



THE *Ahmadiyya* **Gazette** **USA**

إِنِّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْأَسْلَامُ

October-November, 2001

Ikha-Nabuwat, 1380



INTERFAITH PRAYER AT MASJID BAITUR RAHMAN

The barbaric atrocity perpetuated on September 11, 2001, drew immediate condemnation from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of USA. An interfaith Prayer service was organized by the Ahmadiyya Community on September 16, 2001 at Masjid Baitur Rahman. Pictures below and on pages inside depict this event. A brief report of this gathering is given on page 36,



FROM THE HOLY QURAN

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.

“The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast with great difficulty is an expiation—the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.

“The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Quran was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.

“And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way. (2:184-187)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

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The Ahmadiyya Gazette and An-Noor

Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc.

15000 Good Hope Road,

Silver Spring MD 20905

Ph: (301) 879-0110 □ Fax: (301) 879-0115

AMEER

SAHIBZADA M. M. AHMAD

EDITOR

SYED SHAMSHAD AHMAD NASIR

Printers

Fazl-i-Umar Press, Athens, Ohio

The Ahmadiyya Gazette is published by the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc., at the local address 31 Sycamore Street, P. O. Box 226, Chauncey, OH 45719. Periodicals Postage Paid at Chauncey, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to the AHMADIYYA GAZETTE, P. O. Box 226, Chauncey, Ohio 45719-0226

SO SAID THE HOLY PROPHET (PEACE AND BLESSINGS OF ALLAH BE ON HIM)

ON FASTING

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Allah, the Lord of honor and glory says: All other deeds of man are for himself, but his fasting is purely for Me and I shall reward him for it. The fast is a shield. When any of you is fasting he should eschew loose talk and noisy exchanges. Should anyone revile him or seek to pick a quarrel with him, he should respond with: I am observing a fast... He who observes a fast gives up his passion and his food for My sake. For such a one there are two joys; a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord. His breath is purer in the estimation of Allah than the fragrance of musk

Abu Sa'id Khudri relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: When a servant of Allah observes the fast for a day for the sake of Allah, He thereby repels the Fire from him a distance of seventy years of journeying (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: He who observes the fast during *Ramadhan* out of sincerity of faith and in hope of earning merit will have his past sins forgiven him (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: When *Ramadhan* arrives the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of hell are locked up and satans are put in chains (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Start the fast with observing the new moon and terminate it with observing it. If you are unable to observe it by reason of the sky being overcast postpone the fast by a day (*Bokhari and Muslim*). Muslim adds: If you are unable to observe the new moon at the end of *Ramadhan*, observe the fast for the thirtieth day.

On Munificent Charity etc. during Ramadhan

Ibn Abbas relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was the most generous of men and 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 (s.a.w.) waxed faster than the rain-bearing breeze (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

On Prohibition of Fasting

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Do not observe the fast on two days preceding *Ramadhan*, but this does not apply to one who has made a practice of it (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Ibn Abbas relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Do not anticipate *Ramadhan*. Start the fast with observing the new moon and terminate it with observing it. If the sky is overcast let the month run to thirty days (*Tirmidhi*).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: When the middle of Sha'ban arrives do not observe a fast during the rest of it (*Tirmidhi*).

Ammar ibn Yasir said: He who observes the fast on a doubtful day disobeys the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) (*Abu Daud and Tirmidhi*).

On Supplication on Observing the New Moon

Talha ibn Ubaidullah relates that, on seeing a new moon, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would supplicate: Allah, do Thou cause the appearance of this moon to be a harbinger of peace, faith, security and Islam for us. Thy Lord, O moon, and mine is Allah. May this be a moon presaging guidance and good (*Tirmidhi*).

On Breakfast during Ramadhan

Anas relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Take breakfast before the fast begins; there is

blessing in breakfast (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Zaid ibn Thabit relates: We ate breakfast during *Ramadhan* with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and then stood up for Prayer. He was asked what was the interval of time between the two. He said: The time required for the recital of fifty verses (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Ibn Umar relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had appointed two *muezzins*. Bilal and Ibn Umm Maktum. He said: Bilal calls the *Azan* while it is still night. So continue your breakfast till Ibn Umm Maktum calls it. There was in fact only a brief interval between the two (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Amr ibn 'As relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: The difference between our observance of the fast and that of the People of the Book is the eating of breakfast (*Muslim*).

On the Time of Breaking the Fast etc.

Sahl ibn Sa'ad relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: My people will adhere to good as long as they do not delay the breaking of the fast (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Abu Atiyyah relates: Masruq and I visited Ayesha and Masruq said to her: There are two of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) neither of whom holds back from any type of good; one of them goes forward in breaking his fast and offering *Maghrib* Prayer and the other retards both. She asked: Who is the one who goes forward in breaking his fast and offering *Maghrib*? He answered: Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. She observed: The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) did the same (*Muslim*).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Allah, the Lord of honor and glory says: Of My servants I love most those who are foremost in breaking their fasts (*Tirmidhi*).

Umar ibn Khattab relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: When the night approaches from the East and the day retreats in the West and the sun

has set, the one observing the fast breaks it (*Bokhari & Muslim*)

Salman ibn 'Amir Dhabi relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Break your fast with a date, else with water for it is pure (*Abu Daud and Tirmidhi*).

Anas relates: The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to break his fast before offering *Maghrib* with fresh dates, failing that with dry dates and failing that he would swallow a few mouthfuls of water (*Abu Daud & Tirmidhi*).

On Safeguarding the Fast

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: If a person does not eschew falsehood and false conduct, Allah has no need that he should abstain from food and drink (*Bokhari*).

On Miscellaneous Matters Concerning the Fast

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: Should any of you eat or drink in forgetfulness of the fast, he should continue his fast till the end, for Allah has fed him and given him to drink (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

Laqit ibn Sabarah relates: I asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to inform me about the ablutions. He answered: Carry out the ablutions completely in all respects, and remember that you clean out the base of your fingers and wash out your nose well, but be careful in this last if you should be observing the fast (*Abu Daud and Tirmidhi*).

Ayesha and Umm Salamah relate: Should the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) have consorted with a wife he would start and complete his fast as usual (*Bokhari and Muslim*).

On the Desirability of Fasting on Three Days in every Month

Abu Dharr relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: If you observe fast on three days in a month, then make them the days of the 13th, 14th, and 15th

nights of the moon (*Tirmidhi*).

On the Excellence of Providing for the Breaking of the Fast

Zaid ibn Khalid Juhni relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: He who provides for the breaking of the fast of another earns the same merit as the one who was observing the fast without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter (*Tirmidhi*).

Umm Ammarah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) visited her and she put some food before him. He asked her to eat also. She said: I am fasting. On this he observed: Angels call down blessings on a person who should be fasting when other people eat in his presence till they finish (or till they have eaten their fill) (*Tirmidhi*).

Anas relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) came

to visit Sa'ad ibn Ubadah who brought bread and olive oil and presented it to him. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) partook of it and said: Those who were fasting have broken their fast with you and the righteous have eaten your food while the angels were calling down blessings on you (*Abu Daud*).

On Retreat

Ibn Umar relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to go into retreat in the mosque during the last ten days of *Ramadhan* (*Bokhari and Muslim*)

Ayesha relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) went into retreat during the last ten days of *Ramadhan* till Allah caused his death. Thereafter his wives used to go into retreat (*Bokhari and Muslim*)

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) went into retreat for ten days in the month of *Ramadhan* but in the year in which he died he went into retreat for twenty days (*Bokhari*).

From the Writings of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him)

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING IS PURIFICATION

I have already spoken of the *Salat*. Next in order is worship in the form of fasting. It is a pity that some who call themselves Muslims at this time desire to modify these forms of worship. They are blind and are not aware of the perfect wisdom of God Almighty. These forms of worship are essential for the purification of the spirit. These people seek to intervene absurdly in a sphere of which they have no knowledge and devise false schemes for the improvement of a territory that they have not visited. Their lives are devoted to worldly affairs; of spiritual matters they have no notion.

To be moderate in eating and drinking and to bear hunger and thirst are necessary for the purification of the spirit and promote the capacity for visions. Man does not live by bread alone. To discard all thoughts of eternal life is to invite Divine

wrath. But it should be remembered that the fast does not mean merely that a person should abstain from food and drink over a certain period. During the fast one should be occupied greatly with the remembrance of God. The Holy Prophet, peace be on him, occupied himself greatly with worship during the month of *Ramadhan*. During that month one should discard one's preoccupation with eating and drinking and cutting asunder from these needs should address oneself wholly towards God.

Unfortunate is the person who is bestowed material bread and pays no attention to spiritual bread. Material bread strengthens the body, and spiritual bread sustains the soul and sharpens the spiritual faculties. Seek the grace of God, as all doors are opened by His grace. (*Malfoozat*, Vol. 9, p. 123)

A MONTH OF GREAT BLESSINGS IS ABOUT TO START

Almighty Allah has declared *Ramadhan-ul-Mubarak* a very important and blessed month. The revelation of the Holy Quran started in this month. Allah says:

“The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Quran was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.” (2:186).

This is the same blessed month in which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to pray in the cave of Hira before he was commissioned to be a prophet. In this reference *Ibn-e-Ishaq* narrated that every year the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to stay in the cave of Hira for worship in the month of *Ramadhan*, until one year when he had gone there as usual for worship. Hazrat Gibraeel (Archangel Gabriel) descended on him and he received the first revelation. (*Al Seerah-tul-Nabawiyyah*). That is how the revelation of the Quran began in this blessed month and the foundation of religion of Islam was laid.

According to the Islamic calendar, the month of *Shabaan* precedes the month of *Ramadhan*. Hazrat Salman Farsi narrates that on the last night of *Shabaan* the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed us and said:

“O people! A month of great glory and prestige is about to dawn on you. Yes a month of blessings in which comes a night which is better than a thousand months. Almighty Allah has made fasting obligatory during day time and worship at nights as *Nafil*.”

He (the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.)) said, “this month is the month of patience and reward for this patience is Heaven. This is the month of compassion.”

He also said “This is such a month in which the livelihood of the believers is increased. (*Mishkat al Masaabeeh, First Volume, The Book of Fasting, third chapter*).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had described the greatness of this month on different occasions and had established the significance and importance of this month in the hearts of people. Out of these sayings some are mentioned here,

1. “This is the month, the beginning of which is blessings and the middle of which is forgiveness and the end of which is a time for perfect reward, *i.e.*, deliverance from hell.” (*Mishkat al Masaabeeh, First Volume, The Book of Fasting, third chapter*).
2. “This is the month in which any person who wakes up in the nights of *Ramadhan* with the intention of seeking pleasure of Allah and to fulfill the requirement of faith, all the previous sins of that person are forgiven.” (*Bukhari, Book of Fasting*)
3. “In this month anyone who worships with sincerity and seeking pleasure of Allah, such a one is cleansed free of sins as one was the day one was born.” (*Nisai, Book of Fasting*)
4. “This is the month in which the doors of heaven are opened and the doors of hell are closed and Satan is chained.” (*Bukhari, Book of Fasting*).
5. “This is the month in which a caller calls out that O! who is desirous of good, come and move forward and O! who is desirous of evil, stop! And a lot of people are delivered from fire for the sake of Allah and it so happens in every night of *Ramadhan*.” (*Ibn-e-Maja, Book of Fasting*)

6. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has declared this month the gateway of worship. He said, "For everything is a gateway and *Ramadhan* is a gateway of worship" (*Al-Jame-al-Munir fee Ahadeeth al Nazeer, Part One, Hadeeth #2415*)
7. This is the blessed month in which the Archangel Gabriel used to complete the recitation of the Holy Quran with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and in the last *Ramadhan* before the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) he completed it twice.
8. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "The almsgiving during this month is the best of all almsgiving." (*Sunan Al Tirmizi*)
9. "Anyone who lightens the burden of one's servant and lessens the workload in this month, Almighty Allah will forgive such a person and will deliver him from fire." (*Mishkat al Masaabeeh, First Volume, The Book of Fasting, third chapter*).
10. "Anyone who does not quit lying and committing wrong deeds during fasting. Allah does not care for such person's giving up eating and drinking." (*Bukhari, Book of Fasting*)
11. On another occasion he said, "Fasting does not mean just quit eating and drinking, rather, giving up all loose talk and stopping from utterance of obscenities is also included in it. Therefore, those who keep fast should be aware that if anyone abuses you or angers you, you just tell him that I am fasting." (*Bukhari, Book of Fasting*)

If anyone indulges in loose and obscene talk while fasting then his fast would be nothing more than staying hungry and thirsty and would not achieve any reward.

Therefore if one does not take care of these requirements and etiquette of fasting then such a person is not going to get any benefit from it. Fasting is a kind of worship which is done by following and fulfilling all the conditions. A lot of

unfortunate people lose the best of the rewards of this worship by not paying proper attention to these conditions.

Hazrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "There are a lot of people who do not gain anything except hunger and thirst by fasting and there are many who wake up at night to say prayers but do not gain anything except sleeplessness." (*Ibn-e-Maja, Book of Fasting*)

Hazrat Promised Messiah (a.s.) said, "One who keeps fast should be careful that fasting does not only means that one should stay hungry but should constantly remember Allah while fasting."

