

The Al Islam eGazette

Friday, October 5th, 2007

www.alislam.org

SO SAID THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Pleasure and gratification in Salat

“What is Salat? This is a special worship. It is a pity that people regard it as a levy from the Kings. The ignorant don’t understand what need God Almighty has for this?” His perfection has no need for man to engage in prayer and devotion. It only benefits man. With this method he is able to achieve his goal.

It saddens me to see that there is no love for worship, righteousness and devotion in the present times. The cause of this is the negative effect of living a life of rituals only. The love of God is getting cold and his worship has no lure which it deserves. There is nothing in this world which God has not blessed with some charm and appeal. A sick person is unable to enjoy the best of the food and considers it tasteless or even bitter. Those who do not find pleasure and gratification in the worship of God should worry about their own illness, as I have just pointed out that God has not created anything in this world without some pleasure in it. God Almighty has created human beings for His worship then how could it be that there is no pleasure in this worship for them? Indeed there is pleasure and joy in it but there has to be someone to experience it. Allah the Almighty says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have not created the jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.”
(Al Dhariyat 51:57)

Now if the humans were created only for worship then it is necessary that this worship should be filled with joy of the highest order. We can understand this in our daily living. All

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food and grain and other edibles are created for the humans: Does he not find them delicious and satisfying? Does he not have a tongue in his mouth to appreciate the taste? Does he not enjoy looking at beautiful things whether they are plants, stones, animals or humans? Do his ears not enjoy the melodious voices? Then do we need further argument to show that worship should have joy in it?

Allah the Almighty says that He has created attraction between a man and a woman. There is no compulsion in it. He has placed pleasure in it. If procreation was the only goal, then it could not have been met. The self-respect of man and woman could not have allowed them to conjugate in their nakedness. But there is joy and pleasure in it for them. This joy and pleasure has risen to such a level that some unwise people forget about procreation and are concerned with enjoyment only. The higher cause of God Almighty was procreation for which a relationship was created between a man and a woman and a joy and a pleasure was placed in this relationship, which has become the ultimate goal for the ignorant.

Therefore, appreciate that worship is not a load or levy. It also has a joy and a satisfaction in it. This joy and satisfaction exceeds all other pleasures in the world. There is joy in the relationship of man and woman but only those appreciate it who have the ability and keep their faculties in good shape. An impotent and incapable person cannot experience it. As a sick person is deprived of the taste in the best of the foods similarly unfortunate is he who does not find pleasure in worship.

The relationship of a man and a woman is transient.



URGENT Appeal for Africa Flood Relief Fund

www.HumanityFirst.org and www.HumanityFirst.ca

Assalam o alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuhu

With the permission of Syedna Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (aa), Humanity First is making an urgent appeal for Africa Flood Relief Fund to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of disaster.

During the last days of the blessed and holy month of Ramadhan, you are requested to donate generously to help our suffering African brethren. Holy Prophet (sa) was the most generous of men. He was at his most bountiful during Ramadhan when Gabriel visited him every night and recited the Quran to him. During this period the bounty of the Holy Prophet (sa) waxed faster than the rain-bearing breeze . (Bokhari & Muslim)

The early onset of seasonal rains in Africa has caused severe flooding affecting 20 countries in a belt across central Africa from Senegal to Kenya. Reports confirm at least 270 dead and 600,000 homeless. Millions more face starvation and disease after catastrophic damage to local crops and clean water following the heaviest rains in three decades. The greatest danger currently looming over is shortage of food and drinking water along with the threat of outbreak of waterborne diseases and malaria.

Humanity First aims to provide food, water and basic rations to the displaced people, particularly the vulnerable children. The Humanity First team is already present in most of these countries and has already responded to requests for help in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Togo and Benin. Funds are required urgently to accelerate the distribution of essential supplies.

Volunteers of Humanity First are actively working to assist in this desperate situation. The victims are in urgent need of food, fresh water and medical supplies that are running dangerously low.

Humanity First is seeking generous contributions to continue with its relief efforts. Donations can be made online at www.humanityfirst.org (USA and others) www.humanityfirst.ca (Canada) or through cheques written to Humanity First. You may contact your local secretary finance or Sadr Jama'at.

