

Friday 12th January 2007

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

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، وَالتَّنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ،
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (الحشر ، 18)

"O you who believe, fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that you do" (S59, A18)



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA. In today's khutbah, we revisit the concept of "Taqua" in Islam. Again and again we find that Islam is a wonderful and a beautiful religion. Which ever way you look at it, it is beautiful. It is such a wonderful blessing that everyone should be entitled to it. Muslims who portray Islam as a rigid religion, as a religion based on fear and punishment and as a religion only fit for the time it was revealed in, are misrepresenting the beauty of this message. If we truly believe that Islam is the **Universal** religion for everyone and for all time, then we should put our faith in Allah(SWT). It is our duty as Muslims to portray the multitude of benefits that Islam has had on us.

We preach Islam by letting people see how Islam has lifted us. We preach Islam by letting people see how settled and content our children are. We preach Islam by letting people see how confident we are in the wisdom of Allah. We preach Islam by letting people see that we, the Muslims are generous, warm hearted, compassionate, peaceful, calm and God fearing. Whatever the problem may be, what ever the topic is, no matter how distasteful others may be, we, the Muslims, should not be reacting to others, but make others react to us.

This, unfortunately, is where it becomes difficult. We have to build in ourselves these qualities if we want others to see them in us and through us. We need to build in ourselves the qualities of generosity, warm heartedness, compassion, calmness and so forth. If we do not have these qualities, we will never deliver the message of Islam. We all know that Islam is a practical religion, and we can only preach it by practicing it.

The message of Islam is based on compassion, on mercy and on forgiveness. In the opening Surah, Al-fatiha, we immediately start our holy book by saying:



In the name of Allah, "Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem". Then we continue with: "All praise be to Allah, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds". After that, Allah(SWT) again introduces us to two of His Glorious names: "Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem". This is how our Holy Quran guides us as we open it. The first three ayas of our Holy Quran testify to us and tell us that this "Deen" is the "Deen" of "Rahma", the "Deen" of mercy. Those of us in this mosque are blessed with Islam, and are blessed with this understanding of "Rahma". However, with this blessing comes a heavy burden. Should we believe that this is the "Deen" of "Rahma", it becomes incumbent on us to deliver this "Rahma" to those around us, and not to deny it from them. For if we deny this "Rahma" to others, we will surely be denying Allah's "Rahma" on us as well. "Have mercy on those on earth, and you will gain the mercy of He who is in the Heavens".

During the battle of “Uhud”, a ditch was dug and the Prophet^(SAAWS) was backed into it until he fell. He was then struck on his helmet so hard that the metal sides dug into the skin of his face. In these moments of despair, the companions asked the Prophet^(SAAWS) to curse the disbelievers, but he replied, our beloved Prophet^(SAAWS) replied: “I was not sent as a curse, but as a Rahma”. Brothers and sisters, if we ever learn one thing today, it should be this scene in our history. We need to envisage this situation. Many sahabah were being killed by the disbelievers, the Muslims were being pushed back, the Prophet^(SAAWS) was being attacked incessantly to kill him. The objective of the disbelievers on that day was to kill the Prophet^(SAAWS), to annihilate the Muslims to stamp out the flame of Islam and to avenge their defeat in Badr. Yet, with all that hatred that was being thrust onto the Muslims, the Prophet^(SAAWS) was letting us know that his message is to guide those who hate us into Islam and not away from it. In this darkest moment, he was declaring what Islam is about, it is about mercy and forgiveness.

Let us try to present and represent this “Deen” as the Prophet^(SAAWS) would have wanted us to do. It is the “Deen” of guidance to Allah, the “Deen” of mercy and the “Deen” of compassion. Let us always remember that it is we that are the lucky ones. We are the lucky ones because of who we are, we are Muslims, and we must show this to everyone else. What good is Islam to us if we are always angry, frustrated and aggressive. We need to grasp a good understanding of Islam, and one of the important concepts to grasp is the concept of “Taqua”.

We normally open the khutbah with an aya that reminds us to have “Taqua” of Allah.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، وَالتَّنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ،
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"O you who believe, fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that you do" (S59, A18)

The Prophet^(SAAWS) said:

☆ اتق الله حيثما كنت وأتبع السيئة الحسنة تمحها، وخالف الناس بخلق حسن ☆

"From Abi-Zar and Mu'az Bni Jabal^(RAA), the Prophet^(SAAWS) said: (Ittaqi) fear Allah where ever/when ever you are and follow a bad deed with a good one, it erases it, and deal with people with good conduct" (Narrated by Al-Tirmizi)

There is a lot of emphasis in the Quran and hadeeth on the issue of “Taqua”. We need to grasp the concept of “Taqua” and hopefully, eventually, we can apply this concept on us. The Holy Quran leaves us with no doubt as to what it all means.

