombard us, we hold fast to our belief in Allah, or do we melt away leaving our faith behind? Are we believers enough to believe in every account of the journey. Do we believe that Al-Isra' Wal-

Mi'raj was in body and soul. If we were there, would we have believed the prophet, or would we have turned our backs on him. The answer can only lie in our actions now. When we behave as Muslims, do we behave as if we are strong in faith? If not, then we would have been among those who turned their back on the prophet.

Brothers and sisters. We started by asking, what can we do in times like these. When we have no ability to immediately change the course of history. The answer is very clear. Strengthen your faith, for you will be tested. You want to do something for the victims of Lebanon and Palestine. Then come tonight for Isha prayers. Come tomorrow for Fajr prayers. Park your car properly. Drive safely away from the masjid. Give Islam a good name. Respect all of humanity. Recycle. Be energy efficient. Do not smoke. Keep a healthy diet. Read more Quran, read more Quran with your children, and so on.

Do not ask what can I do for those victims before you are doing all of these and more. We have no right to ask what can we do to these victims if we do not even come to fajr prayers, if we do not give in charity, if we cheat, if we backbite, if we do not recycle, if we do not drive safely, if we do not love our neighbours, if we do not visit the sick, if we do not keep our family ties, if we are angry with each other. As Muslims, we will not be able to change the ills of humanity if we do not change ourselves. **Our helplessness comes from within ourselves.**

Can you see the message? Jihad starts with us. Victory starts with us being strong in faith. When you wake up tomorrow at 4 in the morning and defeat satan to do your fajr prayers, you have won a victory. When you put your paper for recycling you have won a victory. When you have prayed sunnah you have won a victory. When you embrace a brother that has wronged you, you have won a victory. Small victory after small victory, and ISA we change ourselves. If we cannot even do these things, then we will be of no use to any of our brothers and sisters when it comes to what we are witnessing now in the world. **Strengthening the faith starts here.**

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (S3, A110)