

Friday 22nd September 2006

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.

All 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 own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whom-so-ever 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

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيداً ☆ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ، وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً ﴾ (الأحزاب، 1-70)

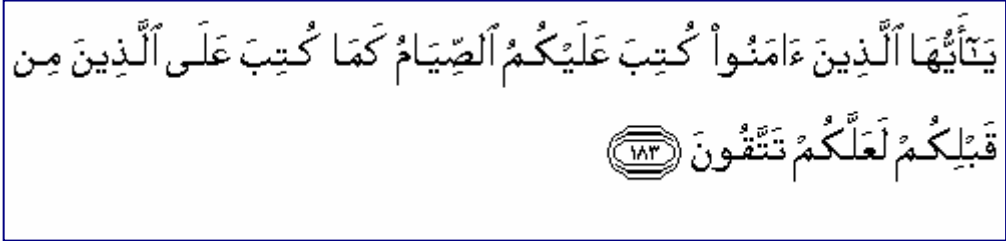
"O you who believe, fear Allah, and say what is the truth. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive your sins. He that obeys Allah and His messenger has attained the great victory" (S33, A70-1)



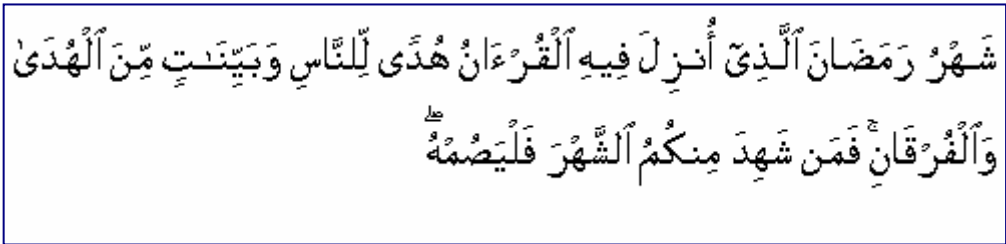
Brothers and sisters, ASA.

As we are edging towards Ramadan, the khutbah for today includes some reminders about Ramadan, and ISA, some reminders about the status of Taqua in Islam.

It is not necessary to remind you that fasting the holy month of Ramadan is an obligatory act of worship in Islam:



"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may achieve Taqua" (S2, A183)



"The month of Ramadan in which the Quran, was revealed, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion of right and wrong. Whosoever witness the month, he should fast it" (S2, A185)

We are all aware that fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam, and along with the other pillars, they form the foundation of our "deen". There is an important point that Muslims tend to forget when considering the acts of worship in Islam. Many may believe that fasting and praying are not means to an end, but are an end in themselves. By this I mean, once a Muslim has performed his salat or his si'yam, they feel that they have accomplished what Islam has demanded of them and that they are safe. When we teach our children about Islam, we focus on the obligatory nature of salat and si'yam, and rightly so. We also deliver the message that these two acts of worship form part of the foundation on which Islam is built, but is that enough. Have we taught our children what salat and si'yam are about?

If we take the analogy of building a house. When one builds a house, the foundations are critical if one wants the house to last and to withstand the age long impact of the environment. However, no matter how strong the foundations are, building a foundation alone does not provide us with a shelter. Once a good foundation has been established, then, and only then, one can start building his house over that foundation. The foundation is critical, but it is not and end in itself, but a means to an end. This is

the same with prayers, fasting and Hajj. They are the essential foundations to our "deen", but they are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. This is such an important concept for us to grasp.

A wise Muslim is the one who not only asks when do I fast and how do I fast but also asks *why* do I fast. A wise Muslim should ask himself; what will I get from fasting, how is fasting going to make me a better person, a better Muslim and a Muslim that is ready to reform and to better my society.

Let us take some of the hadeeth relating to fasting.