Then he said, "This month is better than the rest of the months." (*Speeches At Annual Convention 1906, pp 20-21*)

This is such an important month that safety and blessings for the rest of the year depend upon completing this month safely (while fulfilling all the conditions).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "If *Ramadhan* is passed safely then be rest assured that the rest of the year will be safe." (*Al Jaame-al-Sagheer, Part One, Hadeeth # 675*)

One should be very careful about maintaining the proper honor and observing the etiquettes of the blessed and sacred month of *Ramadhan* so that from physical, spiritual, moral, and every other aspect, the rest of the year should become a source of peace and blessings and this month should become an expiation for sins and weaknesses for the rest of the year.

Hazrat Promised Messiah (a.s.), while describing the importance and significance of the month of *Ramadhan*, said, "The importance of the month of *Ramadhan* is evident from the verse of the Holy Quran, "*Shahro Ramazan allazi Unzela fee-hil Quran*" (2:186). The divines have written that for enlightenment of the soul this is a very important month. Frequent revelations are received during this month. *Salat* (prayer) results in *Tazkia-e-Nafs* and

Saum (Fasting) results in *Tajjalli-e-Qalb*.

Tazkia-e-Nafs means that one becomes distant from evils of *Nafs-e-Ammara* (a soul inclined towards evil), and *Tajjalli-e-Qalb* means that the door of revelation is opened so that one attains communion with Allah and witnesses Him.” (*Malfoozat, Volume 4, p. 256*)

If someone is so unfortunate that in addition to the fasts in *Ramadhan* he is also deprived of other prayers and blessings of this month then he should say the following prayer as described by Hazrat

Promised Messiah (a.s.).

“O Allah! This is your blessed month and I am missing the benefit from its blessings and I do not know whether I shall be alive next year or not or I would be able to complete the fasts that I am unable to keep now.”

The Promised Messiah (a.s.) added: If he seeks the power and strength from Allah then I am certain that Allah will bestow strength on such a soul. (*Malfoozat, Volume 4, p. 288*)

THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN IS THE SAFEST MONTH FOR A BELIEVER

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV, in his Friday Sermon on January 26, 1996, elaborated on the superiority of Fasting, in the light of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). He said that the one person who had the best knowledge of the blessings and advantages of *Ramadhan* was the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) himself. He related some of the sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and said that a person who fasts with fortitude and sincerity, his sins are forgiven.

Huzoor said that the *Tahajjud* prayers are especially related to *Ramadhan*. Those who fast, get a way opened up for them for *Tahajjud*. He said that even children should be encouraged to get up at *Sahri* time so they can at least say the *Nawafil* prayers.

With reference to the Hadith, Huzoor said that

when *Ramadhan* arrives, the gates of heaven are opened up and the gates of hell are closed and Satans are tied up. It does not mean that there is no one who can do bad deeds in *Ramadhan*. The glad tidings are for those believers who remain within the limits set up by the Quran and the Hadith. For them, *Ramadhan* brings so many tidings for good deeds and fear of God that it is not possible for them to do any bad thing which may take them towards hell. It is the safest month for the believer because he is ever vigilant to do good and shun evil.

Every person has a Satan attached to him. For a believer that Satan is tied up. Efforts should be made to tie down this Satan permanently. The gates of hell are opened for them who live outside the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadith.

JUMA OF FAREWELL OR JUMA OF WELCOME

(Friday Sermon of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV, delivered on February 7, 1997, and published in Al Fazl International, March 28, 1997. A stimulating guidance provided for those who come to the Mosque only once a year to perform Juma'a tul wida (the Juma of Farewell) and have forgotten the true significance and importance of Salat (Prayer) in Islam. Slightly abridged from the English translation printed in the Ahmadiyya Gazette, January, 2000)

Huzoor (a.b.a.) said:

“*Juma'a tul wida* (the last Friday of *Ramadhan*) is regarded most sacred but I am not certain when this concept was introduced in Islam. It appears to have deep historical significance among Muslims of India and Pakistan and elsewhere in the world. Many stories are in vogue about this sacred concept. For this reason I asked the scholars of the Jamaat for investigation of this concept from the *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) so that I could present it to you as a special gift at the time of the *Juma'a tul Wida* of this *Ramadhan*. The blessings of *Juma'a* Prayer are often mentioned in the Holy Quran and in many *Ahadith* but there is no mention of '*Juma'a tul wida*'. There is nowhere to be found in the *Ahadith* or *Sunnah* (practice of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.)) any evidence of Muslims impatiently waiting to seek blessings from the last Friday of *Ramadhan*.

True, the blessings related to the last ten days of *Ramadhan* are mentioned very often. Blessings of *Juma'a* Prayer, wherever and whenever it comes during the year, are mentioned. I want to impress this fact upon the memory of all Muslim brothers, (whether they belong to this Jama'at or not) who unfortunately are not regular in offering their obligatory Prayer and are gathered together in the Mosques in search of that sacred day and, who will hear my voice today because only God knows whether they will be able to return to the Mosques again. I want to make use of this occasion to convey to them that there is no special mention of *Juma'a tul Wida* and its sanctity in the Holy Quran, *Ahadith* or *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) or in the practice of his companions. The kind of day you were waiting for has turned out to be different from your concept of it.

However, *Juma'a tul Mubarak* is a sacred and

blessed day for all Muslims according to the Holy Quran and the *Ahadith*. And this Friday comes every week. Besides, the Holy Quran repeatedly emphasizes the importance and the sanctity of *Salat* (Prayer) in the life of every believer and it comes five times every day. The Holy Quran repeatedly mentions about this blessing that is available to all Muslims five times every day. *Salat* is a treasure of goodness and full of blessings. No other act of worship is mentioned as often in the Holy Quran as the obligatory Prayer (*Salat*). It is strange that people turn away from this obligation and keep waiting for one Friday for their salvation.

The importance of *Juma'a tul Wida* is not mentioned anywhere in the Holy Quran or *Ahadith*. But people can at least learn and earn this blessing from this Friday, *Juma'a tul wida*, if they realize that all goodness of this world and in the hereafter are linked to Allah's worship and every believer is afforded an opportunity to receive them five times a day by performing the obligatory Prayers.

You pass by big Mosques everyday. It may appear to you that those big Mosques are built without any purpose. But you will be amazed to see those big Mosques are overflowing with worshipers today, the day of *Juma'a tul wida*. Streets are sometimes closed to traffic to make space for people who come for prayer in big cities. Many streets outside the Mosques are closed and sometimes special tents are erected to make space for people who come for *Juma'a tul Wida*'s Prayer!

In fact, (according to Allah's command) these worshipers are expected to come to the Mosque (where available) five times a day for their obligatory Prayer. You can easily perceive the difference between the misconceived idea of worship of the worldly people who consider *Juma'a tul wida* as a means to salvation and forget the true

concept of worship that pleases Allah and wins His mercy and blessings, and is in accordance with the instructions in the Holy Quran and *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

True salvation lies in the obedience to Allah and this obedience is best shown through His worship. Worship is the first door to His obedience and entry through this door leads to obedience in all respects. One who closes this door has no access to Allah.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has put great emphasis on Prayer, especially the Prayer in congregation. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have said to his companions after one morning's congregational Prayer, 'some people are sleeping in their homes and if I were permitted by Allah I would take these worshipers with me with loads of firewood and would burn their homes with them. But I am not permitted to do that because God has not made me responsible for their actions.'

You can not imagine a person with greater love for mankind than the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). He was so kind that even a small suffering of other human beings grieved him. He was kind and forgiving particularly towards the believers. The above quoted words uttered by the mouth of the most loving and caring Prophet conveys a message that people who sleep at the time they should be present in the Mosque for Prayer are the fuel of fire. It would be better for them to be burnt in this life so that they might be spared the punishment of hell-fire in the life hereafter.

The true import of this sermon is that man is created to worship Allah. Salvation is dependent upon worship. So my message today is for all the people who can hear my voice, having come in large numbers to the Mosque in search of blessings for their salvation and some of them are praying outside in the streets for lack of space inside the Mosques, that our real worship is our Five Daily Prayers. It is the duty of every believer to respond to the call of Prayer. They should leave their homes and business and proceed to the House of God for Prayer every time they hear 'come to the Prayer, come to the *Salat*; come to the salvation, come to success'. This call is heard five times a day then why do they not

respond to it and go for success and salvation?

Those who are not able to join the congregational Prayer because of illness or some other reason, then they are responsible for their actions and their case rests with God. Every person knows best his own situation and has to give his own account to God.

If a person can not go the Mosque five times a day for congregational Prayer, he should make 'a mosque' wherever he can. He should try to make his friends and family members to join him in Prayer and he should lead the congregational Prayer for the benefit of all. A person, who is anxious to offer all his Prayers in congregation but is not able to do so, is given this glad tidings that all his Prayers would be counted congregational if he calls '*AZAN*' and begins to offer his Prayer as if he were leading a congregation. Then God Almighty shall make the Angels descend and join with him in a Prayer in congregation.

This blessing greets you five times everyday. Those who turn away from it and run after *Juma'a tul wida*, that comes once a year, to seek forgiveness for their sins do not know whether they are going to die just after the *Juma'a* Prayer when their sins have been forgiven (although there is no mention of the promise of Allah's forgiveness attached to *Juma'a tul wida*!) Only Allah knows when the angel of death will visit you, it could be any day of the year. That is why you have an opportunity, five times a day, for Prayer and asking Allah's forgiveness and to be prepared for departure from this world as a purified being.

I, therefore, draw the attention of our Jama'at (and advise all other Muslims who are increasingly joining our *Khutba Juma'a* through Muslim Television Ahmadiyya, MTA), that five daily Prayers should be punctually offered in congregation where possible. This is the soul of the message of the Holy Quran and it should be conveyed to all believers. If all the Muslims fulfil this obligation, then with Allah's blessing a comprehensive system of reformation will be established to bring back the lost glory and greatness of Islam in this world. The outward glory and greatness are interconnected with

the inner spiritual glory and greatness. Nothing can be achieved when all efforts are wasted in pursuit of outward glory and greatness and inner spiritual greatness and glory is not restored.

Therefore, you should seek inner greatness and try to develop your inner self first. May God grant you that greatness for which He Himself says: *'the most honorable and the greatest of all persons among you is the one who is the most righteous, the most God fearing.'* This *'Taqwa'* (righteousness) can not be achieved without fulfilling your obligation of worshiping God Almighty. I am hopeful that with Allah's help you will pursue this objective in life, *Insha Allah*.

I shall now present a Hadith narrating the blessings related to the day of Friday.

'The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said that Friday is the chief of all days and it is greatly ranked in blessing by Allah. Its sanctity is greater than the day of Al-Adha and day of Alfitr.' (*Ibne Maja*)

The fact is that the two *Eids* and *Juma'a tul wida* are all highly sacred days but every Friday is declared to be a more sacred day by Allah than both the *Eids* and it has five prayers.

On Friday God grants His servants all their prayers provided they do not ask anything prohibited. There is a special moment on every Friday when God does not refuse any legitimate request made by His obedient servants. This is a message for those who come to *Juma'a* Prayer regularly, they should specially pray for every goodness for this life and for the next life. They should recognize the importance of *Juma'a* Prayer and should keep praying to Allah for making it easy for those who are not able to come for *Juma'a* Prayer.

There is no mention of *Juma'a tul wida* to be found anywhere that one should keep waiting for or to be the last *Juma'a* when one can ask for anything from God once every year. Strangely enough this concept has become now a custom in the entire *'Umma'* and even those people who never say any Prayer throughout the year come to the Mosques with great zeal on *'Juma'a tul wida'*. Mosques begin to overflow with worshipers and many are

accommodated under tents in the streets, which are temporarily closed to traffic. One may feel affected by the great scene presented by such huge gatherings of worshipers who apparently have come to seek Allah's blessings through worship. But the most painful aspect of this custom is that they have come to bid farewell not only to the last Friday of *Ramadhan* but also to all the Fridays that will follow! They have now to take leave not only of Friday Prayer, but also of all Prayers. The following Friday you will see not only the streets are empty, the Mosques are empty too.

One wonders where those people had come from and where have they gone? Their claim was that they were gathered like moths around a candle. Moths come every night when the candle is lit and their love is proven by the fact that they sacrifice their life for the candlelight. They burn to death but the candle of their love remains alight.

But what kind of love for *Ramadhan* and *Juma'a tul wida* is this that they come and go in a manner that shows that no relationship was ever established between them and *Ramadhan*. This seems to be an impulsive act and apparently very impressive. It was a great Friday, even all the streets were overcrowded. But think of the next Friday too when Mosques will be empty. Only a few worshipers who used to come before *Juma'a tul wida* will come or the number of worshipers may even be smaller as some may think that they have worked hard for a full month and they can rest for a few Fridays!

The Holy Quran and *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), as I have said before, make no special mention of *Juma'a tul Wida*. Special emphasis is placed upon the whole of *Ramadhan* and worship during the night.

Today is *Juma'a tul wida* (farewell *Juma*) but I want to make it a *Juma'a tul istiqlal* (*Juma* of welcome): I must clarify the difference between these two terms. I wait for the whole year to welcome this Friday. But there are many, or at least a large number, who also wait for this Friday but come to bid it farewell. They would like to take leave of all the future Fridays and all goodness.

They bid farewell to Friday to take leave of *Ramadhan* and remembrance of Allah. Most people or at least a large number who attend this Friday with this intention are those who seldom offer their five daily Prayers or *Juma'a Salat*. They never have time for *Juma'a* or other Prayers, they never have time to remember Allah, they never like to sit in the company of the righteous nor do they ever listen to talks related to goodness in life. They keep the company of their own kind where they feel relaxed and do not come under any pressure of those who call others to goodness. They continue wandering with their group, away from Allah.