Firstly, how does the Quran define the status of “Al-Muttaqeen” in the sight of Allah:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

“And fear Allah, and know that Allah is with “Al-Muttaqeen”, those who restrain themselves” (S2, A194)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

“And act aright, for verily Allah Loves “Al-Muttaqeen”, those who act aright” (S3, A76)

وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

“But Allah is the protector of the righteous” (S45, A19)

Isn't that enough for us. Allah(SWT) is on the side of “Al-Muttaqeen”, Allah(SWT) loves “Al-Muttaqeen” and Allah(SWT) is the protector of “Al-Muttaqeen”. We have to ask ourselves a serious question. Do we want Allah to be on our side, to love us and to protect us? The answer should be “it goes without saying”. Of course we want all that.

Let us now see what the reward of “Al-Muttaqeen” will be in the Hereafter?

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا ﴿٨٥﴾

“The day We shall gather the righteous to (Allah) Most Gracious, like a band (presented before a king for honours)” (S19, A85)

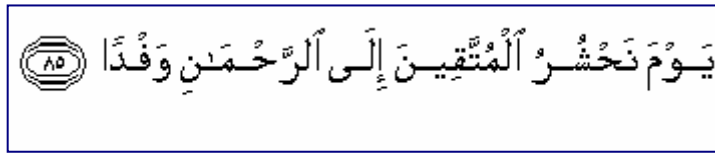
إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

“The righteous (will be) amid gardens and fountains” (S15, A45)

وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

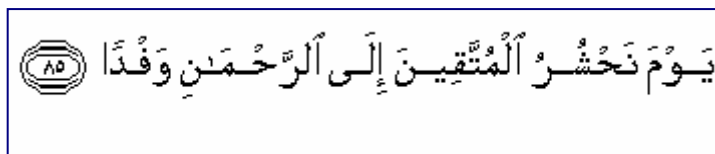
“And the home of the hereafter is even better, and excellent indeed is the home of the righteous” (S16, A30)

These three ayas leave us in no doubt as to what Allah has promised “Al-Muttaqeen” in the hereafter. When we read:



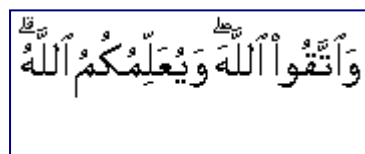
“The day We shall gather the righteous to (Allah) Most Gracious”

It sends shivers up the spine. Let us consider an example here. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to attend a graduation ceremony, do we remember how we felt when we were gathered together, in celebration, waiting to go up there in front of everyone, to collect our degree. A wonderful moment, and a wonderful memory. This gathering was the culmination of all those years of hard work, a confirmation of your achievement for all to see and the beginning of a new chapter in your life. A wonderful moment, and a wonderful memory. Imagine now being gathered on the day of judgement to go and collect your prize from Allah(SWT). This gathering will be ISA the culmination of all those years of hard work, a confirmation of your achievement for all to see and the beginning of the final chapter of your eternal life. This aya is so beautiful, but we have to wait, as the aya declares, until the day of judgement.

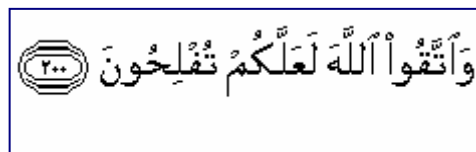


What about in this life? Should we expect a life of hardship and misery to achieve this eternal reward. Is the life of someone who wants to achieve “Taqua”, a life of misery and hardship. You may rightly ask, or be asked, what can “Al-Muttaqeen” expect from Allah(SWT) in this “Dunia”?

The following ayas are equally beautiful:



“So fear Allah, and it is Allah that Teaches you” (S2, A282)



“And fear Allah that you may prosper” (S3, A200)

وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

“And be righteous, that you may receive mercy” (S6, A155)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ﴿٤﴾

“And for those who fear Allah, Allah will ease their affairs for them” (S65, A4)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَكْفِرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا ﴿٥﴾

“And for the one who fears Allah, He will blot his sins and will expand his reward” (S65, A5)

These ayas tell us that should we seek the “Taqua” of Allah, Allah has told us in the Quran that He will teach us, He will make us prosper, He will give us mercy, He will ease our burdens in this life and He will forgive our sins and expand our reward.

