

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

All Praise be to **اللّٰهُ**.

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

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿٥٧﴾

“Surely Allah and His angels are praying for the Prophet; O you who believe! Call for prayers on him and salute him with worthy salutation. Those who willfully malign Allah and His Messenger: Allah has turned away from them in this World and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment” (S33, A56-7)



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA. The topic for today's khutbah is pertinent to the period of the year we are in now. I think most of us are already getting excited about the prospects of Ramadan, and, as is usual with me, in the excitement, I tend to forget that we are now going through another very important month. The month of Sha'ban. This month is indeed a very special month for Muslims, and ISA I will try to highlight some of the aspects that will make us make full use of it.

What makes Sha'ban special? First of all, Sha'ban is the month leading up to Ramadan, and by that alone it gets a special status in our calendar. It is the month that we should start our preparations for Ramadan. Many of us prepare for Ramadan by getting our invitations sorted out, booking various venues, getting our shopping sorted and so on. There are many traditions that we have been brought up to respect, but I hardly remember anything else from my early days about Sha'ban. Like many other things in our Islamic life, yet another Islamic bargain that goes begging. Sha'ban is the month that sets us up to Ramadan, and the Prophet(SAAWS) was very conscious of this fact and made sure that the Sahabah did not lose out on the benefits of this month.

Before we get into some of these benefits, it is interesting to note some of the important events that took place in this month, which hopefully should highlight its importance in the Islamic calendar.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ

“Indeed We see the turning of your face up to heaven, so We shall surely direct you (in prayers) to a Qibla which is dear to you; turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it” (S2, A144)

When prayers in Islam were first ordained in Makkah, the Muslims took the “Aqssa” masjid as their Qibla and turned in prayers towards it. The first Qibla for the Muslims was turned facing in the direction of the “Aqssa” masjid. There were very good reasons for that. Firstly the “Aqssa” masjid was already the direction where the “people of the book” turned towards in their prayers to Allah. Secondly, and probably much more important, is the way Islam tames our hearts, directs us towards Allah(SWT) and leads us away from hypocrisy.

In “Jahillia” it was customary for the Arabs to glorify the Qa’ba not only because it was the house of Allah, but because it represented their glory and it was where all the idols stood. The Qa’ba to the Arabs and the very early Muslims had more than one significance. Some of that significance was to do with the glory to Allah, but a major significance was to do with their own glory. Therefore, to initially turn away from the Qa’ba in prayers to Allah(SWT) was a very difficult test to the early Muslims. It is as if to ask the early Muslims, what is in your hearts when you pray, the glory of the Qa’ba or the glory of Allah. In

turning away from the Qa'ba, they were turning away and washing away from their hearts the attachments of "Jahilliah", even if that meant turning away from the holy "Qa'ba".

Later on, and once the Muslims established themselves in Madinnah, they continued to pray towards the "Aqssa" masjid for sixteen to seventeen months. The glory of the Qa'ba as understood in the Jahillia has now been washed away, and the Prophet(SAAWS) was yearning to face the "House of Allah" in prayers. During this period, he frequently looked up to the heavens waiting for the sign from Allah(SWT) to do so. The order came down to the Prophet(SAAWS) as he was in Zuhur prayers with the sahabah:

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ

"Indeed We see the turning of your face up to heaven, so We shall surely direct you (in prayers) to a Qibla which is dear to you; turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it" (S2, A144)

This ayah came down after having done two raka's from the Zuhur prayers. The Prophet(SAAWS) and the sahabah were initially facing the "Aqssa" masjid, and during the salat they all turned and faced the Qa'ba. This was a historical prayers. Half of it was to the "Aqssa" and the other half to the "Qa'ba". The link between the two has been established down to splitting this salat between the two. An amazing historical and religious event. This event took place in Sha'ban. It was in the month of Ramadan that Salat was ordained, and it was in Sha'ban that the direction of the Qibla to the "Sacred" masjid was ordained. A very important event in our history. Once the Arabs have cleaned their hearts from the ills of Jahillia, and once they have devoted their hearts to Allah(SWT), it was time for them to turn back to the original house of Allah. The masjid that this event took place in was then called the masjid of the "two Qiblas". This event was one of many that cemented the relationship of the three Divine religions.