Only on *Juma'a tul Wida* they are forced by their innate goodness to join the righteous. They are among the righteous today listening to good things but their hope is that after all this is just one Friday and it will pass away. It is *Juma'a tul wida* and they have come to bid it farewell just as children say 'ta ta' to the departing guest.

On the contrary, I have been waiting for this Friday to welcome them because this is a welcome Friday for me. I welcome those people and from this point of view it is a welcome Friday for me. I wait for the whole year for them to come and listen to good things and open their eyes to other realities in life. There is no contradiction in these two concepts of farewell and welcome, it is the way you look at things. For them it is an occasion for farewell and for me it is an occasion to welcome.

Wrong Concept of *Juma'a Tul Wida*

If a person truly believes in the existence of God and considers Him to be the Greatest of all, then how can he turn away from God when he can not behave like this towards those whom he thinks to be great in this world. Lost in the worldly pursuits, how can one keep one's faith in God Almighty and turn away from Him when the time for daily Prayers comes? This will be a lie and a life of deceit. One must pay attention to this fact that ultimately our return is to Him. God Almighty has created us and has sent us in this world and all the blessings we have received are given to us by Allah, the Creator of the entire Universe. Being ungrateful for all His rewards is indeed a very undesirable kind of life.

You continue to stay at the door of an important person in this world when you think he can bestow something on you. Often he does not. How many politicians are there who have given anything to their followers? It is just a feeling of false pride of being important because of your connection with a highly placed person, although he does not actually give you anything.

Why are you not ever so grateful to God Almighty who is the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds and has provided you with everything you need in life? His obedience you think is a heavy burden and his worship you consider a calamity! You think you can please God by attending one *Juma'a* Prayer once every year and remain a friend with little effort or sacrifice!

As a matter of fact, many so called Muslim leaders and scholars tend to mislead people. They say that God is Merciful and Kind. So there is no need to undergo any hardship for His sake or to find Him. If you come to *Juma'a tul wida* and pray till *Asr* (afternoon) Prayer, you will be forgiven all your sins not only of that year but also of your entire life. Thus they narrate (and dwell on) the blessings and greatness of *Juma'a tul wida* to the ignorant masses and whatever good sense they may have is further depleted. They talk in total contradiction to the teachings of the Holy Quran.

You must remember that it is stated in the Holy Quran that if you come to God just for a short time, He will listen to your prayer. However, it may mean absolutely nothing if you do not establish a permanent relationship with Allah. Your selfish motive would not benefit you as you came and left and did not establish that lasting bond with God. God will certainly inform you when you finally appear before Him what you used to do on earth. As a consequence of your sinful life here, you will be nothing but a fuel for hell fire in the hereafter.

However, the deceitful mullahs are telling you that you do not need to worry about anything if you just say with your tongue that you love the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), then you are permitted to do anything. And those of your sins which God can not forgive, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would get those

forgiven! The people who are given such concept of religion lose everything, their *DEEN* and their *DUNYA* i.e., their life on earth is wasted and consequently they will suffer in the hereafter.

“Therefore, wake up Ahmadi Muslims! If you have not been punctual in your Prayers, let this Friday welcome you and help you to undergo a complete change and you begin to be nearer to God. Giving yourself completely to God is a tall claim but you can not be His unless you start on this journey. You should move in His direction a few steps then He will guide you and take care of you by coming closer to you. It is not that hard to get closer to God. You should begin praying for yourself on this Friday. You should set your goals with a plan on how you are going to continue to receive the blessings of this Friday through the rest of the year.

Move Towards The City of Goodness

You should try to understand the message

carefully and make a decision that this year you will depart from the city of evils and begin moving towards the city of goodness. If you do so, you have then the assurance of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) that you will meet a noble end in the sight of Allah wherever you give your life in your journey towards Allah. You must move towards goodness, even if you have to crawl. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has given the example of a person who is near death, who has little strength left in his body but continues his struggle to move forward on his knees and elbows to give his life amidst the righteous people of God. It is impossible that God will not forgive after observing this scene. When you experience this kind of change in you, then *Juma 'a tul wida* will have a different meaning for you. It will be a farewell to all evils while its blessings will continue. You will continue to have blessings of other Fridays too (*Insha Allah*).”

The Eid Sermon:

YOU WILL ENJOY YOUR EID IF YOU MAKE EID FOR THE POOR AND IMPOVERISHED PEOPLE

The best solution to fulfilling your needs is to get busy in fulfilling the needs of humanity
Serve the poor for you have your bounty because of them

(*Eidul Fitr* Sermon of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, delivered on January 8, 2000, at Tilford, U.K. Translated from *Alfazl International*, December 22, 2000 by Basharat Munir Mirza, Athens Jamaat)

After *Tashahud*, *Ta'awuz* and *Surah Fateha*, Huzoor recited these verses of the Holy Quran:

“And they feed, for love of Him, the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner, saying: ‘We feed you for Allah’s pleasure only, we desire no reward nor thanks from you.’” (76:9-10)

Then he presented some *Ahadith* which shed light on the need for sympathy for the poor and fulfilling their needs. The words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) have great power and appeal to the hearts. (We give below only the words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and leave out the chain of references. Please refer to *Alfazl International*, Jan. 8, 2000

“Whosoever fulfils the needs of his brother, Allah fulfils his needs.” (*Muslim*)

Thus the best recipe for the fulfilment of your needs is to get busy in fulfilling the needs of humanity. While you are working for others, Allah is fulfilling your needs. Other *Ahadith* are:

“A person who alleviated a Muslim’s worldly anguish, Allah will alleviate his anguish on the Day of Judgment.” (*Muslim*)

“Allah helps a person as long as he is ready to help his fellow person.” (*Masnad Ahmad bin Hambal*)

This means that it is not only Muslims we should

help, but should help all humanity. Another *hadith* is:

“On the Day of Judgment, Allah will say: ‘O son of Adam, I was sick and you did not inquire about me.’ Man will say: ‘O God, You sustain the universe, how could I inquire about your health?’ Allah will say: ‘Did you not know that a certain person was sick and you did not go visit him. If you had gone to him, you would have found Me with him.’ ‘O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you did not give me food.’ Man will say: ‘You feed and sustain the whole universe, how could I feed You?’ Allah will say: ‘Don’t you know that a certain person asked you for food and you did not feed him. Could you not understand that to feed him was tantamount to feeding Me.’ Then God will say: ‘O son of Adam, I asked you for water and you did not give me water.’ The man will say: ‘You sustain the whole universe, how could I offer You water?’ God will say: ‘A certain person asked you for water and you did not give him water. Could you not understand that to give water to him was akin to giving Me water.’” (*Muslim*)

This is a word of wisdom. To cater to God is not possible for a person, but when a person fulfils the needs of a fellow being, he is serving Allah. Another Hadith goes like this:

“There are three virtues in a person, Allah will encompass him with His Mercy: (1) To be merciful to the weak; (2) To love and cherish the parents; (3) kindness to those who work for you. (*Tirmidhi*)

“Look for me among the weak among you. You are provided for (by Allah) only on account of the poor and weak.” (*Tirmidhi*)

This is something a person usually ignores. It is the poor who are a source of bounty for the rich any way you look at it. The rich get their wealth from the labors of the poor. They forget that and turn away when the poor ask for help. This is a great injustice. So help the poor as your wealth is on account of them. Here are some more sayings of the

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.):

“All humans are children of God. Allah loves those among His creation who are kind to other humans.” (*Mishkat*)

“The best household among Muslims is that where there is an orphan and he is treated with kindness. The worst household is where there is an orphan and the orphan is treated badly.” (*Ibn Majah*)

A person complained to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) about his hard heartedness. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “If you want to become kindhearted, feed the poor and become a guardian to an orphan.” (*Masnad Ahmad bin Hambal*)

Hazrat Ja’far bin Abi Talib loved the poor, kept them company, talked with them and they talked with him. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to call him *Abul-Masakeen* (the father of the poor). (*Ibn Majah*)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “O Allah, keep me alive in a state of humbleness, make me die humble and poor and raise me up with the humble” Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) asked: “Why, O Prophet of Allah?” The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) replied: “The humble will enter Paradise 40 years before the affluent. O Ayesha, do not send away a poor, even if you can only give him half a date fruit. O Ayesha, love the poor and keep them near you. On the Day of Judgment, Allah will give you His nearness.” (*Tirmidhi*)

Here it is 40 years, in some other traditions it is hundreds of years. These are metaphorical terms. It simply means that the poor will be pardoned much earlier and Allah will show beneficence to them. It is obvious that when the heart of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) is with the poor, then because of him, the poor will receive pardons earlier.

Then Huzoor said: I have given you some excerpts from the Hadith because at the time of *Eid* it is particularly worth reminding, and I have reminded you often, that you should try to make the *Eid* for the poor and indigent among you. When you

make their *Eid*, Allah will make your *Eid*. This has deep significance. The Ahmadies are getting used to giving extra help to the poor at the time of *Eid*.

The Promised Messiah (a.s.) says:

“If you want to find God, you will find Him near the hearts of the poor. This is why the prophets embraced humbleness. In the same manner, people from a big nation should not belittle small nations. Neither should one brag about his lineage and race. Allah says that He will not ask you about your race when you present yourselves before Him. He will ask you about your actions. Similarly, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said to his daughter Fatima (r.a.): ‘God will not ask about your race. If you do a wrong deed, you will not be forgiven only because you are the daughter of a prophet. Therefore, you should always ponder about your actions.’” (*Malfoozat*, Vol.3, pg. 370)

Again, the Promised Messiah (a.s.) says:

“In reality, it is a big thing to be kind to God’s creatures and Allah loves it. We see this in everyday life also. If the servant of someone goes to his master’s friend and that friend ignores him, will the master be happy with his friend? Although this friend did not hurt him personally, the treatment of the servant reflects on the treatment of the master. Allah is also irritated if one is indifferent to His creatures. Allah loves His creation, so a person is kind to others, Allah is pleased with him. (*Malfoozat*, Vol. 4, pg. 215-216)

“Thus kindness to humanity is a worship and a hefty means to earn the Grace of God. I observe that some actions are contrary to that. Some are treated as inferiors, they are mocked at, rather than helping them looking after them. I am afraid such people may get into trouble themselves. If God has been gracious, we should be thankful to Him by treating the poor graciously. God’s bounties on us should not make us arrogant so we maul down the poor.” (*Malfoozat*, Vol. 4, pg. 438)

“I see that many have no sympathy for their fellow men. If one person is dying of hunger, the other pays no attention nor look after him. If he is in any other trouble, they do not spend any of their wealth to help. The Hadith commands of looking after our neighbors, to the extent that if you cook meat, make some extra gravy in it so you can share with your neighbor. Many look after only themselves and ignore others. A neighbor is not only one who lives next door, all your brothers are neighbors, even if they live hundreds of miles away.” (*Malfoozat*, Vol. 4, pg.215)

It must be noted that hundreds of miles of those days are like thousands of miles of today. There are many in Pakistan undergoing hardships. If those in America, Canada, Germany or England do not help them from thousands of miles away, then they have ignored a basic teaching of Islam. We should, therefore, look after all our brothers, even those thousands of miles away, to the extent of our God given capacity. The Promised Messiah (a.s.) further says:

“Thus virtues are the source of all advancement. In my mind, it is the aspect of the rights of humanity which enforces our duties towards God. God does not let the faith of a person diminish who treats his fellow humans kindly. When a person helps one in need just to please Allah, his faith becomes stronger. We must be mindful that acts done for show only are not counted with God and are useless. Some people make big buildings for their personal fame, not to make them available for the poor to stay. On the other hand, even a small act for the sake of God is not wasted and is rewarded by Him.” (*Malfoozat*, Vol. 4, pg. 216)

Even God has enjoined that when you help an unfortunate person, do not take his thanks for it, saying that you are doing it just to please God. The real service is that which is done just for the sake of God, not to get thanks from other persons. If thanks are offered, they only embarrass the person doing the service and he says that it is only for the sake of God that he did it.

FASTING IN ISLAM

(An abridged version of the translation from *Fiqah-e-Ahmadiyya*, the authoritative compilation on Islamic jurisprudence according to Ahmadiyya interpretation. Translated by Mr. L. R. Mahmood, Texas)

Fasting is an important pillar of Islam. This act of devotion suppresses temptations, cultivates patience and instills zeal to obey Allah.

The Promised Messiah (a.s.) has said:

“A religion without hardship and trials is devoid of potential for accomplishing reformation.” (*Fatawa Ahmadiyya*, p. 183)

Fasting literally means Abstention. In Islamic terminology *Saum* (fasting) means abstention from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk, with an intention of religious devotion. Allah, the Almighty, says in the Holy Quran:

“*And eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then complete the fast until the nightfall.*” (2:188)

Abstention from eating, drinking and conjugal relations, in obedience to divine command, symbolically stands for warning to guard us from impulses of all kinds of vices and evil tendencies. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

“He who does not abandon falsehood and false actions in state of fast, Allah has no need that he should abandon his food and drink.” (*Bokhari*)

This hadith simply conveys that if the real purpose of fasting is eclipsed, mere hunger and thirst cannot be beneficial. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), remarked at another occasion:

“Fasting not only implies abstaining from eating and drinking but also from all type of gossip and obscene talk. Should anyone revile or seek to pick a quarrel with a fasting person, he should suppress his anger and respond: ‘I am observing fast’. If anyone utters abusive and insulting words, despite fasting, his hunger and thirst would go in vain.” (*Daarmy* with reference to

Mishkat, p. 177)

Fasting among Earlier People

Fasting as an act of divine worship, can be traced in ancient religions. Allah, the Almighty, has referred to it in the Holy Quran:

“*O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may guard against evil.*” (2:184)

Although Islamic fasting differs in form from the fasting practiced by followers of earlier religions, basic elements appear to be common. The Holy Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.) has referred to one such difference:

“A major difference between our fast and the fast of the Jewish people is that we take meal at dawn (*sahoor*) while the Jews do not.” (*Musnad Daarmy*, p. 154)

Hindus are permitted to eat or drink during fasting with the exception of certain types of foods and drinks. Christians, in some kind of fasts, do not eat meat or leaven bread. In some religious denominations, fast continues for twenty four hours without taking meals at the start. Some people fast for four consecutive days. Others refrain from solid food during fast. They are allowed to partake light refreshment like milk or juice. Such food does not invalidate their fast.