From Abi Huraira, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *Allah almighty said: all the work of the son of Adam is for him except fasting, it is for me and I reward it.* The Prophet ^(SAAWS) continued saying, *fasting protects from sinning. When one is fasting, do not utter obscenities, do not be loud and do not act foolishly. If someone swears at him or fights him, let him say twice: I am fasting:-----* The Prophet ^(SAAWS) then said; *for the person who fasts there are two joyous moments; when he breaks his fast, he has the joy of eating, and when he meets his Lord, he has joy of his fasting.* (Narrated by Muslims, Ahmad and Al-Nissa'i)

Fasting has a very special status in the eyes of Allah. Imagine what this hadeeth is telling us. For every act of worship and for every good act, there is a prescribed reward, but for fasting, Allah tells us that the reward lies with Him. Allah is the Generous and Allah is the Bountiful, so just imagine the reward promised for us for our fasting. When it comes to it, fasting is the only act of worship that exists purely between the person and his Lord. People can see you pray and they can see you performing Umrah or Hajj, but no one but yourself know that you are fasting. When you fast, it is truly for Allah, and Allah in turn is telling us that the reward lies with Him.

The next hadeeth narrated by Ahmad: From Abdullah Bin Amrou, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *Fasting and reciting the Quran will act as intercessors (shafaa'a) for the person on the day of judgement. Fasting will say, my Lord, I have made him abstain from food and desires during the day, so accept me as an intercessor for him. The Quran says, my Lord, I have prevented him from sleeping at night, so accept me as an intercessor for him, and Allah accepts their intercession.*

Abi Oumama came to the Prophet ^(SAAWS) and asked: order me in a work that will enter me Paradise. The Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *Fast, for there is nothing that matches it.* Narrated by Ahmad.

The Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *every day that one fasts for the sake of Allah, the fire of hell is driven away from his face seventy years.* Narrated by all.

The Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *Paradise has a gate called "Al-Rayan". On the day of judgement, those who have fasted are called forth, and are ushered through this gate, until all have passed through, then the gate is closed.* Narrated by Muslim and Al-Bukhari.

Even though fasting is obligatory, its rewards are immense. Allah will reward you as Allah pleases, it will act as an intercessor for you on the day of judgement, every day you fast for the sake of Allah, the fire of hell is driven further away from you, and as a person who fasts, there is a special gate for you to enter into paradise. With all this, probably none of us need any more encouragement.

What about the month of Ramadan? We are informed that fasting the month of Ramadan was prescribed in the second year of Hijra. From Abi Huraira, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said when the month of Ramadan entered: *a blessed month has arrived that you are ordered to fast. During this month, the gates of heaven are opened, and the gates of hell are closed, and the satans are chained. In this month there is a night that is worth more than a thousand months. He who has been denied the benefit of this night, then he has truly been denied.* Narrated by Ahmad and Al-Nissa'i.

From Abi Huraira, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *he who fasts Ramadan and keeps within its defined limits, and keeps away from what he is supposed to, his past sins are forgiven.* Narrated by Ahmad. And, in another hadeeth, along the same lines, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *the five prayers, Jum'a to Jum'a prayers, and Ramadan to Ramadan, all forgive the sins in between, as long as one avoids the great sins "Al-Kaba'er".*

I am quite sure we all know the next hadeeth: From Abi Huraira, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَاضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

He who fasts the month of Ramadan with good "Iman" seeking the pleasure and reward of Allah, his past sins are forgiven.

Where ever we read about fasting in Islam, we find a great deal of encouragement to help us fast. However, if there remains any doubt, the following should act as a warning and as a deterrent. From Abi Huraira, the Prophet ^(SAAWS) said: *He who does not fast a single day in Ramadan on purpose and without legitimate excuse, no fasting will ever make up for it, even if he fasts for the rest of time.* It is also suggested by some scholars that he who abandons fasting the month of Ramadan for no legitimate excuse, his Islam is in doubt. So there we have it.