For further information please visit Humanity First websites:

www.HumanityFirst.org and www.HumanityFirst.ca

My assertion is that the real and the lasting relationship, full of joy, is between man and God Almighty. I really get anxious and this trepidation bears on my soul that if a person does not enjoy his food, he finds a doctor, makes pleas and petitions, spends money, and strives hard to experience that joy. An incapable person who cannot get pleasure from his wife sometimes considers suicide in desperation and many die. But Alas! That sick of heart, that incapable person who finds no joy in worship: Why does he not struggle and why does he not worry? For the pleasures of this world, one does so much but for the everlasting and genuine pleasures he has no thirst and no yearning. How unfortunate is he and how deprived! He seeks and finds the cures for the temporary and transient pleasures. How is it possible that there are no cures for finding the permanent and everlasting pleasures? Indeed there are! In seeking the right path, determined and firm feet are required. In the Holy Quran Allah the Almighty has mentioned the similitude of women for the righteous. There is profoundness and mystery in it. Those who believed are compared with *Aasiya* and *Maryam* meaning the God Almighty brings forth believers from among the idolaters. There is profoundness and depth in describing the example of the women. As there is a relationship between a man and a woman, similarly there is a relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped. If a man and a woman are friendly and love each other then it is a useful and a blessed pair. Otherwise the order in the home is disrupted. Success cannot be achieved. Men desecrate themselves at other places and bring home myriad of diseases. They are stricken with syphilis and suffer in this world. If they are fertile this is passed down many generations. By the same token, the woman also acts shamelessly and even after dishonoring herself cannot get satisfaction. By separating from this marital union, only disaster and mischief occurs. Similarly, a person who separates from the spiritual union becomes sick and a leper. He actually suffers worse than the worldly union. **As there is pleasure in the union of a man and a woman for the sake of existence, similarly for the everlasting**

Two Doctors Martyred in Pakistan

Karachi, Pakistan: Over the past week two Ahmadi Specialist Doctors were martyred only for their faith by anti-Ahmadiyya terrorists. **Dr. Hameedullah, a Dental Surgeon** was kidnapped on 20th September when he was returning home from his clinic. Two days later his body was recovered from bushes in a deserted place. Dr. Hameed Ullah had devoted his life (Waqf) in the time of Hadhrat Khalifa tul Masih III (may Allah have mercy on him) and had served in West Africa for many years.

Dr. Mubashir Ahmad, Professor of Pathology was gunned down by two hooded terrorists riding a motor-cycle on 26th September. He was rushed to Hospital where he passed away after a few minutes.

In his Friday Sermon on 28th September, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V^{aa} prayed that may Allah grant lofty stations in Paradise to the both and grant the bereaved families steadfastness and patience. Huzur led the funeral prayers in absentia for both after Jumma prayer.

existence there is pleasure in the union of the worshipper and the worshipped. The saints believe that whoever gets this joy prefers it over all other joys. If he gets this even only once in the entire life time he would give up all for this. The trouble is that a lot of people in this world have not understood this mystery and their *Salat* is mere head banging. It is for them a great difficulty and constriction, merely a pretense, observance of a necessary routine.

I am further troubled by the observation that some perform *Salat* so they may be considered authentic and honorable in the world. And they accomplish this to some degree with their *Salat* and are considered righteous. Then, why they are not consumed by the grief that when their false pretense and superficial *Salat* can get them this position, why they would not receive honor and glory by becoming a true worshipper.

Therefore I believe that people are neglectful and ignorant in observing *Salat* because they are oblivious of the joy and pleasure that Allah the Almighty has placed in it. This is a very important cause of this neglect. This is worse in towns and villages. Not even one or two out of a hundred bow their heads before their Lord with true love and commitment. The question arises, why they are not aware of this joy and why they have never experienced it. In other Faiths there are no such obligations.

Sometimes it happens that people are busy in their work and the person calls out *Adhan*. They don't want to hear it as if their hearts ache. These people are pitiful. Some here have their shops right below the mosque but they never stand in prayers.

