

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 **اللَّهِ**.

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 **اللَّهِ** to whom there is no partner

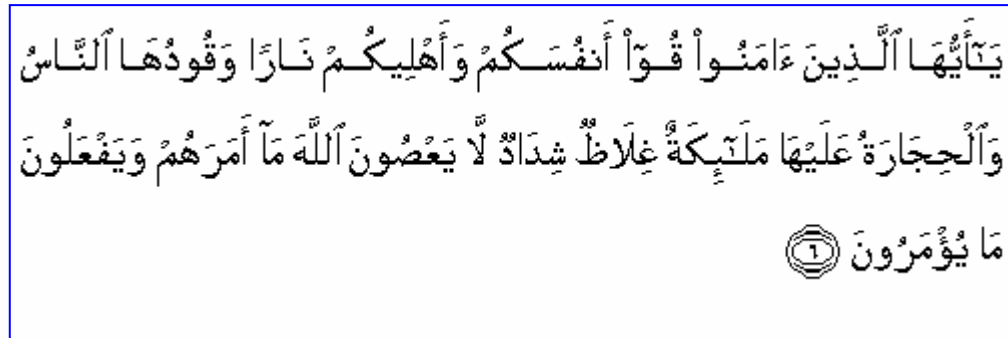
and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

*“And that those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord, so that they may believe in it, and their hearts may then submit humbly unto Him. And most surely Allah will Guide those who believe onto a straight path” (S22, A54)*



Dear brothers and sisters ASA. ISA over the next few khutbahs, we will try to understand the process of initiating positive change in the life of the Muslim. I think I may be right in saying that we all want to change to the better. I know myself, and I know the problems I have with my relationship with Allah, my relationship with myself and my relationship with others. I need to be a better Muslim, and I need to be a better person. I need to change, if not for my sake, at least for the sake of my family and my friends.



***“O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern and severe. They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them to execute, and they do as they are commanded” (S66, A6)***

This aya is very scary indeed. One can only imagine the scene with the angels leading people to hell fire. People screaming and asking for mercy for themselves and for their families. Allah(SWT) is warning us that the angels appointed for this task are stern and severe. Our cries of mercy will have no effect on them, for they can only obey Allah’s command. Very scary indeed.

Can anyone here deny that they need to better themselves. For those of us who have responsibilities towards others, we cannot escape the fact that we are setting the example for our children and for those who look up to us. In our community we have parents, we have mentors, we have “big brothers and sisters” and so on. We have those involved in “Da’wa” and we have those involved in teaching. We do not have a choice and we need to set the right example. For that we need to change to the better. All of us are struggling with the concept of change, whether it is us who need to change, or whether it is us who need to help others change.

Hajj is only a few weeks behind us. I hope that we all have had an opportunity to welcome a brother or a sister who has been on Hajj. Somehow, we have tended to associate a certain tendency for change in these “Hajjis” when they come back. From our understanding of the impact that Hajj has, we anticipate that these brothers and sisters will show a positive change in their adherence to their Islamic duties, a positive change in their behaviour and a positive change in their perspectives on life.

Somehow, for these Muslims after Hajj, their duty towards Allah features very highly in their every day life.

This amazing change can be so manifest that it rubs on us. Some of these people have been transformed. We instinctively want to be with such a person so that some of these blessings end up rubbing on us. However, and very sadly, we also come across brothers and sisters who have come back from Hajj, but somehow, they have remained much the same. There has been no tangible difference. The hijab is still off. They still miss their prayers. The needs of this life are still more at the forefront of their minds than the needs of the hereafter. Behaviour and conduct are much the same. Hajj was just another adventure trip. It was very exciting and moving when they were there, but Hajj is now behind them. It is as if one is saying, I have done my duty and I have performed Hajj, and there was nothing to it. It is almost like a tick box exercise. You can imagine our brother or sister saying; let me see, I have done Ramadan, tick, I have done Zakat for this year, tick, I have done Hajj, tick. Then, what shall we do for the summer holiday, will it be the Canaries or Costa del Sol; tick.

You might think this is an exaggeration, but something happened last weekend that prompted me to question myself again: What is it that makes us change, for better or for worse? During our Eid Ul-Adha celebration dinner, a number of non-Muslims were invited to witness how “good” Muslims celebrate their closeness and their appreciation of Allah. One such young lady said to me that she was definitely impressed that this was an alcohol free event. She has never witnessed such a big event where there was not a single drop of alcohol, very impressive. But, she was extremely disappointed with the rudeness of Muslims when the speakers were addressing them, and she was utterly taken back by the dress code of many Muslim ladies. Some Muslim ladies were showing their tummies, some were showing their necks and many had no hijab or head cover whatsoever. In fact, she herself was dressed more modestly than many of the Muslim women that were there. Her comments were like a knife going straight to my heart.