May Allah lead in His mercy all those who are returning back to Islam, and may Allah help us make the best of this forthcoming Ramadan, for it may be the last Ramadan that we may witness. We all know of loved ones and close friends who were with us last Ramadan, but are no longer with us. Let us remember them in our prayers and our Du'a, and let us remind ourselves that we have been given, by the mercy of Allah, another chance to gain forgiveness, and let us remind ourselves that this may be our last Ramadan. So let us conduct our fast as Allah wants us to, and let us gain the pleasure of Allah, and let us be among those who have achieved the ultimate reward in this blessed month, Ameen.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَ لَكُمْ

2nd Khutbah:

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

We started by saying that si'yam is one of the foundations of the "deen". Establishing a strong foundation is necessary, but it is also important to build further upon this foundation. This is one of the reasons why we read:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن
قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may achieve Taqua" (S2, A183)

This aya is telling us that by fasting, by establishing one of the foundations of Islam, we may be able to achieve "Taqua". To me, it appears that one of the things that a Muslim can hope to build on this foundation is the quality of "taqua".

We need to make this critical link between an act of worship and its objective. The Quran is very clear on this issue. Every act of worship has an objective and this objective is linked to that act. If you fail to achieve the objective you have not made the best use of this act of worship. If we do not move closer to achieving "taqua", then we are not making the most of our fasting. In other words, we have wasted our foundations and not used them to build anything. Is this important?

Let us see what the Quran has to say:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

"And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord; and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth, prepared for the Mutaqueen" (S3, A133)

This aya is telling us what Allah has prepared for the "Mutaqueen": a vast paradise, the extent of which is as the heavens and earth. By achieving "taqua" we can hope for the promise of paradise. However, if this is the reward, what is the obligation? What is the obligation of the one who has "taqua"? The answer lies in the following two ayas.

We read in the next two ayas, the description of the "mutaqueen", a description that tells us what is expected of those who have achieved "taqua".

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَبِيمِ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ
النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ
إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

“Those who spend (of that which Allah has given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their anger, and those who are forgiving of others. And Allah loves those who do good (to others). And those who when they commit an indecency or transgress against themselves, remember Allah and ask for forgiveness for their sins-- and who can forgive sins except Allah. And are not obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done” (S3, A134-5)

So let us see what is to be expected of "Al-Mutaqueen".

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ

One of the mentioned characteristic is that he or she should be willing to spend in helping others and in helping society during both, times of ease and times of adversity. We often see many well-off people being a little tight, so imagine how one may be when they are facing hardship. It is not easy to give in the way of Allah during adversity, but one of the attributes of "Taqua" is the willing to give of what Allah has provided, at all times. Fasting, ISA, should help us get there.

وَالْكَبِيمِ الْغَيْظِ

Secondly, those who control their anger. We spoke about this in last khutbah. Controlling ones anger is such a virtue, and fasting is prescribed for this specific task. Remember the hadeeth: The Prophet^(SAAWS) asked the companions: who among you do you consider invincible. They replied it is he who is not overcome by other men. The Prophet^(SAAWS) said it is he who is not overcome by anger. (Narrated by Muslim).

Who among us here does not wish to be invincible? In fact, if we take a look at the other side of the coin, he who cannot control his anger can be easily defeated. How

many arguments have been lost due to anger? How many times have we portrayed Islam in the worst possible way because all we can show is anger? Anger takes away ones dignity, ones self esteem, ones ability to control his emotions and his behaviour. Fasting has been prescribed for us to control this devastating weakness.

If any one of us knows that they get angry easily, you will need to work on this during Ramadan. When you are able to tolerate hunger and thirst, try also to tolerate others. Exercise "Zikr" and keep Allah at the tip of your tongue always. ISA, day on day, you will be able to control the anger in you.

وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ

Thirdly, we come to those who are forgiving of others. In the aya, it says those who forgive others, as in people in general, and not specifically Muslims. If we are aiming towards the state of "taqua", we are expected to be forgiving of all others. As a quick exercise, let everyone in this masjid right now ask himself or herself, do I know someone that I am angry with, for whatever reason, and I am not prepared to forgive them. Probably a few may come to mind. Well, if you truly want to achieve "taqua", you must find it in your heart to seek forgiveness for them. You cannot go through the month of Ramadan, and come out at the other end, and you still have not forgiven others. You have the whole month of Ramadan to do so.