Purpose of Islamic Fast

The main purpose of the prescribed fasting is soul-purification through self-denial and self-discipline. In fasting, one abandons all sorts of permissible pleasures, shuns all types of prohibited things and concentrates on good deeds.

The following words of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih, II, (r.a.) emphasize the same aspect:

“The fasting does not aim to torture individuals

with pangs of hunger and thirst. If hunger or thirst could have bestowed Paradise on humans, even the worst type of non-believers or hypocrites would have ventured to enter Paradise by abstaining from food and drink till death. It is extremely difficult to bring about a moral and spiritual revolution in one's life, which is the main objective of the institution of fasting. People are used to hunger and thirst during strikes in prisons or for pressing their demands. Brahmans (a priestly class in India) have been employing this technique to force their followers to obey them. Experiencing hunger or thirst does not constitute a supreme sacrifice. Hence it is not the real purpose of fasting.

The real purpose of fasting in *Ramadhan* is that the believers should be fully prepared to abandon everything for the sake of Allah. The discipline of hunger and thirst is merely symbolic. A believer is prepared to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual gratification for Allah's sake. When he can easily and willingly surrender what is lawful and permitted, he would not be tempted to violate Allah's prohibitions. *Ramadhan* comes to remind us that the blessed time has come that we should abandon even our lawful rights for Allah's sake." (*Alfazi*, March 30, 1926, p. 5)

Hazrat Khalifatul-Mashi, I (r.a.) once remarked:

"He who leaves his own possessions, whose use is neither legally nor morally prohibited, for Allah's sake, would never cast a glance at the things which belong to others. Naturally he would never harbor the desire of using things which have been declared unlawful by Allah." (*Alfazi*, December 17, 1966, p. 8)

Religiously speaking, fasting not only purifies the soul but also illumines the heart to experience spiritual enlightenment. Fasting bestows many important physical, moral and social advantages. It equips us with an ever increasing energy to penetrate in the spiritual realm. Fasting is a kind of spiritual food. Material food nourishes and sustains our body. This spiritual food (fasting) purifies and

fortifies our soul. The Quranic verse "*And the fasting is good for you, if you only knew*" (2:185) refers to it.

The Holy Quran presents fasting as a time-honored confirmed prescription for attainment of self-purification and righteousness:

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

There are four things which are sources of all rebellious tendencies: (1) Eating (2) Consumption of beverages (3) Lust (4) Wish to avoid hard work and exertion.

All other actions and situations are the offshoots of the above culprits. Since all other rebellious acts sprout from the above mentioned four things, Islam has sought to harness them by prescribing obligatory fasting. Imagine a man who does not wish to work hard, to earn lawful income, rather he prefers to have money by hook or by crook. If he fasts, it would become practically difficult for him to pursue that course of action. He has to devote a major part of night in worship. Moreover he has to get up early for taking meal for fasting (*sahoor*) and has to refrain from idle talk and obscene language and other bad deeds during fasting. Moreover he is exposed to this rigorous discipline throughout *Ramadhan* and becomes used to it. Naturally a great change is silently wrought in his thinking. Likewise he has to abandon eating, drinking and coition in state of fast, from dawn to sunset. Practically he is liberated from the bondage of those powerful impulses which generally lead to sin." (*Alfazi*, December 17, 1966)

Fasting has physical advantages too. It bestows on a practicing believer a great deal of patience and fortitude to face tribulations and difficulties. At times, certain food restrictions are imposed as medical necessity. If the principle of moderation is followed, it ensures good health. In other words, fasting is a source of righteousness from spiritual point of view and at the same time ensures good health, inculcates excellent morals, preserves

chastity, honesty, integrity, virtuous conduct, patience and courage. It generates sympathy in the heart by creating a soft corner for the poor and less fortunate segments of society. That is how fasting helps to promote economic and social harmony.

High Rank and Reward for Fasting

A well known Hadith reads:

“Allah says that man undertakes many things for his own sake but observes fast for My sake and I shall bestow the reward for it. He undertakes fast, gives up his food, drink and desire for My sake. (Bokhari, p. 255)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) remarked:

“By Him in whose hands is the life of Muhammad, the breath of one who is fasting is purer in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk.” (Bokhari)

“He who observes midnight prayer and fasts in *Ramadhan*, with intention of satisfying all the requirements of faith, his/her previous sins are pardoned.” (Bokhari, p. 260)

Kinds of Fasts

The Holy Quran and Hadith refer to different kinds of fasts which can be divided into two classes:

1. Obligatory fasts
2. Voluntary fasts

Obligatory Fasts

1. Prescribed fasts in the month of *Ramadhan*,
2. Omitted fasts of *Ramadhan* which must be undertaken,
3. Fast for atoning “*Zihar*”.*
4. Fast for atoning unintentional murder
5. Sixty consecutive fasts as penalty for breaking a prescribed fast intentionally
6. Atonement fast for breaking an oath.
7. Fasting to honor a voluntary pledge to fast
8. Fasts associated with *Hajj-e-Tammatu*** and *Hajj-e-Qiran****
9. Penalty fasts for hunting in state of *Ihram*
10. Penalty fasts for shaving head in state of *Ihram*.

Voluntary Fasts

1. Six fasts in the month of *Shawal*
2. Fast on the day of *Ashura*
3. Fasts observed by Prophet Daud (David) – i.e. fasting on alternate days.
4. Fasting on the day of *Arafa* (i.e. 9th *Zil-Hajj*)
5. Fasting on 13th, 14th and 15th day of every lunar month of Islamic calendar.

Prohibited Days

It may please be noted that fasting is prohibited on the following days/occasions:

1. *Eid-ul-fitr* (1st *Shawal*)
2. *Eid-ul-adhia* (10th *Zil Hajj*)
3. *Tashriq* days (11th, 12th and 13th *Zil-Hajj*)
4. Fasting on every day of the year (365 days consecutively)
5. Fasting on “*Nerose*” and “*Mehrgan*”*

(*Fatawa Alamgeeri* and *Durr-e-Mukhtar* with reference to *Bahar-e-Shariat* Vol. 5, p. 98)

Fasting in Ramadhan

The Holy Quran refers to *Ramadhan* as a blessed month. The revelation of the Holy Quran ensued in the month of *Ramadhan*.

“*The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Quran was revealed as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and judgement (between right and wrong).* (2:186)

The Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said about the month of *Ramadhan*:

“When *Ramadhan* arrives, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are locked up and Satans are put in chains.” (Bokhari - p. 255)

Ramadhan is the month of divine blessings and mercy. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) used to devote a lot of time, energy and money in supplications and charity.

Obligation to Fast

Every adult, sane and capable (healthy) Muslim male and female is bound to fast in the month of *Ramadhan*. Travelers and sick persons are

exempted with the condition that they should complete the omitted days of fasting later on (before the advent of next *Ramadhan*). The following categories of people are excused from fasting on the condition that they should pay expiation (*Fidya*) by feeding a poor man for each omitted fast.

1. The sick and the aged and infirm who have no hope of having a chance to observe fasting in *Ramadhan*.
2. Expectant ladies and nursing mothers who breast-feed their babies.

The Holy Quran says:

"But whosoever among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast same number of other days, and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation – the feeding of a poor man." (2:185)

Beginning of the Fasting Session

The following Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) deals with this issue:

"Do not start fasting without observing the crescent (of Ramadhan)" (Bokhari, p. 255)

It has two aspects:

- (a) Observing with eyes
- (b) Observing as a result of knowledge

Sight of crescent, on a clear day, by a single honest and dependable individual is legally sufficient to start fasting. The consequent announcement in electronic media (radio, TV) is valid. The completion of 30 days of *Sha'ban* (month preceding *Ramadhan*) is also a valid reason. Knowledgeable authorities can decide the matter and guide the community accordingly.

However it is important to take into account the aspect of horizon while considering astronomical appearance of crescent at a particular location. Such sighting of the crescent applies to only those areas or regions which share the same horizon and are not too far away. For example, Pakistan and the United Kingdom do not have the same horizon and are separated by thousands of miles. The observing of

Ramadhan crescent in England will not be binding on people living in Pakistan.

Intention (Niyya) For Fasting

It is necessary that one should intend to keep fast as a religious obligation. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

"He who fasts without having an intention for observing fast, prior to Fajr, is without a fast." (Tirmidhi, p. 87)

There are no fixed set of words to be used as declaration of intention. Intention or *Niyya* is actually the existence of that firm determination to refrain from eating, drinking, etc., for the purpose of fasting. For a voluntary fast, one can make intention up to *Zuhr* Prayer provided he/she has not tasted a food or a drink up to that time. The same applies to *Ramadhan* fast in case of a genuine circumstance.

Time to Start and End the Fast

The Holy Quran says:

"And eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of dawn. Then complete the fast till nightfall." (2: 188)

The following Hadith of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) deals with the same subject:

"When the night approaches and the day retreats and the sun has set, the one observing the fast breaks it." (Tirmidhi, p. 88)

Keeping fast with some food around midnight or without taking meals at dawn is not in accordance with the practice of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). The showering of divine blessings is associated with following the practice of The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), which is partaking of meals before breaking of dawn, known as "*sahoor*". The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) advised his companions with the following words:

"Take breakfast before the fast begins, there is blessing in breakfast." (Bokhari, p. 257)

Now-a-days we can easily estimate the time for

breaking of dawn (time to stop eating) with reference to time of sunrise. It is an hour and twenty two minutes before the sunrise. Next activity is the *Fajr* prayer. The time between the two (end of *Sahoor* and start of *Fajr* prayer) is roughly equal to the time spent on the recitation of fifty verses of The Holy Quran.

End of the Fast

Soon after the sunset, one should hasten to break the fast. Unnecessary delay in breaking the fast is not a correct attitude. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

“My people will adhere to good as long as they do not delay in breaking the fast.” (*Bokhari*, p. 263)

Another Hadith gives some interesting details:

“We were with The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in the course of a journey, when he was observing a voluntary fast. When the sun set he said to someone: so and so, dismount and prepare the food for us. He answered: Messenger of Allah if you would let it be dark. He repeated: Dismount and prepare the *Aftari* (food) for us. The man said: there is daylight still. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said a third time: Dismount and prepare the *Aftari* for us. On this the man dismounted and brought him the *Aftari*. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) ate of it and pointing to the East said: When you perceive the night approaching from that direction let the one observing the fast break it.” (*Muslim*, p. 456)

Breaking of fast with dates, milk or water is the practice (*Sunnah*) of The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

The following prayer should be recited at the time of breaking the fast:

“O Allah I observed the fast for Thy sake and I break it with food provided by Thee.” (*Abu Daud*)

After breaking the fast a believer may add the following words:

“Thirst has been quenched, arteries have been

refreshed and the reward for fasting would be granted by the grace of Allah.” (*Abu Daud*)

According to a saying of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), he who makes arrangement for breaking of the fast of another believer, is granted the reward of observing a fast, without diminishing the reward of the other.

Infractions of Fasting

The following factors invalidate the fast:

1. Eating and drinking knowingly/willfully
2. Sexual intercourse (Any seminal emission)
3. Enema
4. Injection
5. Deliberate vomiting

According to Hadith, involuntary vomiting does not vitiate the fast. There is no “*Qada*” or restitution for it. (*Tirmidhi*, p. 90) Such a person should complete the fast.

There is “*Qada*” (restitution) as well as “*Kaffara*” (atonement) for breaking a fast deliberately. “*Qada*” consists of fasting one day for each invalidated fast. “*Kaffara*” is the penalty for the same offence and consist of two months of consecutive fasting or feeding of sixty poor or needy people. Sixty poor persons can be fed collectively on a single day – or one poor man can be given provisions or cash to cover food expenses for sixty days.

If the man guilty of breaking a fast deliberately, himself is a poor and needy person and cannot afford to feed sixty poor people, he can leave his matter with Allah, heavily relying on his infinite mercy and forgiveness. (*Bokhari*, p. 259)

Women in their menstruation or ‘*Nifas*’ (post-natal bleeding) are not allowed to fast. Since there is ‘*Qada*’ for the omitted days of fasting, they are required to make up later for the missed days.