She was right. For most of the Muslims there, this was just another party, and not an Eid celebration. This was a chance for them to show what they have prepared for this “Dunia”, and not what they are preparing for the hereafter. If you did not know better, you may have thought that this was a dinner party with some Muslims attending.

With that in mind, I asked myself many questions; why are we still like this? What is it that will make us change for the better? How can we, Muslims, change ourselves in accordance with the teachings of Islam? What does it take for one to get closer to Allah, and probably more to the point, what does it take for one not to drift away from Allah?

I know that some of us are already getting uncomfortable, because we are already thinking I cannot change until the world around me changes? I know that when it comes to change, many factors are involved. Many factors are in the in hands of Allah and we have no control over that what so ever. Some might even say that when Allah wants me to change, ISA I will change. However, Allah(SWT) Says in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

*“Allah does not change the condition of a people until they (first) change what is within themselves” (S13, A11)*

This is a very good and relevant reminder for us. Sometimes we say I will change once this or that happens. If Allah wants me to change, then Allah will help me. I will just wait until His help comes. Somehow, we ignore that this aya states that we have to take the first step. In Islam, waiting for a change is not an option, and we need to actively seek change.

Now that I know that change must start from within, we need to address a very important question. What is it that is within me that will make me change? After a lot of thinking and asking, it comes down to two obvious things; **the mind and the heart**. Two very familiar expressions: **a change of mind and a change of heart**. We are probably also familiar with a new “political” expression: **we need to win the hearts and minds of the people**.

For the past two weeks, I have been asking our brothers and sisters the following question: if you seek change, which do you think will have a greater influence on you, your mind or your heart? Is it knowledge that will help you change or is it feelings. Is it logic or is it emotions?

In thinking about these questions, we must not forget that to initiate change is understandably very difficult, but to maintain change is even harder. For example, when a sister decides to put on a hijab, this is a tremendous change. However, for her to be wearing it one year later is a much greater achievement. So we ask again, which will have a greater influence, the mind or the heart.

Most of those I asked immediately answered it is the mind. Most said they have to think carefully before they do anything. Others put the heart first saying it has to feel right first before I do anything. And obviously some could not put one above the other. Surprisingly, none thought that there may actually be a conflict between the two. The heart tells you something, but the mind is not ready, or the other way round. It is a very difficult thing. The issue for me brothers and sisters is that these are not silly, hypothetical questions. These are very important issues. If we do not understand how we think and how we feel, how can we even start to help ourselves and help others.

We have many sisters and brothers starting fresh in Islam. We have many sisters and brothers struggling with their Islam, and we have many who are gradually drifting away from Islam. But most tragic is that we have our own children also drifting away from Islam. If we do not know how to help them change to the better, we will surely lose them. We cannot afford to drift away from Allah!

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

**“And do not be like those who forgot Allah; and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the transgressors” (S59, A19)**

With this in mind, the next few khutbahs ISA will look at the importance of knowledge and the importance of the heart in Islam. ISA we will then try to understand how we can initiate and maintain change in ourselves for the better. I personally know I need to change. My Islam is not up to scratch. I cannot continue as it is, and I think this goes for most if not all of us.

Let us first talk about the importance of knowledge and learning in Islam. I think everyone will agree that to progress and to change, sound knowledge is vital, so what does Islam say? Does Islam prohibit science? Does Islam prohibit learning and seeking knowledge? Does Islam prohibit the questioning of knowledge? Or does Islam demands of us to learn and to become knowledgeable? This, I think, is where Islam, as a religion, is simply amazing.

We know of many previous religions that were built on myths and legends. In their days, they had an audience and an impact. But now, as knowledge progressed, these myths and legends have withered away. They still however make very good Hollywood blockbusters. Amazingly however, when Islam was born, what were the first cries of our faith? Was it worship your God? Was it pray or prostrate to the Lord? Absolutely not. These were the first five ayas at the birth of Islam:

أَفْرَأُ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ أَفْرَأُ وَرَبُّكَ  
الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

**“Read in the name of your Lord Who has created. He Created the human from a congealing clot. Read and your Lord is Most Generous. It is He Who teaches with the pen. He taught the human what he did not know” (S96, A1-5)**

What an amazing start to Islam. It sets an agenda, an agenda of reading, of writing and of learning. It defines the great blessing of Allah on people, the blessing of knowledge. It also defines a unique human perspective: “for knowledge to progress and expand, reading and writing is vital”. In fact, the progress of knowledge through reading and writing set us apart from all other creations. The word “read” is mentioned twice in these opening verses in the form of an order. It is a Divine order

for us to read. The emphasis on knowledge was so vital, that Islam called what was before it the era of ignorance; “Al-Jahiliya”.

