

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَ نَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَ نَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ
شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ
لَهُ، وَ مَنْ يُضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ. وَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَ أَشْهَدُ 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 within ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one can lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leaves misguided, no one has the power to 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

وَأَنْتَقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

“And guard yourselves from the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every soul shall be paid what it has earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly” (S2, A281)



رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

"Our Lord: Let not our hearts deviate now that you have guided us, and grant us mercy from you; for you are the grantor of bounties without measure" (Al-Imran, 3:8)

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ

"Our Lord: You will gather all people to a day of which there is no doubt: for Allah does not fail His promise" (Al-Imran, 3:9)

Dear brothers and sisters, ASA. The topic for today's khutbah has been prompted by the reminder that brother Haitham gave us this weekend. His reminder was about mercy. He asked a very pertinent question: why is it that the Ummah of Islam, the Ummah of the religion of mercy, has very little mercy in the hearts of its people? We always remind ourselves of this beautiful ayah in Surat Al-Anbiya':

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"And We have sent you not, but as a mercy to all creatures" (Al-Anbiya', 21:107)

We, the Muslims, make abundant claims about our beautiful religion, about the beautiful names of Allah, about what Islam has to offer and yet, when we look at ourselves and at Muslims in general, we do not seem to have a lot of mercy on offer. These comments by brother Haitham made me ask: why should this be the case and where does the problem lie?

We know that the problem does not lie with Islam. Allah tells us in the Holy Quran that our religion has been perfected for us:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your way of life" (Al-Ma'ida, 5:3)

If the problem does not lie with the “Deen” then it can only lie with the follower. Knowing what Islam has to offer, why is it that Muslims in this day and age have very little to offer. A scholar recently gave the expression that the Muslims are at the tail end of civilization. Muslim nations are at the begging end of knowledge, science, industry and so on. So why is it that this is the case, and what does Ramadan has to do with it?

In a famous hadeeth about what will become of the nation of Islam, and how other nations will come upon us like the predators on their pray, the Prophet(SAAWS) was asked, was it because our numbers will be small. The Sahabah thought that our predicted predicament must surely be because will be very small in number. The Prophet(SAAWS) said “no”, indeed we will be plenty, but we are about to be struck by “Wahn”. The Prophet(SAAWS) was asked: what is “Wahn”; he replied (and that is where many scholars believe that the real problem lies with Muslims): “Wahn” is the love of this “Dunia” and the hatred of death. The more one looks at oneself, at our local community, at the wider Muslim community, we do come to realise that like most other nations, we are in deep love with this “Dunia”.

Can this be the reason? Can it be that despite our unyielding belief in the Hereafter, we are still heavily engrossed in the matters of this “Dunia”? We pray, we fast, we visit Makkah and we give in charity, yet we cannot stop falling in love with this “Dunia” and I am no exception. Has our Islam become no more than a set of rituals and ceremonies with no tangible end result? It seems that we know “worship” for “worship sake”. We fast to accomplish the fast and we pray to accomplish the prayers, but we do not gain beyond that. The love of this “Dunia” is so overpowering that our acts of worship and our contact with Allah(SWT) are not enough to help us change. This is where the following two hadeeths have a significant meaning for us all. A meaning that we need to take on board very seriously if we want to go down the path of change: The Prophet(SAAWS) said in a familiar hadeeth to us all:

☆ إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ ☆ مَالِك

“For I was sent to complete (within you) the best of morals”. Narrated by Malik

The Prophet(SAAWS) is telling us very clearly that the statement of his mission is to reform character. The mission of Islam is to reform character. If we are not achieving reform, then we are not fulfilling the mission of our beloved Prophet(SAAWS).

The next hadeeth is equally familiar to us all. We hear it every Ramadan, but for today, we need to grasp its meaning very clearly:

☆ من لم يدع قول الزور، والعمل به، فليس لله حاجة في أن يدع طعامه
وشربه ☆ البخارى

"The one who does not stop lying and giving false witness Allah has no need for him to fast from food and water" In Saheeh Bukhari.