Somehow, we are being left in no doubt as to the significant status of “Taqua” in Islam. With this in mind, I doubt if anyone here would not want to jump at the opportunity to be among “Al-Muttaqeen”?

Imagine this offer from Allah(SWT). Have “Taqua” and you will gain my love, my support and my mercy. Have “Taqua” and you will be gathered to Me on the day of judgement. Have “Taqua” and you will be rewarded in this life with knowledge, prosperity, mercy, ease and forgiveness. What an offer. Like the godfather said: It is an offer “you can’t refuse”. So, with this offer on the table, Muslims will be saying: what do I have to do to achieve “Taqua”.

With such a wonderful offer, I am afraid, the task is not that easy.

❁ لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ
 وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
 وَالرَّسُولِ وَعَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
 وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَعَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ
 وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ
 وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west, but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the last day, and the angles, and the book, and the messengers, to spend of your wealth out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves. To be steadfast in prayer, and give zakat, to fulfil the contracts which you have made, and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, such are Al-Muttaqoon” (S2, A177)

Let us look at this again:

To be among “Al-Muttaqeen” we have to believe in Allah, to believe the last day, to believe in the angles, to believe in the book, to believe in the messengers. So far so good.

Then, to spend of your wealth out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves. That is also probably OK for those of us in Altrincham and we should not much difficult either. Praise to be Allah, this is a prosperous community, and we all spend some of our wealth as indicated. But do we always spend out of our love to Allah, or do we sometimes say, that is probably enough, we need to consider our 42” flat screen, our latest up-to-date gadgets and so on. Is it now getting a little bit more difficult?

Then we have to be steadfast in prayers, and give zakat. That does not seem to be too difficult. We are all here for Friday prayers, so isn’t that enough. Do we have to pray any more than that. Do we really have to pray five times a day. Do we really have to wake up for fajr. Do we really have to come to the mosque for prayers. Somehow, even this task seems to be a little bit difficult. However, so far it is between you and Allah(SWT)

Now comes the most difficult bit, it is the bit that tells you how to interact with others and how to cope with your predicament. The aya states that we have to fulfil the

contracts which we have made (honesty and integrity), and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of struggle (that is when our resolve and Iman get tested). Should you achieve that, then the Quran testifies that “Such are the people of truth, such are Al-Muttaqoon”.

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفرُ الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الحمد لله ثم الحمد لله. الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره، ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا وسيئات أعمالنا. أما بعد:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ

“O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared” (S3, A102)

This aya reminds us that if we want to achieve “Taqua” we should strive in the manner that Allah rightly demands “Taqua” from us.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ

“O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared” (S3, A102)

Before we continue, there is an important remark about the translation of the word “Taqua”. When we read the translations of some of the previous ayas, the description of “Al-Muttaqeen” varies from those who restrain themselves, to those who act rightly or to those who are righteous. In many translations the words “fear Allah” are usually used. The truth is that none of these translations give the true meaning of “Al-Muttaqeen”. Scholars have tried to encompass this concept in few words, and one example of such a translation of “Taqua” is that of a constant “Awareness of Allah”.

If I am correct, I think brother Ghaleb once mentioned this saying from Ali Bin Abi Taleb(KAW) when asked to define “Taqua”. He did not give a single word response, but replied: “Al-khaoffu minal-Aljaleel, wal-amalu Bit-tanzeel, war-rida Bil-qaleel, wal-isti’dadu Liyoum-Ir-raheel”. This is translated as fearing the Majestic, working

with what has been revealed, being content with what is little and preparing for the day of departure.

Another revealing and touching explanation of “Tuqa” is the following:

أن يجدك الله حيث أمرك ، ويستفقدك حيث نهاك .

“Tuqa” is for Allah to find you where Allah has ordered you to be, and to miss you where Allah has ordered you not to be.

Where has Allah asked us to be. We are asked to pray five times a day. Allah expects the men to be present at the mosque for our congregational prayers when it is feasible and safe. Allah expects us to be up at dawn to pray fajr. Allah expects us to be at our work on time when we should be there. Allah expects us to be beside the weak, the poor, the sick and the infirm. Allah expects us to be visiting our families and friends. Allah expects us to be using our time wisely with learning and with useful work. So we need to ask ourselves, are we where Allah has asked us to be?