As Islam came to change the whole of humanity, its first message to initiate this change is to challenge to the mind. Islam has a clear ideology that a change to the better must be built on sound knowledge. Without knowledge, we cannot start. To learn, to gain knowledge and to challenge the mind are fundamental in promoting a positive change. We cannot initiate and maintain change based on ignorance or on error. It simply does not happen. It always eventually becomes so obvious when ignorance was used as the instrument of change. When we look at how some Muslims commemorate today, can we reach the conclusion that these commemorative acts are based on sound knowledge?

There is no doubt that sound knowledge is necessary for a positive change, but also be warned that defective knowledge can crepe in, and it will lead to negative changes as we witness in some parts of the Muslim Ummah today commemorating “Ashourah”. So, not only is it important for the Muslim to read, to learn and to seek knowledge, but the Muslim must also be critical and must question knowledge.

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾

*“Say: Can those be equal, those who have knowledge and those who have not? It is those who are endued with understanding that are mindful” (S39, A9)*

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2<sup>nd</sup> Khutbah:

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

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ، فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُمْ  
قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

*“And that those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord, so that they may believe in it, and their hearts may then submit humbly unto Him. And most surely Allah will Guide those who believe onto a straight path” (S22, A54)*

It is not possible for us to progress and to improve without knowledge. Ali(RAA) said, whoever wants this “Dunia” he needs to seek knowledge, whoever wants the “hereafter” he needs to seek knowledge, and whoever wants both he needs to seek knowledge. This is what the early Sahabah learned from The Prophet(SAAWS), and this is how they understood Islam.

It is estimated that the number of ayas in the Quran challenging the mind is nearing one thousand. One such example:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾

***“Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed Signs for those of understanding” (S3, A190)***

And there are many more, continuously asking us to challenge our minds, challenge knowledge and challenge tradition. Islam tells us learn and keep learning, and teach and keep teaching. We cannot go forward without this ideology, and we are very grateful for all those who are involved in the Madrassa, the classes and the library in our Masjid. It takes effort to learn but it takes much more effort to teach.

Allah(SWT) Has honoured those with knowledge to the greatest degrees.

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

***“Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. And Allah is Aware of what you do” (S58, A11)***

Allah tells us that in knowledge is elevation. And Allah also joined in this esteem both, those who believe and those who have knowledge. The status of those who have knowledge is so important, to the extent that Allah(SWT) ranks them among those who bear witness to His Oneness:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا  
إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾

***“Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those who have knowledge; maintaining His creation justly; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.” (S3, A18)***

Islam makes it very clear that knowledge is paramount, and we already mentioned the aya:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

***“Say: Can those be equal, those who have knowledge and those who have not”***

The Prophet(SAAWS) said that when Allah wants to bless a person, he makes him knowledgeable in the “Deen”. The prophet(SAAWS) also said that a single knowledgeable person in “Deen” (Faqueeh), is more of a burden on satan than 1000 worshipers.

The Prophet(SAAWS) once entered the Masjid and found two circles, one reciting the Quran and the other studying the “Deen”. He said in both there is good, but “I am sent as an educator” and he sat with those who were studying. The Prophet(SAAWS) was asked once about the difference between the worshiper and the scholar. The Prophet(SAAWS) replied that the benefit of the scholar onto the worshiper is like my benefit onto the least of you.

The Prophet(SAAWS) used to say as he stood to prayers, let those immediately behind me be those who reflect and those who think.

The benefit of scholars and those of knowledge and those who seek knowledge is so vast that the Prophet(SAAWS) said that Allah(SWT), the angels, the creatures of the heavens and the earth, even the ant and the fish are praying for he who teaches others what is of benefit.

Brothers and sisters, do we want to be among those who Allah(SWT), the angels and all the creatures are praying for. Isn't that an amazing thought? To do so, we need to learn and we need to teach. Each of us can learn and can teach according to their ability. We can teach our children, even if it is a small Surat, or a hadeeth. If we want to change ourselves to be better Muslims, we must first change our perspective on learning and teaching. Some of us may think that by being charitable we are doing enough. Think about this; which is better, to give a poor person a fish, or to teach him how to fish. Learning and teaching of Islam must be a crucial part of our daily activities if we ever want to better ourselves as Muslims. If we truly want to get close to Allah, we need knowledge. I end by this very well known aya:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

***“Truly, those who fear Allah, among His Servants are those who have knowledge” (S35, A28)***

ISA, in the next khutbahs, we will carry on with the theme of change, the mind and the heart.