So I say that one should pray to Allah the Almighty with passion and zeal that He blesses us with the joy of worship and *Salat*, as He has given us enjoyable flavor in fruits and other edible things. One remembers what he eats. If one looks at a beauty with joy, he remembers it well. If one looks at an ugly and repulsive face with fear he can imagine the entire caricature. But if there is no emotional connection nothing is remembered. Similarly *Salat* appears to be a levy to those who don't observe it. One has to get up early in the morning in winter and perform ablution, leave behind the sweet sleep and many other comforts and then perform it. The truth is that he is disinterested. He cannot understand the joy and

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pleasure in the *Salat*. Then how can he experience it?

I see when an alcoholic and an addict does not get enough pleasure he continues to drink until he gets a sort of satisfaction. A wise and sharp person can learn from this. He can be persistent in his *Salat* until he achieves satisfaction. As an alcoholic's goal is to achieve the pleasure, which he has in mind, similarly, in *Salat* all faculties of mind should be concentrated towards its pleasure. **With sincerity and passion at least like the anguish and painful expectation of an alcoholic, raise a prayer! Then I tell you and again I affirm to you the truth on oath that the pleasure will eventually be realized.** Also, during *Salat* those goals which could be achieved should be kept in mind. *Ihsan* should be before ones eyes.

The Holy Quran says in Sura Hud 11:115 الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ 'Good deeds melt away the bad ones.' So keeping these good deeds and pleasures in mind one should pray that he may be blessed with the *Salat* of the *Truthful* and the *Righteous*. When it is said الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ it means good deeds or *Salat* repels bad deeds or do away with evil. At another place it is said that *Salat* protects against manifest sins and bad deeds and yet we see people committing sins even after observing *Salat*. The reason behind this is that they perform their *Salat* only as a habit or ritual and not with deep righteousness. Their soul is life less. Allah does not consider it a righteous action (*Hasanat*). Here word *Hasanat* is used and not the word *Salat* although they have same meaning. This is to highlight the inherent beauty and splendor of *Salat*

and that it repels sins. Truth lies at its root and it has the capacity for everlasting grace. Such a prayer surely repels sins. *Salat* is not merely a physical exercise. The heart and soul of *Salat* is the supplication that has an inherent pleasure and joy in it. Various elements of *Salat* are in fact a template of spiritual exercise. One has to stand before God Almighty and this is among the ways of the servants. The second part of *Ruku* is an expression of obedience. How much he would bow in obedience! *Sajda* (Prostration) represents the complete submission with great humility and shows negation of self which is the ultimate goal of worship. These are the routines that God Almighty has appointed by way of reminder. These have been appointed to reward the inner self and for the affirmation of the inner self an outward routine has been prescribed. Now if the performance of the outward routine (which is a reflection of the inner routine) is merely superficial and one tries to get rid of it as a heavy burden then imagine what pleasure or joy can be experienced? And unless this joy and pleasure is experienced how would the reality dawn? And this would happen when the soul bows before the throne of the Almighty with humility and persistence and what flows from the tongue should also be spoken by the soul. Then a joy, a light and a satisfaction is obtained!"

Malfoozat volume 3 of 5, pages 25-29. Translated by Lutf Ur Rehman MD.

Hadith

Narrated by Hadhrat 'Aishara :

The Prophet^{sa} used to practice Itikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan till he died and then his wives used to practice Itikaf after him. (Bukhari)

Laylatul Qadr (Night of Decree/Power)

By Adam Walker, UK.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ
 وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ
 لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ
 تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ
 سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Surely, We sent it down during the Night of Decree. And what shall make thee know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descend angels and the Spirit by the command of their Lord with Divine decree concerning every matter. It is all peace till the rising of the dawn. [97:1-6]

Laylatul Qadar is a night of great blessing in which Allah (swt) showers His Mercy upon those of His believers whom sincerely and faithfully love and obey His Will. It is a night which is commonly associated with the revelation of the Holy Qur'an but also has other meanings which are all deeply rooted in Allah's attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*.

