

FRIDAY SERMON

17 March 2023

By Imam Zafrullah Domun

Alhamdolillah once again in our life, we are entering a period when everyone, whether a man or a woman, a young person or an old one, is, so to say, gladly awaiting the beginning of the holy blessed month of Ramadan. But prior to that we need to look at the moon cycle for the coming month. As you might all well know, Ramadhan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar better known as the Higri calendar because it started with the emigration (*hegira*) of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) from Mecca to Medina in 622AD.

Let me say a few words about how a new calendar was devised for Muslims to use. Up till the third or fourth year of the caliphate of Hazrat Umar Bin Al Khattab, Muslims used a range of important events in Muslim history, for example, *Am Al-Fil*, the year in which the Prophet Muhammad (saw) was born, to demarcate time. But, seventeen years after the Prophet's migration and in the third or fourth year of the succession of Khalifa Umar ibn al-Khattab, a complaint was made by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, an official in Basrah (Iraq), regarding a lack of consistent dates on the correspondences he received. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari sent a letter to Khalifa Umar (ra), asking him to develop a new way to calculate dates.

Khalifa Umar debated the issue with his advisors. Some suggested that the date of the Prophet's birth should mark the beginning of a new calendar, whilst others suggested the date of his death. However, the majority agreed that the calendar should begin with the date of his migration. Khalifa Umar then consulted the Prophet's revered companions, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali bin Abi Talib, and they agreed.

After all the discussions, Khalifa Umar announced that the year in which the Prophet Mohammad (saw) migrated would mark the beginning of the **Hijri calendar**. The calendar would begin with the first of the month of Muharram and end with the month of Dhu Al Hijja. Consequently, 622 AD (the year of the Prophet's migration) became the first year in the Hijri calendar. This date corresponds to July 16, 622 CE, on the Gregorian calendar which is based on the cycle of the sun and which was being used by the Christians of the time and which is used by most countries in the world today.

The Muslim calendar months are 12 in number but each one is only 29 or 30 days long because they are based on the phases of the moon. The names of the month are as

follows: Muharram, Safar, Rabi Al Awwal, Rabi Al Thani, Jumada Al Ula, Jumada Al Akhira, Rajab, Sha'aban, Ramadan, and Shawwal Dhu Al Qa'da, Dhu Al Hijja. Out of these months, four are sacred which means that Muslims are not allowed to engage in war in them and these are Rajab, Dhu Al Qa'da, Dhu Al Hijja and Muharram. Since the lunar year is shorter than the solar year by 11 days, the important events of the Muslim calendar like Ramadan and Hajj rotate during a period of 33 years throughout the year during all the seasons.

Now, we come back to the expected visibility of the moon for the beginning of the month of Ramadan for this year. The birth of the new moon is expected at 21h23 Mauritian time on Tuesday 21st March 2023. Visibility might be possible for us the next day i.e. Wednesday 22nd March 2023. If that is the case, we will insha Allah start fasting on Thursday 23rd March 2023. If not, then we will start fasting on Friday 24th March 2023.

So, as good practicing Muslims, let us all prepare ourselves for the coming month as best as we can with good intention to fast. Please do not just think that because you are in good health you will just fast. That might not be the case. So, we should do our best to prepare ourselves for the sacrifices that we will be making and ask for Allah's Help to complete the fasts to His Satisfaction because without His help nothing can be done. May Allah help each one among us to fast in such a way that Allah is very much pleased with us when the fasts end after a month's time. So, I say to you all Ramadan Mubarak because we will be fasting by next Friday insha Allah.

In the second part of this khutbah, I would like to speak a few words about the life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as). I had intended to start this khutbah last week but I could not and I think that in the coming khutbah we might devote some time to it. We do not celebrate days such as Masih Maood day or any other day. But I will insha Allah use Jummah time to remind ourselves who Masih Maood (as) really was so that everyone might have a clearer idea who is that person whom we have believed to be the Promised Messiah (as) who was raised for the reform of mankind in the last days.

The ancestors of Hazrat Ahmad (as) migrated from Samarkand in Iran around the year 1530 to Delhi and in the course of time, I mean after three centuries, his father whose name was Mirza Ghulam Murtaza was given about seventy villages to look after. Initially it was known as Islampur and later on Islampur Qazi and lastly Qazian which we know today as Qadian.

However, a time came when they lost all their properties and in around 1835 only five villages were returned back to his father. It was around this time that Hazrat Ahmad was born on 13th February 1835 in Qadian. His mother's name was Charagh Bibi who was a descendant of the Mughal family of Aima, a village in Hoshiarpur District. She died in the year 1868 and she is buried in the family graveyard west of Qadian.

