



The Prophet's (sal) Khutbah the Eve of Ramadan
Imam Ali's Letter of Guidelines

Allah says in Surah al-Baqarah:

O you who securely believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those who came before you in order that you might guard yourselves by fasting for the number of days. And any of you who are sick or traveling, then make up a similar number of other days. For those who are able to, there is an expiation for the missed days: feeding a poor person. Yet whoever does so voluntarily it is better for him, and fasting is better for you if only you knew. The month of Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an came down as guidance for the people. It is a clear proof in guidance, and in discrimination between good and evil. So who from among you lives to see this month, let him fast in it. And if any of you are sick or traveling, then make it up on a number of other days. Allah wants ease for you and does not want hardship for you. He wants you to fulfill the number of fasting days, and for you to magnify Allah for having guided you, and to give thanks to Him.

And when My worshipers ask about Me, say, know that I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls Me, so let him respond to Me and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided. It is permitted for you on the nights of fasting to enter into relations with your women. They are garments for you, and you are garments for them. Allah knows that you have fooled yourselves in this matter, and has turned to you and forgiven you. Now Allah has written that you shall eat and drink

until the white thread from the black thread can be seen at dawn. Then complete the fast until night. These are the boundaries of Allah that have come to them in a way that makes clear the signs of his people in order that they may guard themselves.

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. These instructions of Qur'an are detailed and sketchy, both. It's very important that we understand the spirit of this month. Guidelines and rules are given not just so they are followed. There can be a hundred guidelines and rules that are given. But Allah gives examples of them so that we might extrapolate from them an attitude or point of view. I think it's very important that on this last *khutbah* before Ramadan, we should remember the *khutbah* given by the Prophet (sal) on the eve of Ramadan. It's a very short one and gives us good instruction, in addition to what I read from the Qur'an. It was narrated by Salman Farsi.

The Messenger of Allah (sal) delivered this khutbah on the last day of Sha'ban. The Prophet (sal) said, "O you people, a great and blessed month has arrived. A month wherein there is a night that is better than one thousand months. The fasting during this month is an obligation, and the extra prayers during these nights are voluntary. Anyone who comes closer to Allah through a good deed during this month is as if he has performed an obligatory duty during times other than Ramadan. He who fulfills an obligatory duty will be like one who performs 70 obligatory duties in another month. It is the month of patience; the reward of patience is Paradise. It is a month of visiting the poor, the sick, the needy so as to share their sorrows. It is a month wherein the nourishment, sustenance, and income of the believing Muslim increases, and they are blessed.

Anyone who invites others to break their fast at iftār will be provided with forgiveness for their sins, and will be saved from hell, and will receive a reward equal to the fasting person without reducing his own reward in any respect. Some of the followers of the Prophet said, “Not all of us may find food to share with one so that he may break his fast.” The Prophet (sal) said, “Allah will reward you even if you help a fasting Muslim to break his fast with a date, a sip of water, or a drink of milk.” It is a month whose beginning is mercy, the middle is forgiveness, and in the last part, freedom from the hellfire. Anyone who helps a slave to be freed, Allah will forgive that person, and free them from hell.

Increase in yourself four characteristics: two by which you will please your Lord; and two others by which you cannot live without. The first two qualities to please Allah are to bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, and to ask for forgiveness from Allah. The other two things you cannot live without are to ask Allah for Paradise, and to ask Allah to protect you from hellfire. Anyone who gives water to a Muslim at iftār, Allah will give him water on the Day of Judgment from the fountain of the Prophet Mohammed, which will make them not feel thirsty as they enter Paradise.

This was the *khutbah*. I'm bringing it again to your attention so that, *inshā'a-LLāh*, it will be a great motivation for all of Ramadan, especially the last ten days. Ramadan is a month of caring for others. It happens this time of year when we have many people around us, some who are fasting and some who are not. We are caring for them, as given by Allah and by their parents. We begin to speak about the meanings of Ramadan. There are a lot of blessings that come from this month; it's the month

of mercy and rejoicing and happiness and guidance and peace; revelations of Qur'an, self control, obedience, self-discipline. But it's also the month of caring and sharing with others our happiness, and their sorrows and our sorrows. Today we have the unfortunate opportunity of sharing the sorrows of Khaled on the loss of his dear father and dear friend of ours, Dr. Hassouna, may his soul rest in peace and be with his Lord as he deserves to be. We have to share our food together as we have been doing much more, and help the poor and need, we will continue to do.