Many times we have passed by this hadeeth and probably failed to stop to think what the implications are. The term, قول الزور، والعمل به, takes into account not just lying and giving false witness, but anything and everything to do with being dishonest. Lying, cheating, deceiving and so on. When one looks at this hadeeth closer, the implications are much wider. If you are an employee and you do not do your work properly in Ramadan, you are in this category. If you promise your parents to study and you don't, you are in this category. If you do not respect copy right laws you are in this category, and the list is endless, but it involves every aspect of our daily living where there is a possibility of being dishonest. The implications of this hadeeth are huge especially in Ramadan. If are not prepared to change in Ramadan then when can we change. Fasting is the main act of worship that develops within us the concept that Allah(SWT) is with us and watching us. We need to cultivate this concept within us and we need to understand this hadeeth very well.

Are we getting the picture? The Prophet(SAAWS) tells us: *For I was sent to complete (within you) the best of morals*, and also tells us: *The one who does not stop lying and giving false witness Allah has no need for him to fast from food and water*. So let us now ask the obvious question: which is more important in Islam, fasting from food and drink, or fasting from being dishonest in any shape or form? Can we now see where these hadeeths are taking us? Can we also see why Ramadan is so important?

Fasting is a special act of worship. Allah tells us that fasting is for Him and the level of reward is in His hands. Yet this hadeeth states that should one fast but remains dishonest, then he or she might as well eat and drink. For a Muslim to get a grasp of the ills of his behaviour and to make a conscious effort to better this behaviour is the ultimate act of worship.

Some scholars have gone as far as stating that Ramadan is the training camp for change and this is why this hadeeth is so important for us. Ramadan is a training camp for us to change our character. It is a training camp for us to improve our conduct and behaviour. If we exit Ramadan just as we have entered it, we have missed yet another golden opportunity. We would have endured all the thirst, the hunger and the fatigue for little. Brothers and sisters, if we ever want to be the Ummah of mercy, it will never happen by fasting from food and drink alone. This will not get us anywhere. We must change our mindset and we must change our behaviour. If we do not want to change, we really have to ask ourselves: why am I fasting and who am I kidding?

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفرُ الله لي و لكم

2nd Khutbah:

الحمدُ لله ثم الحمد لله . الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره ، ونعوذُ بالله من شرور
أنفسنا وسَيِّئَات أعمالنا . أما بعد :

In many Muslim societies, Ramadan has now become the month of eating and not the month of fasting. In some Muslim countries, it is estimated that twice as much food is consumed during Ramadan than in any other month. People sleep the day and eat the night. Work ethics are diminished. Schools are closed. Towards the end of Ramadan, some people spend their time in the mosque when they have other daily commitments on the excuse that they are in worship.

The whole concept of worship in Islam has changed. Worship in Islam has been transformed to mere customs. One of the problems is that Muslims do actually get a great deal of self satisfaction from their acts of worship without realising that beyond the acts of worship they have not accomplished anything else. They have fallen into the trap of glorifying for themselves the fact that they worship even though there is little tangible betterment in their character. Brothers and sisters, this is not Islam. Islam is not about fasting all day and then having big Iftarries every night and inviting friends to huge spreads to fill the stomachs and to congratulate ourselves that we have endured the hunger and thirst.

The message of today's khutbah brothers and sisters is that Ramadan is not just about fasting but it is about reforming our character. As we have our children with us here today, this message is even more relevant. What sort of Islam are we teaching our children? Is it the Islam of don't eat or drink. Watch the minutes closely and then have big Iftarries and gatherings. Or is it about learning the patience and endurance to reform our characters and learning that Allah(SWT) is

ever watching over us. Brothers and sisters, since Ramadan is the month of the family, be fully aware that what we are doing now is being etched in the character of our children.