From the above verses of the Holy Qur'an (97:1-6) we are made to understand that Laylatul Qadr literally means the 'Night of Decree/Power'. It is a night which is of greater value than a thousand months (1000 being the highest numerical figure in Arabic) and in which the angels descend upon the Earth and help to breath a new life into mankind. We also know from another place in the Holy Qur'an (44:4)

that it is a 'Blessed Night', (لَيْلَةٌ مُّبَارَكَةٌ)

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} writes in his Tafsir al-Kabir that the words 'Therein descend angels and the Spirit' فِيهَا تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ signify that,

"...the Angels of God descend to meet and satisfy every religious need and to remove all obstacles and impediments from the way of the expansion and spread of the new Message." (Tafsir al-Kabir, Pg.2859, Ft.4786)

In the context of Surah al-Qadr we find that Allah (swt) is referring to the most blessed of nights in which the Holy Qur'an was revealed to Hadhrat Khatamul Anbiyaa^{sa} and he recited those blessed verses that will forever live in the hearts of all believers:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ - خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ
 اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ - الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ
 عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Proclaim thou in the name of thy Lord Who created, Created man from a clot of blood. Proclaim! and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous; Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he knew not. [96:2-6]

In this context Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} has explained that the words 'one thousand months' شَهْرٍ أَلْفٍ have several meanings two of which are that:

1. as Laylatul Qadr is better than a countless number of nights this signifies that the period of the Holy Prophet^{sa} is greater than all other periods combined;
2. the rich content and value of the Holy Qur'an is greater in worth than

the combined research and efforts of all learned men. This definition is derived from the word Months *شَهْرٍ* which can also mean learned men.

Laylatul Qadr also has a wider understanding and can signify that when mankind reaches a point of darkness and is in need of reform Allah (swt) answers their need by sending a new reformer. In relation to this a period of 1000 months roughly amounts to a century and can thus be linked to the saying of the Holy Prophet^{sa}:

'Verily God will continue for ever to raise for this Ummat in the beginning of every century one who Will restore for it its faith.' (Abu Dawud, Kitabul Fitān)

Allah (swt) is described in the Holy Qur'an as the Ever Merciful *الرحيم* and such a verse personifies the magnificence of Allah's infinite Mercy which is safeguarded for the remainder of mankind's existence. Further expanding on this the Promised Messiah^{as} writes,

“ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ This Night, according to its common interpretation, is a Blessed Night, but some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that the condition of the darkness of the world is also a Night of Decree on account of its hidden qualities. In that condition of darkness, sincerity and steadfastness, and piety and worship, have great value in the estimation of God. It was because of that condition of darkness which at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him] had arrived at its climax and demanded the descent of a Grand Light, that observing this dark condition and having mercy on the creatures afflicted with darkness, there was an upsurge in the attribute of Rahmaniyyat and heavenly blessings addressed themselves to the earth. That dark condition became blessed for the world and the world thereby received a grand mercy so that the Perfect Man and the Chief of the Prophets, like

whom there had been no one, nor ever will be, came for the guidance of the world and brought that bright Book for the world whose match no eye has beheld. It was a great manifestation of spiritual perfection of God that, at a time of gloom and darkness, He sent down a Grand Light which is named the Furqan and which distinguishes between truth and falsehood and which demonstrated the coming of truth and the disappearance of falsehood. It descended upon the earth when the earth had become spiritually dead and land and sea had been greatly corrupted. By its descent it accomplished that to which God Almighty has pointed in the verse:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

That is to say: The earth had died and God revived it afresh. It should be remembered that the descent of the Holy Qur'an which took place for the purpose of reviving the earth came about through the upsurge of the attribute of Rahmaniyyat. This is the attribute which sometimes manifests itself in a material way and causes the rain of mercy to descend upon dry land and thus makes provision for those who are afflicted with famine. The same attribute sometimes surges up spiritually and has mercy on the condition of those who are hungry and thirsty and near unto death on account of misguidance and error, and lack the nourishment of truth and righteousness which is the source of spiritual life. Thus the Gracious One, as He bestows nourishment upon the body at the time of need, so of His Perfect Mercy He provides spiritual nourishment also at the time of need.” (Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1, pp. 414-435, footnote 11)

The ultimate effect of a reformer being sent to the Earth is that the world enters a period of peace as is alluded to in the concluding verse of Surah al-Qadr. Khalifatul Masih II^{ra} explains:

“The word سَلَامٌ (peace) stands for a complete sentence meaning, “it is all peace.” In the time of a Prophet or Divine reformer a peculiar kind of mental peace of equanimity descends upon the believers amidst hardships and privations. The heavenly happiness which inspires believers at that time transcends all material and sensuous joys.