In a *hadith*, the Prophet (sal) said, ***"Ramadan is the month of patience. The reward of patience is Paradise. It is a month of caring, and a month of sustenance as the believer increases."*** When we look around the world and see so many people suffering from wars and droughts and famines and floods and poverty; when we look to where Khaled is headed today to Egypt (*inshā'a-llāh* he goes and returns safely and securely to his family and to us), we see that Allah is testing our faith and belief in Islam, and in the true meaning of Islam: peace and security. Any of those people, if they are not for peace and security, they are not for Islam. You don't have to look too far to find the opportunity to be good people and good Muslims.

We also see the opportunity and feel the goodness as we find those people who are saved from their difficulties in this month, and we pray that Sahar is saved from her difficulties in this month, *inshā'a-llāh*. Then we can look around and see that we are in such good condition, and others are so destitute. That's the real test for us to see: whether we appreciate, whether we are grateful, whether we care for those others as we care for ourselves. There are so many tests and trials, difficulties and decisions in life that are not easily made by ourselves alone. So we cannot make them by ourselves, and we need help and guidance from those who are set above us, each one of us.

Allah has provided for each one of us in Tasawwuf that; but He has also provided for us the good companionship of each other. We can see things that others cannot see; therefore, there has to be sensitive caring and concern and loving people around, whose agenda is to help us in making decisions, to assist the orphan, the homeless, the destitute, the widow, the blind, the deaf, the mute, the handicapped who cannot care for themselves, as Khadija does for her sister. Here in this community, we have examples of everything. They need to have our service. *Alhamdulillah*, from this community, we have an institute that does some good and serves many populations of people. Great blessings come to those of you who work here, and who live here, and who serve here; albeit, at times we question whether or not we are in remembrance of those things.

Don't just pass them off. Don't just think, "Well, that's the community." If you don't support it, then you are against it; and that's the truth. If you are against it, you are against Islam, no matter what you call yourself. Because Allah has placed us here to do what we do, and if you don't support it, you are against the Islam at the foundation of this. To care is one thing; to share is another thing. The caring of a believer, as noble as it is, the sharing of a person's difficulties is much more important. Not only in communicating with them, but in taking responsibility for reducing their plight and their misery and their needs. This is the result of caring during Ramadan and beyond.

During Ramadan, we try our best to look after others and solve their problems, but we have to look at our community and its problems, and the needs of this community, and also the society at large and what problems are pending. That means we need to be educated to those issues. You have to be curious; you have to ask and you have to take responsibility. We need not to be aggressive in our

approach, but cooperative in our approach. No one person can take on everything and anything, nor judge themselves by their weaknesses or their strengths; rather, we should see what's good for the commonweal, the commonwealth, the common good. That is to be partisan to success and fulfillment. There are noble ways of approaching every problem, such as to make even the most impoverished people feel a certain sense of nobility and honor in their own lives. The Prophet (sal) spoke of several needy people at one time. It was stated, that a dialogue will take place between Allah and every one of us on the Day of Judgment (Yawm-l-Qiyama). In a *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurayra (ra):

On the Day of Judgment, Allah Swt says, "O child of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit Me." The child of Adam says, "O Allah, how could I have visited You? You are the Lord of the Worlds!" Allah says, "Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was sick, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you were to visit him, you would have found Me there? O child of Adam, I requested that you feed Me, but you did not give Me food." He replied, "O my Lord, how would I feed You? You are the Lord of the universes!" Allah says "Did you not know that so-and-so was hungry, and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you were to feed him, you would have found Me there? O child of Adam, I requested you to give me a drink of water, but you did not give Me drink." He replied, "O my Lord, how could I give You drink? You are the Lord of the worlds." He replied, "My servant so-and-so requested a drink, but you did not give him a drink. Did you not know that if you were to give him that liquid, you would have found Me there?"

By extension, we can see that any of our needs are exactly the same, whether it's to put air conditioning in the Community Center, or fix a road, help someone in need in

the community, build a school, help with someone's health, cook a meal, or just simply try to sustain ourselves for yet another round of service. In other *hadith*, we are informed about groups of people we have to look after: to visit the sick, to follow funeral processions, to request mercy for the one who sneezes, to honor the pledge, to help the oppressed, to accept invitations, and to spread peace. The Prophet (sal) instructed believers to care for those who need help. He said, "**Visit the sick. Feed the hungry. Liberate the captive.**" To take care of others takes time and takes effort. It takes knowledge and energy, and sometimes money. It necessitates people to volunteer themselves to perform such noble actions.