What Does Not Invalidate a Fast

The following do not vitiate fasting:

1. Eating and drinking while truly forgetting that he/she is fasting.

2. Involuntary entering of smoke, dust, fly, gnat, etc. into throat or food pipe. Same applies to droplets of water while gargling or swallowing of one's saliva.
3. Entry of water into external ear
4. Pouring of ear drops
5. Bleeding from gums and teeth
6. Brushing of teeth with brush or acacia twig ("Miswak")
7. Smelling of perfume
8. Anointing of head or beard
9. Kissing a child or wife
10. Wet dream
11. Failure to take ritual bath before "Sahoor", after having consorted with wife during the night of fasting.
12. Nose bleed
13. Applying of "Kajal" (eye cosmetic) by females.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) has prohibited men from using eye cosmetic while fasting (*Musnad Darrmy*, p. 157)

In answer to a similar question, the Promised Messiah (a.s.) said:

"There is no express need for use of eye cosmetic during the day in *Ramadhan*. Let him apply it at night." (*Badr*, February 7, 1907)

Disrespect for Ramadhan

Failure to observe fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, without valid reason or for minor excuses is a wrong and unfortunate development. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

"If someone neglect a single fast in *Ramadhan*, without an acceptable excuse, he cannot make amends for the omission even by fasting for the rest of his life." (*Musnad Daarhy*, p. 156)

The following remarks of Hazrat Khalifatul-Mashi, II, emphasize the importance of fasting:

"Some people, who regard fasting an ordinary commandment, fail to observe it for trivial excuses. Some of them do not fast for fear of falling sick. This is not a valid excuse. One can

be exempted from fasting only when he is actually sick and nature of the sickness is such that fasting may worsen it. In the face of a minor indisposition or a condition which cannot be affected adversely by fasting, neglecting of fast, being unlawful, cannot be justified." (*Al-Fazl*, April 11, 1925)

PRONOUNCEMENTS (FATAWA)

Fasting And Intention (Niyya)

Question: Is declaration of intention necessary for fasting?

Answer: Hadhrat Khalifatul-Mashi II (r.a.) said:

"Intention is necessary for fasting. No reward is credited without intention. Intention is the determination of heart and mind." (*The Alfazl*, July 28, 1914)

Take the case of a man who remained extremely absorbed in his work or slept the whole day without tasting food or drink. The hunger and thirst of this man cannot be regarded as fasting. The major difference is that he had no intention of keeping fast.

Question: A person did not intend to fast at the time of 'Sahoor' but made an intention to do so around 10 or 11 o'clock. Is this type of "fast" a valid fast?

Answer: The right time for making intention for fasting is before dawn i.e. *Sahoor* time. However, an exceptional situation can be considered on its merit. As an example consider the case of a man who was not aware that the month of *Ramadhan* has already started. On getting up he learnt that it was the first day of *Ramadhan*. He can make the intention for observing fast provided he has not taken food up to that time.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) remarked:

"Only that man's fast is valid who made a firm intention for fasting on that day before *Fajr*." (*Tirmidhi*, p. 91)

Another Hadith shows that there is some flexibility in case of voluntary fasting. The Hadith reveals that at times The Holy Prophet Muhammad

(s.a.w.) would come home in the morning and ask for some food for breakfast. On finding that no food was available, he would opt to observe fasting.” (*Muslim*, p. 481)

Another Hadith refers to a particular situation when, before noon, the news reached Medina that the *Ramadhan* crescent had been sighted in Suburbia. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) decreed:

“He who has not eaten anything from dawn should intend to complete fast but those who have taken meals should fast on another day as restitution (‘*Qada*’)” (*Abu Daud*, p. 320)

Question: Is taking of meals (*Sahoor*) a legal essential for fasting?

Answer: Partaking of meals for fasting is a source of great blessing. In case of a special situation one can fast without taking food before dawn.

It may be noted that it is an important *Sunnah* of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

“Take food for fasting because such a food is blessed.” (*Bokhari*, p. 257)

Another Hadith conveys that angels invoke blessings on a person who takes meals for observing fast. (*Sharah Muatta Imam Malik*, Vol. 3, p. 15)

Question: The following question was presented to the Promised Messiah (a.s.) for guidance:

“While I was in my room, considering that there was enough time to keep fast, I ate with the intention of observing fast. Thereafter someone pointed out to me that the white thread of dawn was already visible. What should I do?”

Answer: The Promised Messiah (a.s.) replied:

“His fast is valid. There is no need to keep a substitute fast as retribution (‘*Qada*’) because he has observed precaution and has made intention for the fasting.” (*The Badr*, February 4, 1907)

Question: What is the meaning of the following Qur’anic verse in the light of Arabic lexicon:

“*Then complete the fast till nightfall.*” (2:188)

Answer: According to Arabic lexicon the word “*lail*” (night) refers to the time from sunset to sunrise – but in accordance with the Holy Prophet’s (s.a.w.) *Sunnah*, the Qur’anic usage of the term refers to the beginning of night, *i.e.*, the time of sunset.

An important Hadith, recorded in both *Bokhari* and *Muslim* endorses this concept. The Hadith reads:

“When you perceive the night approaching from the East and sun setting in the West, let the one observing the fast break it.” (*Bokhari*, p. 262; *Muslim*, p. 456)

Fasting and Traveling

i. The Promised Messiah (a.s.) regarded fasting during journey or sickness as a violation of Divine commandment contained in the Holy Quran.

“*The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days.*” (2:185)

ii. Considering the physical displacement, a journey terminating in the Jama’at Headquarters, is still a journey. Since the Holy Quran exempts travelers from fasting, the travelers who reached Qadian before sunset, were told to break their fast on the instruction of the Promised Messiah (a.s.).

iii. The people who are obliged to travel as part of their professional duties *i.e.*, railway guards, drivers, pilots postal workers, etc., would not be regarded as travelers. They are required to fast during *Ramadhan*. (*Fiqah-e-Ahmadiyya*, p. 288)

The Promised Messiah (a.s.) has elaborated this issue from another angle:

“If someone travels by rail and does not experience any difficulty, he may fast, otherwise he is entitled to benefit from the leave granted by Allah.” (*The Al-Hakam*, December 24, 1900)

Question: Somebody is fasting but unexpectedly a situation has arisen that demands immediate traveling. Should he break his fast?

Answer: Traveling in *Ramadhan* should be avoided. It should be undertaken only when one is compelled by circumstances beyond his control. It should be left to his discretion to embark upon a journey or not. In that case he himself would be answerable to Allah for his choice.

Fasting While Traveling

Hadhrat Khalifa-Tul-Mashi II, (r.a.) once gave the following remarks on the issue:

“My belief about traveling is that the journey which is undertaken after ‘*Sahoor*’ and which ends before sunset – is not a journey from point of view of fasting. Maybe some jurists have a dissident opinion on this point but I think that Islamic *Sharia* stops from fasting while traveling but does not ban traveling while fasting. Therefore a journey which starts after ‘*Sahoor*’ and ends before sunset is not a journey for the purpose of fasting. One can travel in state of fast but cannot fast when traveling.” (The *Alfazl*, Sept. 25, 1942)

Question: What does Islam teach regarding fasting while on a journey? What is the minimum distance in miles which makes a journey permissible for not observing fasting?

Answer: Travelers are exempted from fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*. However, it is important that such a person should not eat or drink in public places. Islamic *Sharia* has not stated quantitatively the minimum or maximum distance in miles. It has been left to the discretion of the traveler.

Summary of The Above Discussion

Traveling can take the following four forms:

1. Continuous journey on foot or by a vehicle and the traveler is constantly covering distance. He should not fast in this situation.
2. If he breaks his journey and has to pass the night and the following day at a place where he can keep fast by using the available facilities. In such a case he may or may not fast.

3. He takes meals at *Sahoor* and then embarks upon journey and anticipates to return home before sunset. In this situation he may fast.
4. Suppose he has to stay at another location for fifteen days or more and can make arrangement for meals at *Sahoor*. In this particular situation he should fast regularly.

The Promised Messiah (a.s.) says about travelers and the sick:

“Any sick person or a traveler who fasts in the month of *Ramadhan*, violates Divine law. Allah, the Almighty has explicitly exempted the sick and the travelers from the obligation to fast. They should fast for the same number of omitted days after recovering from illness or after returning from the journey... Salvation cannot be achieved forcibly by dint of virtuous deeds. It comes as a manifestation of Divine grace. Allah has not differentiated between major or minor illness or long or short journey. The command deals with illness or journey without specification. The travelers and the sick who insist on observing fasting, actually become guilty of violating a Divine command.” (The *Badr*, Oct. 17, 1907)

The Age for Fasting

Hadhrat Khalifa-Tul-Mashi II, (r.a.) has dealt with this issue in the following words:

“Some parents force their children to fast in *Ramadhan*. That is a wrong attitude. The fact is that there is a certain age for observance of different commandments. Some commands are to be obeyed at the age of four, some when kids are seven years old and others at fifteen or eighteen years. I think that fasting should be observed at the age of fifteen to eighteen – because this is the age of puberty or maturity. Boys and girls at fifteen, should be told to develop a taste for observing fast in *Ramadhan*, and should fast regularly as an obligation at eighteen. In our childhood we were eager to observe fasting but the Promised Messiah (a.s.) did not allow us to fast. Childhood is that phase of age when children need environment and

facilities to grow and gain strength for future demands. At the age of fifteen, they should start fasting. Next year the number of days for fasting, should be increased. More days should be added in the third year. In this way, gradually they would be prepared to fully honor the institution of fasting." (*The Alfazl*, April 11, 1925)

"For an aged and infirm person, whose strength and physiology are declining, observing of fasting cannot be regarded as an act of piety, as it is likely to worsen his condition. Likewise for a growing child, who is in the process of storing energy for the demands of forthcoming five or six decades, fasting cannot be counted as a virtuous deed. But if a capable and healthy adult, who is the right person invited in the Quranic verses to observe fasting in *Ramadhan*, fails to do so, it is sinful in the sight of Allah." (*The Alfazl*, February 2, 1933)

Nursing Mothers, Expectant Ladies, Minors and Students

The Holy Quran exempts from fasting the sick and the travelers. Such exemption does not exist in the Holy Quran for nursing mothers and pregnant ladies but the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) has placed them in the category of "the sick". Likewise kids, who are in need of rich nourishment for growth, can be placed in the same category. Same applies to the students, with weak build-up, who prepare for examination and are exposed to extreme mental stress. At times such students fall sick physically or mentally. One should evaluate this situation with utmost care. What is the benefit of fasting for a few days, in such circumstances and becoming deprived of the blessing of fasting for the rest of the life. (*The Alfazl*, Vol. 18,

No. 88, 1930-31)

Question: With reference to fasting, what does Islam teach concerning a student who has to study hard for the forthcoming examination?

Answer: Islam does not teach us to make fasting an excuse to run away from our day-to-day normal activities. If the work schedule of a person makes fasting practically unbearable, then he can be placed in the category of "the sick". In that case, he himself is solely responsible for this decision or choice. Allah would treat him in the light of his intention and the existing situation. In such circumstances, a man himself is the best judge of his heart and mind.

A person who always falls sick on account of observance of fasting, is exempted from this exercise. If it is a kind of permanent condition, then he is permanently exempted. But if this condition is the result of a particular weather or season then he should fast same number of days at some other time of the year. The situation must be handled with a high degree of righteousness. His excuse of being "sick" must be valid and genuine. (*The Alfazl*, May 22, 1922)

Question: Periodically *Ramadhan* comes in a season when, for instance, farm-workers have to do a lot of labor in the fields. What is the Islamic teaching in respect of the affected people?

Answer: The following remarks of the Promised Messiah (a.s.) shed light on the subject:

"The Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) teaches that actions would be judged in the light of intentions. The affected people know the true nature of their situation. Every individual should decide in the spirit of high degree of righteousness and piety. (*The Badr*, September 26, 1907)

THE LAST TEN DAYS (ASHRA) OF RAMADHAN

(Translated by Dr. A. M. Shamim from *Monthly Khalid*, Rabwah)

Many bounties have been associated with the last of the Ramadhan. Come let us see the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.) Sunnat on how we should spend these last days of Ramadhan.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV has said:

"Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) (God be pleased with her) has related: "In the last *Ashara* of *Ramadhan* the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would strive to increase the time spent in worship to far exceed that spent thus in ordinary days."

The accounts which we have from Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) by the ordinary practice of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, is such that it inspires wonder and awe that a human being could spend so much time and energy in the worship of God. He would sometimes spend the whole night in supplication before his Lord. He would become so involved in his supplication that it would seem as if there were only empty garments thrown on the ground, not clothing anyone. Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) would at times find the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) absent and suspect that he had gone to another wife's home.

She would hurry out to look for him and find him engrossed in prayer. She would hear him praying so fervently that he sounded like the furious bubbling of a kettle. When she found the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) thus and returned home, what could be her state? What had she suspected? And what had she actually found?

These occasions that I have presented are an account of his ordinary habits. During the last ten days, Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would come home at unprecedented late hours from prayer and his state was indescribable by any person, she could not describe it, nor could anyone else. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) has himself described his condition, somewhat. He has attempted to explain his experiences and his state during these days. I will present this Hadith before you but I would like to make some clarification. I do not agree with the translation and commentary commonly ascribed to

this Hadith. The familiar translation has been abridged but I will elaborate it to its full meaning:

The last part of the Hadith is usually misrepresented. It's this part to which I wish to draw your attention. Ordinarily the word "*ajud*" is taken to mean that he freely spent on the poor, and "*kher*" is translated as worldly wealth (goods). And it is said the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) gave so generously, the way a high wind increases in intensity until it becomes a storm. This is a very pleasing interpretation but on this occasion it does not apply.

Gabriel used to descend to earth every night and find the Prophet (s.a.w.) there thus, alone. On this occasion to imply that Gabriel used to find Muhammad (s.a.w.) busy giving to the poor is wrong, this time of night is not appropriate to go out and look for the poor and assist them. These nights were devoted between God and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). How is it possible that on this night when Gabriel came with the Holy Quran that he would find Muhammad (s.a.w.) employed in almsgiving. This is impossible. The meaning of "*ajud*" given in scholarly dictionary as Imam Raghīb's, and the meaning of "*kher*" according to these is different. It contains other meanings also.