If by the end of the month you have not done so, or at least have tried, you will have to ask yourself a serious question, have I fulfilled my obligations in achieving "taqua". Have I forgiven my brothers and sisters, have I forgiven those around me, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

This is how Islam builds a strong loving community; by giving, by controlling rage and by forgiveness. "Taqua" is not an abstract idea that has no tangible end product. "Taqua" is a crucial tool to better ourselves, to better our families and to better our societies. This is all achieved on the foundation of fasting. Do we now start to see why fasting is the foundation, and why "taqua" is one of the end products. Fasting is prescribed for us to build a strong loving community, and not to simply get hungry and thirsty during the day. If our community is not benefiting from fasting, then we are not building on this foundation.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ

Then we read; and those who when they commit an indecency or transgress against themselves, remember Allah. "Sub-hana-Llah". With all the Iman in our hearts, this aya tells us that we are not beyond sinning. This aya is talking about "al-mutaqeen", and is saying; and those who when they commit an indecency or transgress against themselves. We, all of us, will be sinful and will transgress against ourselves, for we are humans. Fasting and achieving "taqua" will not totally immune us from sin, but

the aya tells us how we should deal with our transgressions. The aya gives us a healing response to our actions. If we achieve "taqua", we should recognise that we have sinned, we should recognise that what we have done was wrong and we should recognise that by sinning we also transgress against ourselves. Having recognised all that what should we do? The answer is simple, we remember Allah.

فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِدُنُوبِهِمْ

We seek the forgiveness of Allah. Even though we are not immune from wrong, and, brothers and sisters that also means that if you are not immune, your brother and sister is also not immune, we recognise our wrong doings and we seek Allah's forgiveness.

وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

And who can forgive sins except Allah. When we wrong ourselves and sin, who do we turn to? When we recognise our misgivings who do we turn to? Some of you may find this question rather irrelevant, because you may say; well of course I will turn to Allah. You do not realise how lucky we are to have Allah to turn to. Many people who know little about Islam have nothing to turn to. If they wrong someone and they recognise the ills of what they have done, they have no one to turn to for forgiveness. They torment themselves, they may find solace at the bottom of a whisky bottle, but they do not know that there is Allah, and we are partly to blame.

وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

However, the matter does not end with seeking forgiveness from Allah, but also demands not being obstinate in persisting, knowingly in the wrong. Muslims recognise that to err is human, and the beginning of the aya confirms that. However, when one achieves "taqua", they recognise their wrong doing, they remember Allah, they seek forgiveness, and most important, they do not persist in what they have done. This is again another serious illness in society.

When one gets enough courage to do something wrong for the first time, it is almost a licence to carry on doing the same, or even do something worse. Many people pray on this human weakness knowing that it is human to err. They will try to convince you that once you have sinned you have fallen from grace, and there is no turning back. Islam tells us otherwise. Islam wants to reform society. Islam does not want people to continue indulging in what is wrong just because they slipped. Islam gets you out of this cycle. Islam tells you, seek forgiveness, stop doing it and ISA, move on. Isn't that beautiful, isn't that merciful.

أُولَئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

"For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens beneath which rivers flow, an eternal dwelling: How excellent is the reward for those who work (and strive)" (S3, A136)

By saving ourselves in this life, we are also saving ourselves in the hereafter. Allah again reminds us after these two ayas as to the reward of those who achieve "taqua"

That is some of what "taqua" is about. It is about achieving a healthy society. It is about healing the ills of society. That is the message of Islam, and this is how Muslims can fulfil the message of our Prophet^(SAWS):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

"And We have sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures" (S21, A107)

Fasting is one of the foundations of Islam. "Taqua" is one of our objectives from fasting. Bettering our society is one of the objectives of "taqua". So, as a Muslim, ask yourself this question every day: Has my society benefited from my Islam? Has my society benefited from me being a Muslim? If not, we need to work harder at getting closer to Allah. Allah in his mercy has given us this month, year on year, until the end of time to help us save ourselves and save those around us. Let us do our best to get the best of this Ramadan for we may not have the chance to see another one.

Let us **not** be among those who were described as: "all they got out of their fasting is hunger and thirst, and all they got out of their prayers is fatigue".