The manner in which the direction of the Qibla was established highlights to us a very important concept in Islam. This concept relates to the oneness of Allah in everything. Allah is teaching us that everything that we do must be for His Pleasure and His Glory. That is what defines us as having totally submitted to His Will. That is what defines the state of Islam.

Another event that was reported to have taken place in Sha'ban is the splitting of the moon. Anace Bin Malik reported that the people of Makkah demanded the Prophet(SAAWS) to ask Allah(SWT) to show them a sign. The sign came. The moon was split apart so that the people of Makkah could see it in two parts to the extent that the cave of (Hira') was seen between the two parts of the moon. With such an incredible sign, what did the people of Makkah say? Did they all bow down in belief (or disbelief)? Did the vision of the moon splitting in half convinced them of the glory of Allah? No! Even then, they turned away and said that it was the trickery of Muhammad(SAAWS) and that they were being bewitched. They even asked the travellers who came to Makkah if they saw the same. All those that were asked, travelling from various directions claimed to have seen the moon split in two, yet the people of Makkah would not believe.

أَقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَأَنْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ ﴿١﴾ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ﴿٢﴾

“The Hour (of Judgment) is nearing, and the moon is cleft asunder. But when they see a Sign, they turn away and say; the magic continues” (S54, A1-2)

Brothers and sisters, sometimes we get despondent when we present so much evidence on beauty of Islam and the message of total submission, to both Muslims and non-Muslims. We assume that the message is so clear in its own right that no one can turn away from it. It just doesn't make sense that people would turn away. Well, if we were present there on the day when the moon was split, would we have had any doubt that there is an Almighty God in the heavens. We would have probably fallen down on our hands and knees in prostration with our tears flowing in total awe of this miracle. Yet, even though the disbelievers of Makkah witnessed the event and then had an independent verification from travellers, they still turned away. Was it the mind that said no? Was it common sense that said no? Was it the power of debate that said no? Absolutely not! It was a blinkered heart that said no.

People will not submit to Allah until their hearts are ready. It is our duty as Muslims to give the people around us the reasons to help their hearts soften and turn towards Allah. However, their hearts cannot soften until they witness that the Muslim's heart is indeed a soft one. Never believe anyone who tries to guide you towards Islam by asking you to harden your heart. You can only submit fully when your heart lets you do so. The mind may submit but on conditions. When the heart submits, it is unconditional. That is Islam. It is an unconditional submission to Allah(SWT), to our maker, to our perfecter and to our redeemer.

A third occurrence in the month of Sha'ban is the revelation of the aya that we mention at the end of each Jum'a khutbah from surat Al-Ahzab:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

“Surely Allah and

His angels are praying for the Prophet; O you who believe! Call for prayers on him and salute him with worthy salutation” (S33, A56)

Brothers and sisters, we have had this issue in the past. When the mention of the Prophet is made, we, the Muslims are asked to say “SAAWS”. This is the love and respect that we hold in our hearts for the

Prophet(SAAWS). Sometimes we forget or we are too lazy to do so. If we only knew the value of saying “SAAWS”.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said; “whoever prays for me once, Allah will pray for him tenfold”. And in another hadeeth, Abdullah bin Amrou said; “whoever prays for the Prophet once, Allah and His angels will pray for him seventyfold”.

Are we aware that the prayers from Allah(SWT) on us is a mercy for us; are we aware that the prayers from the angels on us is intercession and asking for forgiveness, and are we aware that the prayers from the believers is supplication and praise to Allah.

Abdullah Bin Massoud reported that the Prophet(SAAWS) said; “the most deserving of me on the day of judgement are those who pray for me the most”. Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet(SAAWS) said: “praying for me is a light on the ‘Sirat’”. This relates to the path over the ‘Sirat’ on the day of judgement. Those who have the light will pass unharmed. May Allah grant us this light.