"*Ajud*" is employed for a person who exceeds all others in righteousness. And "*kher*" means good deeds, not only charity. Every good thing, which a believer expects and prays to God for, is termed "*kher*". When we examine this Hadith with these meanings then a new scenario will emerge. Whenever Gabriel used to find the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) on these nights he found him engaged in this work exceeding all others. So much so that the ordinary man cannot conceive to what height he had reached.

In these nights he was "*ajud*". In that, he completely lost himself in *zikare-ilahi* and he was so far gone in all aspects of "*kher*" apart from wealth

that it was as if a storm was blowing. These are the true meanings and by the dictionaries. This is not the time to go into details about these dictionaries but you can be rest assured that I am presenting this commentary after exhaustive research, that whenever Gabriel saw Muhammad (s.a.w.) he was engaged thus. He was engulfed in *zikare-ilahi*, and he completely annihilated himself in the Oneness of God.

So from this angle follow the actions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and discover how difficult and essential that devotion is. This is difficult because it is a lengthy process. For an ordinary person it is improbable that he will even be able to imagine the final steps of *Suena* journey. But there are few days when God Himself comes nearer to us. These are the days when following of the Prophet of Allah is made easy. Just take advantage of these days and welcome them properly. Do not work to hasten these last days but spend the whole of *Ramadhan* preparing for them. Open your hearts and minds to the blessings of *Ramadhan* and open

your minds as if to receive the dawn. (*Khutha Juma* of 1/23/98, ref. *Al-Fazl International London* 3/13/98)

He also said concerning another Hadith from *Masnad Ahmad bin Humble* (v. 2 pg. 75 printed in Beirut) has mentioned that Hazrat Ibn Umar (*razialla anho*) states, "the Prophet of Allah said "as far as observance is concerned, these 10 days are the most high and beloved in the sight of Allah. As far as observance is concerned, these days contain the most blessing". Just be glad that some of these days are before us still, and have not completely passed us by. Welcome them and they might stay in your homes and this is the true measure of righteousness. The piety, which comes and stays with us is true piety. In these days particularly the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has emphasized the remembrance of *Allah (la-illa-ha-illala)* and *takbir (Allah-Akbar, Allah-Akbar)* and *tahmid (Alhamdo-lillah, Alhamdo-lillah)*. These are 3 simple phrases that anyone can easily recite in daily life, so we should lay emphasis on these.

RECENT NEWS ABOUT RESPECTED AMIR SAHIB'S HEALTH

(by Masoud A. Malik, General Secretary)

Following is the recent news about the health of Hazrat Sahibzada Mirza Muzaffar Ahmad Sahib, Amir Jamaat Ahmadiyya, USA.

Hazrat Amir Sahib has not been well lately. He is suffering from an imbalance of body fluid/chemicals, dehydration, mild pneumonia, back pain, general weakness and anxiety. He has been hospitalized in order to evaluate his condition and adjust the treatment accordingly.

Now, by the Grace of Allah, after receiving a blood transfusion and a change in his medication, he is feeling better. His blood results are in the normal range and he is expected to begin physical therapy early next week.

Please continue to pray fervently for Respected Amir Sahib that Allah may grant him complete health and long life so that we may continue to benefit from his blessed leadership for a long time.
Amen.

RAMADHAN AND TRUE EID

True happiness is found in a relationship with God. This is the philosophy of *Eid*. This is the lesson we learn from *Ramadhan* that is followed by *Eid-ul-Fitr*. We abstain from all lawfully allowed things for the pleasure of Allah and we remember Him much day and night.

As a result of this devotional worship, Allah declares that He is the reward for the devotee who observes fast. The day of *Eid* is an expression of happiness for believers. True *Eid* is for those who belong to Allah and not for those who run after the world.

Believers discover true happiness by helping the poor, praising and glorifying Allah aloud. They offer *Eid* Prayer in congregation demonstrating love and brotherhood with one another. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) lays great emphasis on the congregational *Eid* Prayer.

“Hazrat Umme Attiya (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to tell us that everybody should join in both the *Eids*, including children and women. Even the women who were not well enough to join the Prayer were directed to come to listen to *Eid* Sermon and participate in the collective prayer.” (*Sahi Bukhari*)

Let us now review how the *Eid* was celebrated during the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.)

Dressing up Nicely on *Eid* Day

The *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) support wearing of a good dress and use of fragrance on *Eid* Day. It is reported that Hazrat Umar (r.a.) sent a beautiful *Jubba* (dress) for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) for wearing on the *Eid* Day.

Recreational Programs on *Eid* Day

“Hazrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) came to her house on *Eid* Day at a time when two young girls were singing songs. He did not stop them. Hazrat Bakr (r.a.) rebuked them but the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) told him to leave them alone. Also, on that day, the people from Habsha displayed their

traditional games and skills at arms for entertainment. Huzoor (s.a.w.) asked me if I would like to see their performance. I said, ‘yes’, Hazrat Aisha (r.a.) stood behind the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and watched the games. After a while, he asked if she was tired. She said, ‘yes’, and was let go.” (*Sahi Bukhari, Kirabul Eidain*)

How to Offer *Eid* Prayer

It is narrated by Hazrat Ans bin Malik (r.a.) that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to eat a few dates before leaving for *Eidul Fitr*.

Hazrat Abu Saeed (r.a.) narrates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) on the days of *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul Adhya* used to start with *Eid* Prayer at the *Eid Gah* (special site designated for *Eid* Prayer). He would then stand up before the people to deliver the sermon containing admonition and advice. (*Sahi Bukhari*)

An Important Tehrik on the Day of Happiness

Eid is one of the greatest days of happiness for the believers when most of them are gathered together. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), therefore, used to initiate appropriate projects according to the need of times.

It is mentioned in the Hadith that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) after the sermon visited the women’s side. Hazrat Bilal (r.a.) went along with him. Huzoor (s.a.w.) urged the ladies for *Sadqa* (financial sacrifice in the way of Allah). The ladies showed an unparalleled example of compliance by offering whatever they had. Hazrat Bilal (r.a.) collected the contributions in his cloth, including the ornaments donated by many women. (*Sahi Bukhari*.)

After the moon was sighted, all believers recited *Takbira’at* in a loud voice on the way to and from *Eid* Prayer.

Allaho Akbar, Allaho Akbar, La Ilaha Illallaho, Wallaho Akbar, Allaho Akbar Wa Lillah Hil Hamd:

Allah Is the Greatest, Allah Is the Greatest; There Is No God but Allah, and Allah Is the Greatest; Allah Is the Greatest and All Praise Belong to Allah.

They used to embrace and wished each other ‘*Eid*

Mubarak'. They used to return home by a different route from the one they used for going for *Eid* Prayer. The Day of *Eid* passed in joy and happiness.

Therefore, we must fill the Mosques, the houses of

God, to enjoy the true happiness of *Eid*. We should also try to fill the houses of the poor with happiness to obtain the pleasure and acceptance of Allah. May Allah enable us to do so. *Ameen*.

AETEKAF (SACRED SOLITUDE)

The Honor of the Universe the pride of the worlds his reflection upon the *Aetekaf*:

In the last ten days of the *Ramadhan*, which is signaled by the happening of the *Aetekaf* (sacred solitude). How the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to observe these days has been described by Huzoor in his Friday Sermon. He says: I present one tradition which has been narrated in *Masnad Ahmad bin Hamble* Volume 2 page 67, printed in Beirut. In the tradition which has been narrated by the son of Hazrat Omar. How the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to sit for *Aetekaf* and what kind of environment used to be in those days. When *Ramadhan* was at its peak he used to get: *AJUD*: which means the environment we see in that kind of situation. In *Aetekaf* some people want to recite the Quran slightly loud in the Mosque creating a kind of hum, this was very pleasing to the heart but this also caused some disturbance in the solitude of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). His solitude was solitude between him and his Creator, which was disturbed.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) did observe *Aetekaf* in the last ten days of *Ramadhan*. For him a small hut of dried leaves of dates was made. You should also remember about the capacity of the Mosque for the purpose of *Aetekaf*. People ask me about the capacity saying that there is enough capacity in the Mosque. Which is not true. The Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.) made for the purpose of *Aetekaf*, there was a tent around it also, which occupied some space, there was some space to isolate him to give him some solitude, this should be kept in mind also.

We emphasize in filling the space but the real enjoyment is in as much privacy and solitude as possible to fully supplicate with Allah. This time there was some demand from women for more space, we could not allow for special reasons, which is all in accordance with the practice of the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w.). There was plenty of space in the *Masjide Nabwi* for it was not pack full. A night fell when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) went out and looked and found the worshipers busy in their prayers quietly, so you should not recite so loudly that it may disturb the solitude of others. The worshiper should contain his voice so that it does not go out of his cabin. So much so that even the recitation of the Holy Quran should also not be audible to the other worshipers, though the worship and recitation of the Holy Quran is one and the same thing but this also has its limitations and constraints.

What the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said has been narrated by Biasi, which has been recorded in *Masnad Ahmad bin Humble*. He narrates that, he came walking out of his cabin, now there must be distance between the cabins that is why he walked out, the people who were busy in worshipping their voices were loud at which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said that the worshiper is busy in his secret communication with his Lord which must not be disturbed.

These were the secret communications between the person and his Lord, this is evident. What was its pleasure? This is clear from other traditions, I could not bring these traditions but the subject matter is clear in my conception, that is, the worshiper is so much engrossed deep in his worship that all the veils in between were lifted and you attained such a bliss and pleasure that it is impossible to describe it. Any ordinary person when attains pleasure in worship he cannot describe in clear words, the deep contemplation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has been explained already, one should be mindful of others around him, lest we disturb their supplication and solitude.

LAILATUL-QADR

(Translated by Dr. A. M. Shamim, Maryland Jamaat)

About *Lailatur-Qadr* Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV says:

Now I present a tradition from *Bukhari* which has been narrated by Hazrat Ibne Umar. *Lailatul Qadr* was shown to some of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in a dream in the last seven days, which meant that the special revelation of the night on selected person was to be on one of the seven last days of *Ramadhan*. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said that if you all have seen such a dream, then look for it in the last seven days of *Ramadhan*. Now at this time, only six days are left, and in the light of this tradition, this happening can occur repeatedly, meaning that the days can be switched. Sometimes it may happen to occur on the 21st -and sometimes on the thirtieth. But usually this happens on the 21st, 23rd, 25th or 29th nights. So we have some days left to hope for its occurrence. Its not impossible that this will happen at the end of the month this time. So for the persons who have wasted the last *Ramadhan*, there is glad tiding for them. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said that all of you are agreed on the last seven days in your dreams, so look for it in the last week of *Ramadhan*. This was the practice of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) that he used to wake at night, that it was a blessed awakening, that with each awakening new attributes used to unfold upon him, which was ever increasing with each occasion. This was ever increasing experience as the beneficence of God is limitless so is the comprehension associated infinite.

Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) says that when *Ramadhan* arrived the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would gird up his loins. He used to wake up at night and he used to awaken his family, so I have used the same words of awakening that Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.) used for him.

There was not a single night, which was lifeless in his life, but especially in *Ramadhan*. He used to make alive the night, even more because he used to

bring his family to life also.

Here to wake up the family was a physical act which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to perform this also, and to forced upon us, that we should draw the attentions of our family toward getting up at night in order to worship Allah.

But when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) used to waken his family, then I think that he must be granting new treasures in regard to *Ramadhan*. From this angle, the way that the Messenger of Allah used to revitalize his nights he would also inspire his family. Hazrat Aysha (r.a.) stated that I once asked, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, if I am sure that I am experiencing *Lailatul Qadr*. What should I pray at this?' He replied ".....O my Lord, you are the most forgiving, you love forgiveness, therefore forgive me."

It is remarkable that he did not advise a prayer concerning material gain. It is apparent that only a negative aspect has been asked for, all old transgression should be forgiven but he also did not say what you should ask for after this fundamental prayer. It is a fact as I have said before, the effect of *Lailatul Qadr* is such, that if you are forgiven then dawn will appear and this is a positive happening which will never transform into darkness. This means that the rest of his life, the person will be enlightened, this is the subject of *Istighfar*, and this is what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was teaching us.

It is said; "if you have firm faith in *Lailatul Qadr* then that is enough, and you should ask for forgiveness and be satisfied. If Allah erases all your past sin and draws the veil of forgiveness over them then you need nothing else in order to be completely forgiven. Just this is necessary to give emphasis in the asking of forgiveness from God except to pray. It is not probable that you pray for forgiveness and yet insist on committing sins. So this negative aspect of insistence of sinning is hidden in one's minds, conscientiously or unconsciously. People know what type of sins they have

committed all year round, what follies they have indulged in; even then, people ask for forgiveness, this means that in their minds they cling to this idea that they can continue to commit sins and God will continue to forgive them. These are only sentimental which have no relationship with reality.

If such people are forgiven, their life after *Ramadhan* will tell whether they have been forgiven or not. If God has forgiven them, there should be a great revolution in their lives. The life following *Ramadhan* will be testament to this one night of *Ramadhan*.

However, as far as Jamaat Ahmadiyya is concerned, we are passing through another *Lailatul Qadr*. Hazrat Masih Mau'ood's (a.s.) age, as is proven from the Quran is one in which the great believers of the former times are joined with the believers of the latter age. If Muhammad's (s.a.w.) character would not have enlightened Hazrat Masih Mau'ood (a.s.), it is impossible for this to occur. Just keep in mind that the time of *Lailatul Qadr* is ongoing for you. In this *Lailatul Qadr* it is possible that the promise in the Holy Quran is fulfilled in your favor.