The expression هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (It is all peace till the rising of the dawn.) means, the passing of the night of hardships and the rising of the dawn of predominance and ascendancy of the cause of truth.” (Tafsir Al-Kabir, Pg.2860 Ft.4797)

Laylatul Qadr also has a significant meaning to each and every believer as it is a night in which a believer can benefit from great blessings. In a reported hadith the Holy Prophet^{sa} said:

“Whoever establishes the prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not to show off) then all his past sins will be forgiven.” (al-Bukhari, Vol.1, Bk.2, No. 34)

In another hadith the Holy Prophet^{sa} advises as to when one should seek Laylatul Qadr saying:

“Search for the Night of Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan” (Al-Bukhari, Vol.3, Bk.32, No. 234)

The Promised Messiah (as) is known to have said that should the 27th night of Ramadan fall upon a Friday then through Allah's (swt) Grace this will often be Laylatul Qadr.

In light of the above blessed narrations it is incumbent on each believer to increase his or her worship (*Ibaada*) during the last ten days of Ramadan and pray sincerely that they may benefit from the fruits of Laylatul Qadr and have all their previous sins forgiven, Insha-Allah. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V^{aa} delivered a *Khutbah* on the subject of Laylatul Qadr (14 Nov, 2003) where he emphasised the need

for each believer to pay special attention to not only the last ten nights of Ramadan but indeed to every night. Huzur indicated that one reason behind the ambiguity of which night Laylatul Qadr falls upon is to ensure that believers spend all of the last ten nights in *Ibaada* and do not simply ritualise one appointed night.

In further explanation of this subject Huzur added that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said whoever offers all their prayers during the month of Ramadan in congregation gleans a large portion of Laylatul Qadr. Therein is the significance that in order to experience this night one must maintain the highest standard of righteousness through out the month, paying the dues of Allah (swt) and the dues of mankind. Huzur explained that although certain ahadith signify the appearance of signs (like flashes of light) to verify that one has experienced Laylatul Qadr, these signs are not obligatory to Laylatul Qadr. Indeed the Holy Prophet^{sa} would gather immense resolve and determination at the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, spending these days in worship of God of the highest and most excellent eminence. He enjoined us to profusely engage in remembrance of Allah during these days, to glorify Him and to exalt His greatness.

To support us in this effort the following prayer (*dua*) to be recited on Laylatul Qadr was conveyed to Hadhrat Aisha (ra) by Hadhrat Khatamul Anbiyaa^{sa} :

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوفٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

Allahumma innaka 'afuwun tu hibul 'afwa fa 'fu 'anni

**O Allah! You are the Great Pardoner, You love to pardon.
Hence I seek Your pardon.** (Ibn Maja, Kitabul Duaa)

May we each engage in sincere worship during this blessed month and incur the Mercy of Allah (swt), *Insha-Allah. Ameen* ▪

Friday Sermon—excellence of fasting during Ramadan

Huzur delivered his Friday Sermon from Bait ul Futuh, Morden, England on September 14, 2007 and gave a discourse on the excellence of fasting during Ramadan. This was televised live on Muslim TV Ahmadiyya International with running translations in different languages. The summary of this sermon is provided below.

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

O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. (Al Baqarah 2:184)

Citing the above verse Huzur said that with the grace of Allah we are once again enabled to experience the most excellent arrangement for spiritual development, which is, fasting for the few days of Ramadan. If we want the acceptance of our prayers then each one of us should make his or her best endeavor to develop in *taqwa* (righteousness), seek Divine nearness, and develop in religious, moral and spiritual ways.

Remarking on the significance of the commandment to fast Huzur said it was also made obligatory on the followers of the earlier prophets of God for the purification of soul and among them only those became the recipient of blessings who abided by the commandment without any protest, who put the teaching in practice and excelled in *taqwa*. However, when they rejected the teachings, they lost their worldly glory as well as their standards of spirituality plummeted. Huzur said indeed when Allah enjoins the followers of prophets of God to adopt *taqwa*, He declares that it would lead them to the blessings of this world and the Hereafter, as it is stated in verse 47 of Sura Al Rahman (55:47). Huzur said it is vital for each Ahmadi to recognize the lofty

station of God in order to develop in *taqwa* and to be the recipient of His blessings and this, he added, will come to pass when His commandments are followed with sincerity of purpose. One of these commandments is to fast.