To understand the concept of “character reform” in Islam, let us look at one of the important moments in the Seerah of our beautiful religion. Let us stop at that moment when the uncle of the Prophet(SAAWS), Ja’far Ibn Abi Taleb (RAA), stood in the court of the Abyssinian king, An-Najashi. Ja’far Ibn Abi Taleb wanted to define the impact of Islam on the character and the conduct of the early believers. This is what he said:

كُنَّا قَوْمًا أَهْلَ جَاهِلِيَّةٍ ، نَعْبُدُ الْأَصْنَامَ ، وَنَأْكُلُ الْمَيَّةَ ، وَنَقَطُّعُ الْأَرْحَامَ ،
وَ نُسِيءُ الْجَوَارِ ، وَيَأْكُلُ الْقَوِيُّ مِنَّا الضَّعِيفَ

“We were a people of ignorance. We **worshipped** idols, we ate the meat of a dead animal, we severed kinship ties, we ill-treated the neighbour and the strong amongst us devoured the weak.”

People in the era of Jahiliya did acts of “worship”, but their worship was not designed to reform behaviour and character.

كُنَّا كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا مِنَّا ، نَعْرِفُ نَسَبَهُ وَصِدْقَهُ وَأَمَانَتَهُ وَعِفَافَهُ

“This was our case until a messenger from amongst us was sent to us by Allah(SWT). We knew his ancestry, his truthfulness, his faithfulness and his chastity.”

فَدَعَانَا إِلَى أَنْ نَخْلَعَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْبُدُ نَحْنُ وَأَبَاؤُنَا مِنَ الْجِجَارَةِ وَالْأَوْثَانِ

“He invited us to forsake all that we and our fathers have worshiped of stones and idols.”

وَأَمَرَنَا: بِصِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ ، وَأَدَاءِ الْأَمَانَةِ ، وَصِلَةِ الرَّجْمِ ، وَالْكَفِّ عَنِ الْمَحَارِمِ
وَالدِّمَاءِ ، وَنَهَانَا عَنِ الْفَوَاحِشِ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ، وَعَنِ شَهَادَةِ الزُّورِ ،
وَأَكْلِ مَالِ الْيَتِيمِ ، وَقَذْفِ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ،

He ordered us to tell the truth, pay the trusts back to their owners and to preserve kinship ties. He prohibited us from transgression and blood honours, from drawing near to obscenities both open and discrete, from giving false witness, from drawing near the wealth of the orphan and from slandering the chaste believing women.

And Ja'far Ibn Abi Taleb finished by saying: He ordered us to pray, give in charity and fast. We believed him and followed him. We applied what we were ordered and we abandoned what we were prohibited.

Brothers and sisters, it was this change in character that transformed a group of Arabian Idol worshipers into world leaders in less than one generation. Brothers and sisters, if we ever want our Ummah to stop being at the tail end of civilization, we must get the love of this “Dunia” out of our hearts and we must endure the reform of our character and this starts with Ramadan.

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

“O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed to you as it has been prescribed to those before you so that you may attain Taqwa” (Al-Baqara, 2:183)

A scholar was presenting this ayah in his talk and being cheeky he followed by saying that the Quran did not state: So that you may attain hunger, so that you may attain thirst, so that you may attain big Iftarries, so that you may attain good rest in the day. Fasting is to attain “Taqwa” and we will not attain “Taqwa” if we do not change our behaviour.

On a good point, it is always important for us to remember and for us to remind our children that despite all the negativity regarding Muslims, the Muslim Ummah remains the Ummah of: لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
In times where all sorts of Gods are being followed, we remain the Ummah of “Tawheed” and we remain the Ummah that testifies to Allah’s command:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

“And they have not been commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere in devotion to Him and True in faith” (Al-Bayyina, 98:5)

Let us also remember that Ramadan is the month of forgiveness and the month of supplication to Allah(SWT) and getting closer to Him.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“And when My servants ask you about Me, I am indeed close (to them): I answer the prayer of the one who calls on Me: So let them answer to My call, and believe in Me: That they may achieve guidance” (Al-Baqara, S2:186)

Let us ask Allah(SWT) for forgiveness of our sins, for forgiveness of our parents and our closest kins. Let us ask Allah(SWT) to guide us on the path of reform. Let us ask Allah(SWT) to make this “Deen” the most beautiful thing to our hearts and help us to abandon all matters of falsehoods, “Ameen”.