RECORD OF THE VOICE OF HAZRAT AMMAN JAN (R.A.)
(Wife of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam)
AND HER MESSAGE FOR THE JAMA'AT

(Extracted from an article written by Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad, may Allah be pleased with him, and published in Alfazl 4 June 1952. Translated by Munawar A. Saeed)

...on 7 February 1952, Syed Abdur Rahman, recorded the voice of Hazrat Amman Jan (may Allah be pleased with her), at my request. It is a brief message in the form of Question and Answer in which Hazrat Amman Jan (r.a.) Has given a message to the Jama'at... It is a blessing of Almighty Allah that the tape recorder arrived in Rabwah only two and a half months before she passed away.... The wordings recorded are given below:

Mirza Bashir Ahmad: *Amman Jan, Assalamo Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu.*

Hazrat Amman Jan: *Wa'Alaikumus Salam wa Rahmatullhi wa Barakatuhu.*

Mirza Bashir Ahmad: The Jama'at wishes to preserve your voice for blessing. If you are feeling well, please give a message for the Jama'at.

Hazrat Amman Jan: My message is that my Salam may be conveyed to all. The Jama'at should establish itself on righteousness and faith. Never neglect the task of inviting people to Islam and Ahmadiyyat. All blessing lies in it. I have always prayed for the Jama'at. The Jama'at should remember me and my children in their prayers.

Mirza Bashir Ahmad: This is a message from Hazrat Amman Jan (r.a.) For the Jama'at Ahmadiyya... May Allah enable us all to act upon it. May He bless the life and health of Hazrat Amman Jan. (r.a.)

After this on 20 April 1952, Hazrat Amman Jan (r.a.) Joined the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) in eternal life.

INTERFAITH PRAYER AT MASJID BAITUR-RAHMAN

September 16, 2001

(by Kalmullah Khan, Maryland)

An unthinkable tragedy shook the Nation in the early hours of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. This monstrous terrorist attack leveled the World Trade Center Towers in the heart of our country. It inflicted pain and suffering upon all citizens, and took the innocent lives of more than five thousand people. This was undoubtedly a horrible crime against humanity by a group of terrorists.

The religion of Islam condemns such acts of terrorism in the strongest possible terms. In fact, the very name of Islam means "peace" and its teachings are strictly based on peace, justice, and harmony.

Just after these horrendous acts, the National President of Ahmadiyya Jama'at USA, Sahibzada Mirza Muzaffar Ahmad Sahib, immediately issued a Press Release and sent a letter of condolence to U.S. President George W. Bush and a copy to the U.S. Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell. It stated:

"We strongly condemn today's terribly vicious act of terrorism and atrocities committed on innocent civilians.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of U.S.A. condemns in the strongest terms the despicable attacks and extend our sincere sympathies to all those who have suffered and will visit hospitals to donate blood to all those in need of it in New York and Washington."

To share the common grief and sorrow for the victims and create respect and understanding amongst each other, an Interfaith Conference was held on Sunday, September 16, 2001, thereafter in civil Masjid Baitur-Rahman.

Adherents of all faiths were invited to come together to offer PRAYERS for the victims who lost their lives in this tragic incident. It is pleasing to note that with the Grace of Allah, many leaders, friends and members of churches, synagogues and religious organizations attended. According to a reasonable estimate some 250 guests attended apart from our own members who joined in at this occasion from Baltimore, Maryland, Virginia and

Washington in large numbers..

Dr. Laeeq Ahmad Sahib, President, Maryland Jama'at, explained the purpose of the gathering. Thereafter, he introduced the speakers. Maulana Syed Shamshad Ahmad Nasir Sahib welcomed all the guests, and the members and explained the beautiful teachings of Islam in a befitting way.

About twenty guests (including men, women and children) expressed their views for mutual harmony, sympathy and love. They not only extended goodwill but also assured their cooperation and joined in prayers.

Guest speakers included:

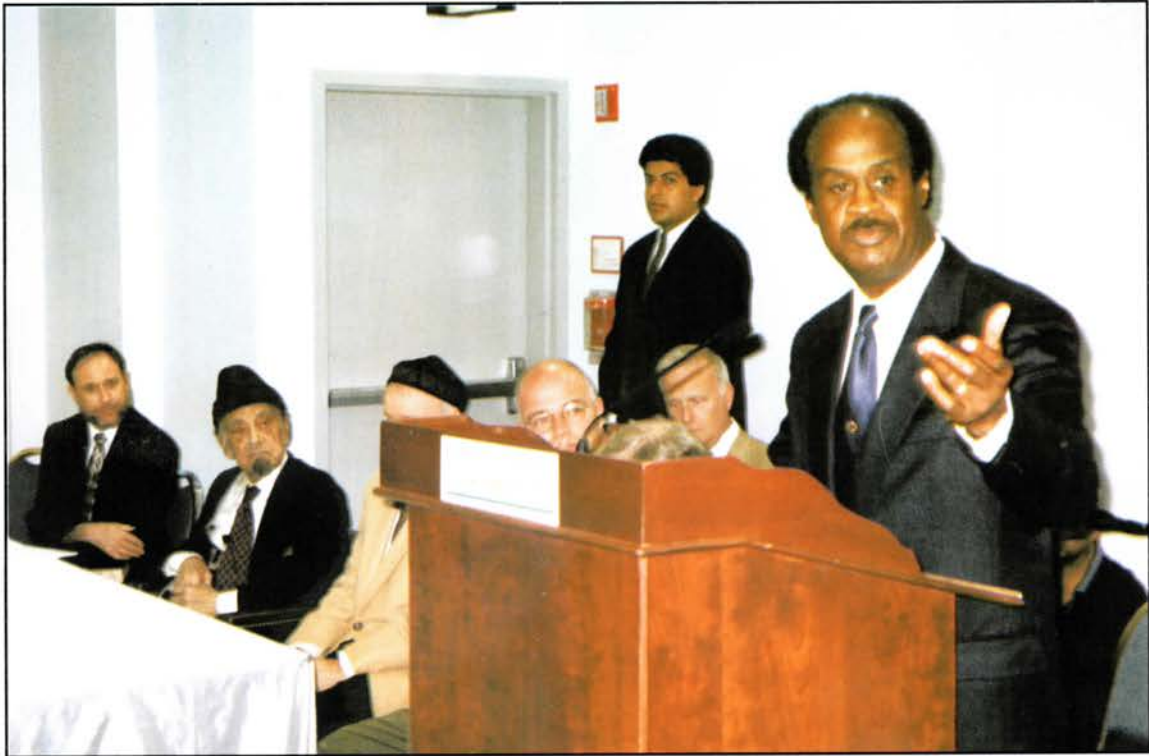
- i. Brian D. McLaren - Pastor
- ii. Reverend Stephen M. Anderson - Pastor Pilgrim Church of Christ, Wheaton, Maryland.
- iii. Rabbi Gary S. Fink's representative Oseh Shalom Congregation, Laurel, Maryland.
- iv. Sheikh Imam Al'Haj Muaz B. A. Fofana Chairman/President Islamic Jama'at cultural Foundation and Institute, Washington, D.C.
- v. Hon. I. Legget, Member, Montgomery County Council
- vi. Mr. Thomas Crews, a local Church leader.

After the speakers, Missionary Maulana Shamshad Ahmad Nasir Sahib thanked all the participants for taking time in joining hands and sharing their thoughts. Then everybody stood up for a moment of silent prayers.

At the end, Respected Amir Sahib mentioned a few examples from the noble life of Prophet Muhammad (*Sallalaho Alaihe wa Salam*) to show how much and how high he upheld the dignity of human beings irrespective of their religious affiliations. These examples magnified the tolerance Islam teaches and demands of us.

Amir Sahib led collective silent prayer. Refreshments were served afterwards.

INTERFAITH PRAYER AT MASJID BAITUR RAHMAN IN PICTURES



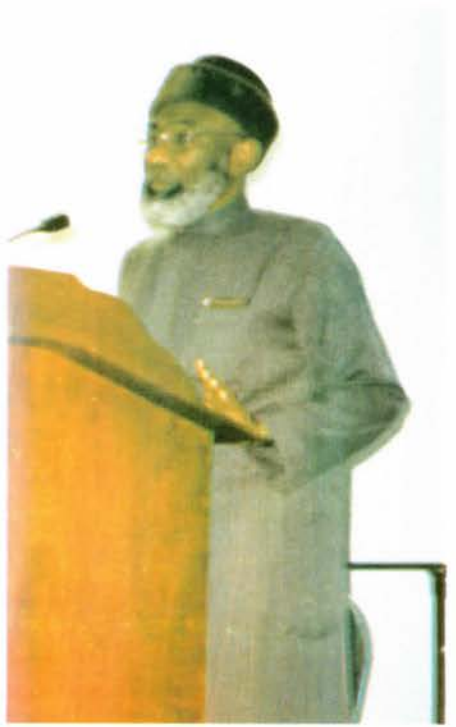
VIEWS OF THE AUDIENCE AT THE INTERFAITH PRAYER



SOME OF THE SPEAKERS AT THE INTERFAITH PRAYER



SOME OF THE SPEAKERS AT THE INTERFAITH PRAYER



FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS OF THE WEST AND THE ISLAMIC POINT OF VIEW

(by Aftab A. Bismil)

The subject of *the Festivals and Traditions of the West and the Islamic Point of View* requires some clarification and elucidation because Islam is a Universal religion and is not exclusively confined to East that it may be against the West. As the Holy Quran says about the Islamic teachings "*La Sarqiyyatin wa la Gharbiyya*" it is neither Eastern nor Western, as it is the light of the Lord of the Universe. It is the sublime combination of all pristine truths "*Feeha Kutubun Qayyema*" and hence truly a World Religion, complete in every respect. So when we talk about Islamic Point of View viza viz the festivals and traditions of the West we must keep two basic factors in mind. Firstly, the festivals of the West are mostly Christian as the dominant religion of the Western countries is Christianity and secondly, the traditions of these Christian nations are a mixture of various European cultures as can be seen in the United States, which is basically a nation of Immigrants, most of whom came from Europe during the last three hundred years.

Before we proceed further I would like to point out that many festivals in the West are not exclusively religious though they have some semblance of Judo-Christian civilization and culture. Although these festivals had the seeds of religion in the beginning but as the time passed these festivals and traditions of the West lost their original religious concept and gradually they were transformed into cultural and social events, especially in the United States.

There are many festivals in the West but three are most important and are generally celebrated with great exuberance and festivity: Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. The first two being religious festivals and the third is mostly social.

As you are well aware the Christmas festival is celebrated on the 25th December and its festivities

continue till the first of January, which is celebrated as New Year's Day.

According to the Christian tradition this festival is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity. Incidentally it may be pointed out that Christianity is not a separate religion as it is an off shoot of Judaism, but as the time passed it became separate specially after Paul invented new doctrines and interpolated the teachings of Jesus Christ and thus created a different creed, which was and still is totally foreign to the original teachings of Jesus Christ (peace be on him).

It is strange that the Christians celebrate the birth of Christ in December when it is extremely cold in Palestine, where he was born. In this connection the narration of Luke is worth attention. While describing the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem the Apostle Luke says: "*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night*" (Luke 2:8). If Luke's narration is true then December cannot be the month of Jesus Christ's birth because at that time of the year it is extremely cold and snowy and the shepherds could not stay in the field to watch over their flock by night.

With this background let us see what the Islamic point of view is about the term of Jesus Christ's birth. The Holy Quran says in clear terms that at the time the dates were ripe and the season was such that Hazrat Maryam could wash and bathe the baby in fresh water. The Holy Quran says: "*The voice of the Angel reached her from below, grieve not; for thy Lord has provided a rivulet below thee, wherein thou may wash thyself and the child. Then take hold of the branch of the palm tree and shake it; it will shed fresh ripe dates upon thee*" (Ch. Maryam, 19:25-26). This clearly shows that it was the summer time, most probably July or August, when

dates were ripe and weather was such that the new born child could be washed and bathed in the rivulet or spring of fresh water. The account of Luke 2:8 also testifies that at that time the shepherds were out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. Thus the Quranic version about the time of Christ's birth is correct and even Luke's version confirms it.

Then why did the Christians start celebrating Christmas in December? Bishop Jarphis in his book "*Rise of Christianity*" says: We do not have any definite proof that the 25th of December was the birthday of Jesus Christ. If we believe what Luke says about the events of the birth of Christ, *that there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night*, then we will have to concede that Jesus was not born in winter when the temperature dips to such a low degree during the night that in the hilly tracts of Judea it starts snowing. It seems that our Christmas Day was fixed after detailed deliberations in about 300 A.D." (P. 79)

Thus it is evident from Luke's gospel as well as from the writings of Christian scholars that the 25th of December was not and could not be the birthday of Jesus Christ. It is another proof of the truth of the Holy Quran which declared six hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ that he was born in a season when dates were ripe which means it was the summer time, most probably July or August. According to the *Encyclopedia Americana* "All Christian churches except the Armenian Church observe the birth of Christ on December 25th. This date was not set until about the middle of the 4th Century and in the East until about a century later. The Armenians follow the old Eastern custom of honoring Christ's birth on January 6, the day of Epiphany, commemorating in the West chiefly the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, and in the East, Christ's baptism. Some Churches hold their most elaborate festivals on January 6, and in parts of the United States, this date has been celebrated as "Old Christmas" or "Little Christmas".