About his childhood, we read from the book *Ahmadiyyat The Renaissance of Islam* by Sir Zafrullah Khan the following paragraph:

“His childhood was distinguished from that of other children of his age by the fact that he was never rowdy and possessed a serene temperament which was seldom ruffled. His gravity and earnestness were remarked upon by all observers. While he participated in pursuits, common among children of his age, he displayed a serious bent of mind and a certain degree of aloofness that were noticeable.” (p. 6)

Speaking about his education, Hazrat Ahmad (as) tells us:

“My elementary education was arranged at home. When I was six or seven years old a tutor was engaged for me who taught me the Holy Quran and a few Persian books. His name was Fazal Ilahi. When I was about ten years old another tutor was appointed for my instruction, whose name was Fazal Ahmad. I conceive that as, by the grace of God Almighty, the purpose of my elementary education was to sow the seed of His grace (Fazal) in my mind, the names of both my tutors began with Fazal (Grace). Maulvi Fazal Ahmad Sahib, who was a pious and respectable gentleman, taught me with great attention and diligence. He instructed me in grammar and cognate subjects. When I was seventeen or eighteen, I read with another Maulvi Sahib for some time whose name was Gul Ali Shah. He had also been appointed by my father for my tuition at Qadian. From him I acquired further knowledge of grammar and studied logic and philosophy with him according to the then current syllabus, as far as God Almighty so willed. My father was an expert physician and I read some books on medicine with him.

By that time, I had become very fond of reading books, so much so that I paid little attention to anything else. My father repeatedly admonished me to reduce my study of books as he was afraid that too much concentration on books might have an adverse effect on my health and also because he was desirous that, laying aside books, I should begin to take interest in his affairs and should become involved in the problems with which he was preoccupied. He was at that time engaged in litigation in the British courts for the recovery of some of our ancestral villages and he finally succeeded in employing me also in that pursuit. I was so occupied for a long period. I have always regretted that so much of my precious time was wasted in this useless pursuit. My father also committed the superintendence and management of our landed property to me. I had little interest in these matters and in consequence my father was often upset with me. He was most kind and affectionate towards me, but he desired that I should pursue worldly affairs like my contemporaries and I was much averse to it” [*Kitabul Bariyyah*, pp. 175-7, footnote].

Maulvi Gul Ali Shah Sahib, after a short while, moved back to Batala where he belonged, and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had to take up his residence in Batala for a time so as to continue his education with his tutor.

At that stage Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had already started taking an interest in religious studies, among which his deep study of the Holy Quran always held pride of place. But he did not confine himself to the study of Islamic subjects alone, and began to take an interest in the study of Christian religious literature also. He was much struck by the aggressive and often highly offensive Christian polemics directed against Islam and the Holy Prophet. This left a deep impress upon his mind.

In the meantime, as was customary in those days, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's marriage to a first cousin was arranged. The bride's name was Hurmat Bibi. From her he had two sons, Mirza Sultan Ahmad and Mir'za Fazal Ahmad, born in 1853 and 1855 respectively.

At the time of his marriage, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was still engaged in his studies and he did not permit his marriage to affect in any manner his programme of studies or his manner of life, which became progressively more studious and contemplative.

The only change was that he began to devote more and more time to divine worship, prayer and the study of the Holy Quran. He spent a good deal of his time in the family mosque, walking up and down most of the time engaged in deep thought and contemplation. He had learned swimming and riding at an early age but his principal form of exercise was brisk walking. He kept to it all through his life, even during its busiest periods.

When he had finished his formal schooling, his father became anxious to engage his interest in and attention to the secular affairs of the family, but nothing of that kind appealed to him at all. He observed:

“My father was desirous that I should be completely occupied with worldly affairs, which was contrary to my disposition. Nevertheless, out of goodwill and in order to earn spiritual merit, but not for the sake of any worldly gain, I devoted myself to serving my father and for his sake I occupied myself with worldly affairs and also continued to supplicate the Divine in his behalf. He was assured that I was dutiful towards my parents and he often said that he desired me to participate in worldly affairs out of a feeling of sympathy for me, though he realized that the subject in which I was deeply interested, that is to say, religion, was alone worth pursuing and that he himself was only wasting his time” [*Kitabul Bariyyah*, pp. 175-8, footnote].

We will stop here for today. We will continue insha Allah next time. May Allah help me and you as well to understand the true aim of our existence and may He help us to fulfill it during the time that he has allotted to each one among us. May Allah grant us the *taufiq* to fast to the end and may we all be as sinless on the last day of Ramadan as on the day when our mothers gave birth to us. Incha Allah. Ameen.