“Allahumma Salli wa Sallem wa Barek Alla Sayidina Muhammad wa alla A’lihi wa Sahbihi Ajma’een”

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

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

A few announcements before we continue. Firstly, and it is with deep sorrow that I inform you of the death of the father of a member of our Muslim community. We are blessed to have such a diverse Muslim community in Altrincham, and our brother, Dr Cheded is from Algeria. We ask Allah(SWT) for his mercies and forgiveness for our deceased. We pray for his forgiveness from the torment of the grave, and from the torment of the day of Hashr, and from torment of the day of judgement. We ask Allah to bless his family with a strong “Sabr” and a strong “Iman”.

Next announcement is to confirm that ISA the first day of Ramadan will be on the 1st of September. Altrincham Muslim Association has agreed to abide by the European Council of Fiqh and Science. The council has declared that for this year the first day of Ramadan will be when the new moon will be borne and visible in Makkah after Maghrib on the 31st of August. ISA we will start the first Taraweeh prayers on the 31st August which will be the Sunday. It is also announced that Ramadan will be thirty days this year and the 1st day of Shawal, Eid Al Fitr will be on Wednesday the 1st of October ISA. I know that this does not sound familiar to our ears as we have routinely waited for a declaration on the night. Praise be to Allah, it seems that the Muslim Ummah is gradually moving towards matching the science of astronomy and of Fiqh. A word of warning, all countries West of Makkah will have to fast with this timetable. However, Countries to the East of Makkah may end up fasting one day later as the moon may

not be visible for them yet. ISA the Ramadan timetable is on the AMA website and printed copies will soon be available if not already here.

Back to the benefits of Sha'ban. The Prophet(SAAWS) was known to fast most of Sha'ban. Aisha(RAA) said that the Prophet(SAAWS) would only complete the fasting of the month of Ramadan and would fast the most of Sha'ban. It was one the most loved of the months to the Prophet(SAAWS). She also narrated that the Prophet(SAAWS) said; "Sha'ban is my month, and Ramadan is the month for Allah. Sha'ban cleanses and Ramadan forgives".

It is recommended that the Muslim starts preparing for Ramadan with fasting during the month of Sha'ban. We should also take time to do Zikr and to do salat for the Prophet(SAAWS).

Finally, we mentioned in a previous khutbah the benefits of the night of the middle of Sha'ban, the night of forgiveness. This month it will be ISA next Thursday the 14th. Some would recommend to fast this day but most agree on spending the night in prayers and supplication to Allah.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said that Allah(SWT) descends on this night to the heavens of this world and grants forgiveness to a great number of people. (The metaphor given for the vast number of those forgiven was that it is more than the hairs on the sheep of the tribe of Kalb).

On one night, Aisha(RAA) witnessed the Prophet(SAAWS) prostrating and he kept in that position so long that she was worried that his soul may have been claimed. She went over to him and moved his index finger, and he moved it, so she returned back. When he finished his prostration, he asked her was she aware which night that was. She said Allah and his Messenger know best. He replied:"This is the night of the middle of Sha'ban. Allah will look at the people and will grant forgiveness for those seeking forgiveness, and will grant mercy for those seeking mercy and will leave those who have hatred in their hearts as they are".

Another supplication that is favoured on that night is: *O Allah we ask refuge in your pleasure from your anger. We ask refuge in your forgiveness from your punishment. We ask refuge in you from you. We can never praise you as you have praised yourself.*

The only worry brothers and sisters is that in a hadeeth, the Prophet(SAAWS) has warned us that certain type of people will not gain the favour of Allah's mercy and forgiveness. These include those who associate with Allah, those who have unresolved quarrels, those who abandon their kin, those who are arrogant, those who disobey their parents and those who continuously drink alcohol.

We ask Allah for his forgiveness in this blessed month. We ask Allah to help us to worship him as He should be worshiped and we ask Allah to grant us the "Qiyam" of this blessed night.

Brothers and sisters, I am made aware that the night of the middle of Sha'ban may have gained a level of importance far greater than what is intended. It needs to be stressed that many of the traditions relating to the night of the middle of Sha'ban are not established "Sunnah" and many of the hadeeth relating to it are weak {Da'eef} or fabricated {Maudou'}. Most of what we have is established on tradition which has gained acceptance and popularity.