Allah Swt prescribed *zakat*, *sadaqa*, and other sources of revenue to fulfill those needs. He informs us in Surah at-Tawbah the avenues in which the *zakat* is to be used. He said: "**Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those who are employed to administer the funds, and for those whose hearts have been recently reconciled to truth, and for those in bondage and in debt to the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer. Thus it is ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.**" We have to remember that for every good deed we do, we are rewarded 10 times. And for every dollar we spend helping others, we will be rewarded 700 times. During the month of Ramadan, the reward is 70 times what it is the rest of the year. For this reason, Muslims throughout the centuries have taken their responsibility to pay the *zakat* and *sadaqa*.

We have to ask and remind ourselves and encourage each other to do our best to care for others who are in need in our community, in our families, in our larger community, in our neighborhood, and in our society. They are the means through which we can serve the world and serve others. If every community cares for its needy, then many of the social, cultural, religious, economic, and psychological problems of this world will be solved; there is no doubt. We have to pray to Allah

SwT to take that initiative and do something about what is wrong in the world. In doing that, Allah will take care of us. We cannot just sit in our comfortable homes and take them for granted. The Prophet (sal) inspired us to take care of others so that Allah Swt will care for us here and in the Hereafter. In another *hadith*, Allah Swt revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (sal),

Whoever relieves a believer from one distress of this world, Allah will relieve him from the grief of those on the Day of Judgment. And whoever makes it easy for someone in difficulty, Allah will make it easy for him in this world and in the akhirat. And whoever protects a Muslim, Allah will protect him in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah will help the servant as long as the servant is helping his brother.

So we pray to Allah Swt to help us to follow His guidance, and shower His blessings upon us. We seek His guidance, mercy, reward and forgiveness. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, we will receive and put this message to use, and remember it throughout this coming month *inshā'a-Llāh*.

SECOND KHUTBAH: Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to read to you also some guidelines and instructions from Imam Ali (as) to his sons Imam Hasan and Imam Hussein. After the attempt on his life and before he died, he left this as his last will and testament, but it is a guideline for all of us in this month of Ramadan. He said,

My advice to you is to be conscious of Allah and steadfast in your religion. Do not yearn for this world, and do not be seduced by it. Do not resent anything you have missed in it. Proclaim the truth, work for the next world, oppose the oppressor, and support the oppressed. I advise you and all my children, my relatives, and whomsoever reads this message to be conscious of Allah, to

remove your differences, to strengthen your ties. I heard your grandfather (peace be upon him) say, "Reconciliation of your differences is more worthy than all the prayers and all the fasting." Fear Allah in matters concerning orphans. Tend to their nutrition, and do not forget their interests in the middle of yours. Fear Allah in your relations with your neighbors. The Prophet often recommended them to you, so much to that we thought he would give them a share of his inheritance. Remain attached to the Qur'an. Nobody should surpass you in being intent on it or more sincere in implementing it. Fear Allah in relation to your prayers; it is the pillar of your religion. Fear Allah in relation to his house. Do not abandon it as long as you live. If you should do that, you would abandon your dignity. Persist in jihad in the cause of Allah with your money, your souls, and your tongue. Maintain communication and exchange of opinion among yourselves. Beware of disunity and enmity. Do not desist from promoting good deeds and cautioning against bad ones. Should you do that, the worst among you would be your leaders, and you will call upon Allah without response.

O children of Abdul Matin! Do not shed the blood of Muslims under the banner, "The imam has been assassinated." Only the assassin should be condemned to death. If I die of this stab wound of his, kill him with one similar stroke. Do not mutilate him. I have heard the Prophet (sal) say, "Mutilate not even a rabid dog."

In the 40th year of the Hijra, in the small hours of the morning on the 19th of Ramadan, Imam Ali was struck with that poisoned sword by the Hajarite Ibn Majam while offering his prayers in the *masjid* at Kufa. He died on the 21st day of Ramadan and is buried in Najaf ashraf. He was born in the house of Allah, the Ka'ba; and martyred in the house of Allah, Masjid al-Kufa. The Lion of Allah, the most brave and

gentle Muslim after the Prophet himself began his glorious life with devotions to Allah and His Messenger, and ended it in the service of Islam. Allah says in Qur'an, **“And do not speak of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not.”** *Asalaam Aleikum.*