We are fortunate that we are the adherents of the perfect Book, are the adherents of the *Shariah* which is promised to continue till the end, are the adherents of the last law-bearing Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) who was granted excellence over all the other prophets by being given the title of *Khatam un Nabiyyeen* (Seal of all the prophets). He brought us the message of Qur'an to enable us to stay firm on *taqwa*, a message that is still fresh today and shall always remain so. Huzur asked what do the commandments of this last law-bearing Book expect of us? What is expected of us is that we seek Allah's favor through the means that He has taught us:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And as for those who strive to meet Us - We will, surely, guide them in Our ways. And, indeed, Allah is with those who are benevolent and do good. (Al Ankabut 29:70)

Citing verse 70 of Sura Al Ankabut (29:70) Huzur said it is indeed God's promise that He guides those to Him who come towards Him with absolute sincerity, He runs to those who at least walk towards Him. A great source to attain nearness to God is fasting. A Hadith relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said that Allah puts a distance of more than 70 miles (Arabic idiom meaning a great deal) between the face of a person who fasts in the way of Allah seeking His blessings and fire. Huzur said indeed it is vital to fast in the quest of Allah's grace and if the attainment of His pleasure is the sole objective, He not only saves one from the fire but also grants the paradise of His pleasure, in this world and the Hereafter.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that one who makes a solemn endeavor to seek Allah never fails. He said that if we can feel

compassion for a student who works hard for school exams how could God not have mercy and compassion to allow one who endeavors to seek him to come near Him? Certainly not!

Recounting a Hadith e Qudsi Huzur said Allah declares that each act of man is for himself, apart for fasting. Fasting is for Allah and Allah alone is its reward. Another Hadith reiterates this point that fasting is done for Allah and only Allah knows the real reward of a person who fasts.

Huzur explained that just as Allah's attributes are countless so is the extent of His reward, however, He has set some limitations for the attainment of His reward. For example during fasting one is not required to merely starve oneself, rather one has to make an endeavor to shun all sorts of worldly and carnal desires, only then it may be deemed that fasting is for Allah alone. Similarly the avoidance from the ills is not to be temporary and brief; rather it has to be a permanent effort.

Indeed Allah knows what is in ones heart, is aware of the intention behind each deed, has knowledge of what is apparent and what is hidden, if a person fasts with Allah's attributes in mind, that fasting would be rewarded.

Huzur further said that when a person who is fasting responds to an abuse by saying that as he is fasting he will not respond in kind, it does not mean that after breaking the fast he is at liberty to retaliate, not at all. Huzur said fasting is a training process during which one is trained to eschew bad habits for good, which is the reason why a Hadith relates that when a person who fasts sincerely, meets his Maker, he will be happy. It is not just thirty days effort that will give him happiness, rather he will be happy because he would have had an opportunity to make an endeavor to avoid bad habits and that person would thus greet each Ramadan of his life until he attains the station where he will be the recipient of Allah's pleasure.

Elucidating a Hadith that terms fasting as a shield, Huzur said the important thing is to be able to utilize this shield to protect oneself from the attacks of the Satan, the most dangerous of all enemies. A believer can be safe by means of this shield through worship of God and by staying firm on His commandments.

Huzur said that the teachings of the earlier prophets were temporary. As their teachings diminished and changed, worldly desires crept into the fasting of these religions. The teachings of the Holy Quran, in contrast are eternal. In light of that, we need to constantly make endeavors to keep the standards of our *taqwa* high. Each one of us should try to the best of his / her ability or capacity to attain the lofty standards. By calling us *Khair e Ummah* (best among the Ummah) Allah has shown us all the ways and we can only justifiably be called *Khair e Ummah*, when we can attain these standards. Huzur said the acts that are done to seek the pleasure of Allah are indeed what *taqwa* is all about.

Huzur prayed that may Allah enable us to make solemn endeavor to attain *taqwa*. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that fasting is about forsaking one kind of nourishment (food) to seek the other kind of nourishment which is for the soul. Allah opens up ways of guidance and spiritual discernment for those who seek Him with truthfulness of heart.

May Allah enable us that we fast while making the attainment of His pleasure our objective, may we attain spiritual discernment which becomes a lasting part of our lives and which enhances us in *taqwa* each moment. ▪

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