The second part of the explanation is for Allah to miss us where Allah has ordered us not to be. The examples for this are plenty, but the main theme is for you to avoid being present in a situation where you end up disobeying Allah.

Brothers and sisters, we need to start questioning ourselves everyday, how much “Taqua” have I achieved today? Can I consider myself to have been among “Al-Muttaqeen” today. If not, how close did I get? Can I do better tomorrow?

In this hadeeth:

☆ اتق الله حيثما كنت وأتبع السيئة الحسنة تمحها، وخالف الناس بخلق حسن ☆

The hadeeth states:

اتق الله حيثما كنت

This means have “Taqua” of Allah where ever and when ever you are. There are no geographical boundaries and no time restrictions on seeking the status of “Taqua”. There is sometimes the occasional mistake that some Muslims make in that on certain occasions or in certain places we may give “Taqua” a miss. In this day and age, this is probably a very pertinent issue. A Muslim may think or feel that with all that is happening to Muslims all over the world, why should I behave in a “Taqua” like manner. Why should I give, when everyone else is taking. Why should I be compassionate when no one else is showing compassion, and so on. These are times of distress and hardship. It is in times like these that your Iman is being tested. It is precisely in times like these that your Islam should shine through.

It is Islam that should be the light in these dark times. It is precisely for times like these that Muslims have been entrusted with the concept of “Taqua”. Is it therefore right that as soon as Muslims are confronted and tested, we throw away our “Taqua”.

Brothers and sisters, the concept of “Taqua” is an amazing one. The rewards are all there, plenty to see, and probably unimaginable. To me, this means one thing. When the reward is so great, it means that the task will not be easy. “Taqua” is not easy. Individually we need to work at it. As a family we need to work at it. As a community we need to work at it. If we are clever enough, we concentrate on the reward more so than on the task.

How many of us can truly come to the end of the day and claim that they have achieved 100% “Taqua” on that day. Probably even 90% or 80% or even less. Sometimes it may even be less than 10%. Yes, we know how high we need to aim, but in reality, it is sometimes impossible to hit the target. We are after all human. This combination of enthusiasm and the inability to hit the target day after day may inevitably lead one to despair. One may even reach the state of accepting that I will never reach the status of “Taqua”, so why should I even try. We all have friends that feel that way. So what is there to do?

The answer lies in the second section of the hadeeth:

☆ اتق الله حيثما كنت وأتبع السيئة الحسنة تمحها، وخالق الناس بخلق حسن ☆

“And follow a bad deed with a good one, it erases it”. Islam is wise to the fact that human nature will have the better of us on occasions. For some it is more often than others, and we will inevitably sin. We will not be able to achieve a high level of “Taqua” all the time, even if we try. So what are we to do when we slip? Do we despair? Do we give up? Do we deny our fallibility? No, it is none of that. The answer is clear. Whenever we slip up, we pull up our socks and do a good deed, and ISA, our slip up will be forgiven.

وَأَتْبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا

“and follow a bad deed with a good one, it erases it”. We are asked not to despair. As soon as you slip up, do something good.

The third part of the hadeeth says:

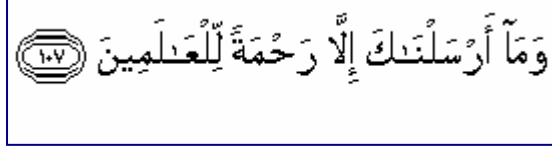
وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقِ حَسَنٍ

“and deal with people with good conduct”.

It is interesting that in this hadeeth, we are initially asked to have the “Taqua” of Allah at all times and in all places. This is linked to the understanding of our fallibility and the need to pick ourselves up as soon as we slip, and this state of “Taqua” is also linked to our conduct with people.

Again we go a full circle in this wonderful religion, the religion of “Rahma”, the religion of mercy. At the end of the day, Islam is there to make our lives and the lives of those around us, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, better.

“Taqua” means that by achieving this relationship with Allah, those around us, Muslims and non-Muslim alike, should benefit from that. If Muslims are not able to make this link between our relationship with Allah to our relationship with people around us, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, we are missing a significant part of this concept, the concept of “Taqua”. This is what is meant when we read:



“We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all mankind” (S21, A107)