

Muharram- the Month of God (Lessons and reminders)

Friday Reminder (17th January 2008) delivered by Shaykh Muhammad Taher

DISCLAIMER: This reminder was originally delivered in Arabic. Any meanings lost in translation are not to be attributed to the speaker as reminders are translated by volunteers. The mosque has no official translator and volunteers often have no formal qualifications to translate on the day. Please forgive any errors as they are from our human weakness and any right guidance is from God.

“God has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity and to teach them the scripture and wisdom- before that they were clearly astray” (Surah Imran: 164)

And He SWT (Glory be to Him) mentioned the generations that come after the generation of the companions:

“..- To them and to others yet to join them. He is the Almighty, the Wise” (Surah Jumu’ah: 3)

O Muslims- To know that God has sent us the messenger Muhammad is a great gift for us; a blessing, which we as humans cannot match. God, through His bounty, greatness and generosity sent us the best and most noble of creation and distinguished us by sending us the last of the messengers peace be upon him (pbuh).

Through the prophet, God Almighty purified and elevated us as humans, cleansed our hearts and souls, made them sincere to Him. He made us see the way, purified our homes, lives, our society with His Divine law or Shari’ah (sources of which are Qur’an and Sunnah). Through His pure message, he purified our intellects from the impurity and delusion of associating partners with God, the One, and freed us from the constraints of following whims and falsehood. “A messenger has come to you from among yourselves, your suffering distresses him; he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers” (Surah Tauba 9: 128)

Reflect upon the description that Ja’far Ibn Abi Talib gave of the daily lives of the people before Muhammad (pbuh) was sent as a Prophet and then describing how they had changed after his prophet-hood and the revelation of Islam:

"O King, we were a people in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols and eating the flesh of dead animals, committing all sorts of shameful deeds, breaking the ties of kinship, treating guests badly and the strong among us exploited the weak. We remained in this state until God sent us a Prophet, one of our own people whose lineage, truthfulness, trustworthiness and integrity were well-known to us. He called us to worship God alone and to renounce the stones and the idols which we and our ancestors used to worship besides God. He commanded us to speak the truth, to honour our promises, to be kind to our relations, to be helpful to our neighbours, to cease all forbidden arts, to abstain from bloodshed, to avoid obscenities and false witness, not to appropriate an orphan's property nor slander chaste Women. He ordered us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, to uphold Prayer, to give in charity and fast in the month of Ramadan."

What a beautiful picture - comparing truth with a life of falsehood, comparing darkness with light, bad with good...

How much are we in need today of understanding the reality of Islam, as the companions of the blessed Prophet (pbuh) did? How much are we in need of spreading and proving that this message of Islam is indeed a beautiful one, just as we heard from Ja'far, the son of Abu Talib with the Christian King Najashi a of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) in those days.

O Muslims it is important that we understand that Islam is a religion dealing with reality, it has views pertaining to lifestyle, a Divine Shari'ah for society, a complete, positive, real and exemplary way of life for humanity and for humanity to be truly happy people.

What have we put forward to the world community today? Nations that went before us provided much in a variety of spheres: in technology, in literature, in the Arts and Sciences etc. Our exclusive gift to the global community is this great message, this beautiful and unique way of life that God Almighty blessed humanity with. Today, more than ever, people are in need for this message, but it requires us to truly understand, to beautify our understanding, implementation in our actions and our calling to others in the best way.

“Who speaks better than the one who calls people to God?”(Surah Fussilat: 33)

“(Prophet) call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way...” (Surah Nahl: 125)

“This is my way, based on clear evidence, I and all who follow me, call (people) to God”
(Surah Yusuf: 108)

Peace and blessings be upon him who was a blessing, a beautiful fragrance for us in our lives!

Second Reminder

It is a mercy from God the Most Generous that He has given us certain occasions, special times to seek out His repentance and be forgiven for previous sins-we are now in the month of Muharram, known as the month of God. The Prophet (pbuh) said:

“The best time for fasting after the fasts of the month of Ramadan is the month of God, Muharram...”

When asked about fasting the day of Ashura, 10th Muharram, he replied:

“It wipes out the sins of the previous year” and in another narration he said: “I hope that God makes (fasting the day of Ashura) expiation for the sins of the past year.”

In this month, we remember the start of the Hijrah calendar and the event of the hijrah itself i.e. when the migration of the Prophet took place and a new phase of calling to Islam and establishing the first city took place. We also recall the victory of another Prophet amongst the Prophets- the story of Moses (Musa) pbuh when, on the tenth of this month of Muharram, Moses, the one close to God, gained victory over Pharaoh, the one the devil had befriended so well. Praise and thanks be to

God “Who made the word of the unbelievers the lowest and elevated the words of God and God is the Great, the Most Wise”

O Muslims- there are many lessons of Ashura that we may benefit from. (The Imam mentions 7):

1. It was a historical event marking the conflict between faith and disbelief. So great an event that even in the people of ignorance, (in Jahiliyya) and the people of the Book would fast on this day as narrated by Aisha in Sahih Bukhari and Muslim: “The Quraysh would fast on the day of Ashura in the period of ignorance (i.e. pre-prophethood)”
2. It is a time where people of faith can unite, regardless of their lineage, race or language just as Prophet Moses united with those that followed him and were believers. This feeling of happiness at the victory God gave them should include all believers.
3. In Medinah, on seeing the Children of Israel commemorating this event, the Prophet (pbuh) said: “I am closer to Moses than they are.” So fasting the day of Ashura does highlight that prophets are closer to each other than the rest of people. This closeness is because they are united in the same religion and same message which is Islam.
4. Fasting the day of Ashura points to the fact that we as a community (an Ummah) are closer to the Prophets than the people that rejected them. This is a distinguishing feature of our community (an Ummah) and they will be witnesses for the message being spread by the Prophets on the Day of Judgement.
5. The day of Ashura is a general reminder for the people on earth of the help God gives to those who are close to Him. This revitalises the hearts of every seeker of God’s help with hope to continue employing the means to receive it every year.
6. Fasting on the day of Ashura is an indication or a proof of the greatness of God’s generosity SWT because for this small action he gives you such a great reward. Fasting one day with a true intention and sincerity for God wipes the sins of an entire year!
7. Regarding Ashura, the prophet (pbuh) said: “if I lived to the next year I will fast the ninth day as well.” For this reason, people of knowledge said fast the ninth day and the tenth day together, or the tenth day alone, or the ninth, tenth and eleventh; especially if the people are confused about the starting of the lunar month.