According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, the

reason for establishing December 25th as Christmas is somewhat obscure but it is usually held then, the day was chosen to correspond to Pagan festivals that took place around the time of the *Winter Solstice*, when the days begin to lengthen, to celebrate the "re-birth of the Sun". (*Solstice*: either of the two times a year when the sun is at its greatest distance from the celestial equator, about June 21st, when the sun reaches its northernmost point on the celestial sphere or about December 22nd, when it reaches its southernmost point. (*Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 6, pp 666,667))

Northern European tribes celebrated their chief festival of Yule at the *Winter Solstice* to commemorate the rebirth of the Sun, as the giver of light and warmth.

The *Roman Saturnalia* (a festival dedicated to Saturn, the god of agriculture, and to the renewed power of the Sun) also took place at this time, and some Christian customs are thought to be rooted in this ancient pagan celebration. It is held by some scholars that the birth of Christ as "Light of the World" was made analogous to the rebirth of the sun in order to make Christianity more meaningful to pagan converts. Many early Christians decried the gaiety and the festive spirit introduced into the Christian celebration as a pagan survival, particularly of *Roman Saturnalia*. They considered the birth of Christ a solemn occasion. But also from the first, Christians have generally regarded Christmas as both a holy day and a holiday, for Christ's birth brought a new spirit of joy into the world, and from the first recounting of the story of Nativity people have fashioned endless variations—not only in words, but in art, song, dance and drama and have even created special symbolic holiday foods. Customs of all lands have been added through the centuries, making Christmas today the greatest folk festival in the Christian world. Many well known Christmas customs originated in various lands. While there are many ideas about the origin of the Christmas tree, it is widely believed that Martin Luther began the custom in Germany. The sight of an evergreen tree on Christmas Eve with stars blazing above, is said to have made great

impression on Martin Luther and he put a similar tree decorated with lighted candles in his home. Some scholars hold that the evergreen tree, a symbol of life to the pagans, became a symbol of Christ, thus an integral part of the celebrations of his birth.

A well known Christmas custom is the singing of carols. The word “*carol*” is thought to have originally denoted a dance accompanied by singing. Thirteenth century Italy is considered to be the birthplace of real Christmas carols.

The image of Santa Claus derives from St. Nicholas, a 14th century bishop of Asia Minor who was noted for his good works. The idea of gift giving associated with this saint spread from Asia Minor to Europe and was brought to the United States by early Dutch settlers. According to *Encyclopedia Americana*, Christmas has not always been remembered with gaiety and good cheer. Excessive frivolity had always been frowned upon by some and Christmas was not celebrated by the Puritans or Calvinists. When Puritans came to power in England under Oliver Cromwell in 1642, Christmas celebrations were banned as evidences of anti-religious. The Puritan tradition was brought to New England where Christmas did not become a legal holiday until 1856. Nevertheless in other areas of the United States the festive season was celebrated by immigrants who brought the holiday tradition from their homelands. This tradition of festivities continues till this day.

As regards the Islamic point of view, it must be remembered that Islam does not teach to celebrate the birthdays of religious founders in a manner which is totally against their teachings. It is true that some Muslims celebrate the Holy Prophet’s (s.a.w.) birthday with festivities but that is not Islamic teaching. The best way to celebrate the birthday of a religious personage is to follow his teachings and avoid any such activities which are against the established principles of that religion. Thus when we, the Ahmadi Muslims, celebrate any such occasion we speak about the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) or the Promised Messiah

(a.s.) we try to follow their footsteps and avoid all frivolities in accordance with Islamic teachings.

In Islam the two great festivals of *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul Azhia* bring with them additional prayers and sacrifice. Muslims are expected to offer additional prayers on these happy occasions thus thanking God Almighty for the great spiritual beneficence which He graciously showered on the Muslims – the blessings of fasting in *Ramadhan* and the happy occasion of Haj and sacrifices precede the *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul Azhia* respectively.

The second most important festival of the Western Christian world is Easter which is celebrated as the feast of “Resurrection of Jesus Christ”. Most Christian Churches in the West observe Ester on the first Sunday after the full moon that comes on or after March 21st. Thus Easter falls with a 35 day period between March 22nd and April 25th inclusive. The date of Easter in some Eastern Churches may vary from the Western date.

According to the *Encyclopedia Americana* the origin of the English word ‘Easter’ is uncertain. Besides various views the word Easter is derived from the Hebrew ‘*Pesach*’ (Passover) through its Greek transliteration ‘*Pascha*’. The history of Easter is rooted in the Book of Exodus (Old Testament) wherein Passover refers not only to the angel of death passing over the Jews in Egypt but also to Israel’s deliverance from servitude: the Exodus from Egypt and Entrance into the Promised Land.

The Jewish festival feast joined the theme of gratitude for divine deliverance with a spring harvest feast in which the first produce of the year was offered to God. Since Christ was crucified during Passover, the Christian commemoration of his death (according to Christian belief) not only coincides with Passover but also incorporated elements of the Jewish feast. Thus Easter is the Christian Passover.

According to the Christian belief, the central theme of Easter is the celebration of the ‘death’,

'resurrection' and 'ascension' of Christ. (It is strange that the Christians celebrate the presumed death of Jesus on the Cross, which is an accursed death according to the Torah). Easter is envisioned not merely as a commemoration of a past event, but also a manifestation of Christ's death and resurrection to new life shared by those believing in him. The origin of some customs and their association with Easter are not always easily determined. Eggs, for example, are related to a variety of Easter customs. They are regarded as symbols of life and creativity. Associated with Easter in popular lore are flowers specially lily, and also animals, the rabbit, an ancient symbol of fertility and chicken are popularly portrayed as laying eggs in nests prepared for them. Thus throughout the customs associated with Easter there is a blending or interplay of symbols of spring with the religious significance of the 'Resurrection'.

Now I would like to comment on the theme of Easter, *i.e.* the so called death on the Cross, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, according to Islamic point of view. While mentioning the claim of the Jews that they killed Jesus Christ on the Cross, the Holy Quran says: *"And their saying 'we did kill the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah, whereas they slew him not, nor did they compass his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified to death, and those who have differed in the matter of his having been taken down alive from the cross are certainly in a state of doubt concerning it, they have no definite knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture. They certainly did not compass his death in the manner they allege; indeed Allah exalted him to Himself; Allah is Mighty, Wise, and there is none among the people of the Book, but will continue to believe till his death that Jesus died on the cross, and on the Day of Judgement Jesus shall bear witness against them."* (Ch. *Al Nisa*, 4:158-160).

Thus the Holy Quran has categorically refuted the claim of the Jews as well as the Christians that Jesus died on the cross. Jews wanted to prove that he was a false prophet therefore they killed him on

the cross and thus he met an accursed death according to the Jewish scriptures. The Christians, on the other hand, adopted this erroneous belief, under the influence of Paul, that Jesus died on the cross for the atonement of their sins. This belief is so preposterous and illogical that the Christians themselves find it difficult to explain. There is no sense or logic that an innocent person be killed for the crimes and sins of others. Even the Gospels contain irrefutable proofs that Jesus did not die on the cross.

It is an acknowledged fact that Jesus was put on the cross in the afternoon of Friday and remained there for only 2/3 hours and as there arose great storm and it became suddenly very dark, the Jews were afraid that the Sabbath had started and they could not keep anyone on the cross during the Sabbath. The two thieves who were put on the cross with Jesus were alive when taken down and their bones were broken to kill them. But Jesus's bones were not broken and when a Roman soldier pierced his side, blood and water oozed out, which is clear proof that his heart was functioning and he was alive though in a state of swoon. He was carried to a nearby chamber which was specially prepared for him by one of his disciples, Joseph Armathea, who was a wealthy man and had access to the Roman Governor Pilate, who himself was very sympathetic to Jesus. Jesus was administered balms, ointments were applied to his wounds and medicines were given by another faithful disciple. After three days he emerged from the chamber, was seen by and met his disciples, he ate fish and honey, showed his hands to his friends assuring them that he was in his physical body and was alive and he went to Galilee, which was about 70 miles away. All these facts prove that Jesus did not die on the cross and was saved from the accursed death. God heard his prayers which he had offered with great anguish.

He had also promised to show the sign of Jonah and had said that as *Jonah remained in the belly of the whale for 3 days and 3 nights similarly the Son of Man will remain the belly of the earth for three days and 3 nights.* (Matthew 12:39,40) Now

everyone knows that Jonah entered the belly of the whale alive, he remained therein alive and came out alive. Hence to show the sign of Jonah it was essential that Jesus should enter the chamber alive, remain there alive and come out alive. But if he died on the cross he could not have shown the sign of Jonah and that was the only sign he had promised to show. We know from the testimony of the Gospels that he did show that sign and proved himself to be a true prophet of God.

If we consider the events of pre and post crucifixion we find that Jesus did not die on the cross, his prayers were answered and he was saved from the accursed death and after showing the sign of Jonah he migrated from that land towards the East to seek the lost tribes of Israel in accordance with his earlier announced plans. He went to India through Afghanistan and present day Pakistan. It is a vast and interesting subject and I suggest that seekers of truth should read the Promised Messiah's (a.s.) book, "*Masih Hindustan Mein*" (*Jesus in India*) to know further details.

The Holy Quran also throws more than ample light on the subject. Now, when it has been proved and established on the basis of the Holy Quran and testimony of the Gospels that Jesus did not die on the cross, the basis for the dogma of atonement has been shattered. If Jesus did not die on the cross, then there was no resurrection and no ascension.

The third important festival of the west is Thanksgiving, which is celebrated on the 4th Thursday of November commemorating the arrival of early immigrants. This is a festival which is exclusive to the United States, which is a nation of immigrants, after the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The people from Europe started migrating to this country mostly to escape religious persecution in the Medieval Europe. They were called Settlers. The first such group to come to America were the pilgrims who came in 1620. They came across the ocean on the "Mayflower" and landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Only half of these survived the very harsh winter. They were the people who celebrated

Thanksgiving in the fall of 1621 for the first time. They invited the local Red Indians to join with them in the feast to thank God for a year of peace and the bountiful harvest. This festival was given official status by the first President of the United States, George Washington, in 1780. Since then it is regularly celebrated with great festivity and is considered to be an occasion of get together of the families. Although it was started with a spirit of religious fervor, as the time passed it lost its religious aspect and became more or less a social event. Thanksgiving has become a ritual now and there is hardly any family that thinks of God Almighty and His bounties. They drink, make merry and many die due to drunk driving. This is no way to be thankful to God Almighty.

The Islamic point of view in respect of being thankful is given in this verse of the Holy Quran:

"If you are grateful, I shall give you more but if you are ungrateful then my chastisement is very severe."

This is indeed the basic principle on which the whole activity of a believer should be concentrated. We are taught to be grateful to Allah at every step of the way and we are indeed lucky to be the followers of a religion which is a perfect code of life. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has shown through his noble example that we should praise Allah every minute of our life. When we get up in the morning, we praise Allah,

"All praise is to Allah, who has given us new life after we were dead in our sleep and to Him we shall return."

When we perform ablution to offer Salat we say:

"I bear witness that there is no God except Allah and I bear witness that Mohammad is His servant and messenger. O my God make me one of those who repent and include me among those who have been purified."

Then we offer Salat which is full of prayer and we praise Allah in every move. Before and after every meal a Muslim offers prayer and thanks Almighty

God. Then before going to bed we praise Allah and seek His protection during the sleep. In short every action of a Muslim is followed or preceded by a prayer and constant thanksgiving. We do not believe in thanking God just once in a year. We thank Him with all our heart and all our soul 24 hours a day and each day of the year throughout our life. This is real Thanksgiving.

We do not belittle the efforts of those who engage themselves to help and feed the poor on Thanksgiving Day. They are doing a great job. But our point is that one should not limit such noble deeds to only one day in a year. This should be a regular feature of one's life and should not be used to be an opportunity to showoff and get publicity.

Feeding the hungry and poor is a very noble deed and the Holy Quran has mentioned it at several places, asking the believers to feed the hungry and the poor for the sake of Allah's pleasure. It has been clearly stated that those who do not look after the poor and needy will not enter Paradise. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has also given detailed instructions to help the orphans, widows, poor and needy. His own noble example is a great testimony to the importance of thanking Allah for His favors.

In this Age the Promised Messiah (a.s.) in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) also admonished us to be always thankful to Allah for His bounties and should always be kind to His creatures. He says:

"I have come with two main objectives. First is to bring the people to their Creator and make them worship Him with all their hearts and souls and secondly to be kind and helpful to the human beings."

Love for the Creator and affection towards His creations should be our motto. If we spare some

time out of our busy schedule and ponder over the bounties of Almighty Allah, we will find that it is impossible to count the blessings of our beloved God. He is so kind and benevolent towards His creatures that He has provided for their nourishment right from the beginning. This is not limited to human beings. He has provided the needs of all living things, be they animals of the jungle, birds of air or fish of the oceans. He has provided nourishment for the plants and insects. That is why He is called *Rabbul Alameen*, the Lord and Sustainer of all worlds. It is a very vast subject and the more we ponder over it the more we are a witness to His Beneficence and Mercy on His creatures. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"If you try to count the bounties of Allah you will not be able to count them."

Therefore, we should be ever grateful to our beloved God and if sometimes things do not happen according to our desire or wish, we should not become agitated because our job is to pray and the result should be left to Allah. Whatever the result of our efforts we must consider that to be good for us and we must thank God for His favors.

Before I close I would like you to keep in mind that the festivals and traditions of the West are mostly Christian oriented and we should not copy them blindly. We are Muslims and have our own traditions and festivals which we must value. We must be very careful and should jealously safeguard our Islamic values, otherwise we will be swept away and consequently will face the same consequences which the Christian nations are facing today.

May Allah grant us the will and strength to follow the teachings of the Holy Quran to the best of our ability and may He help us in all our undertakings. Amen.

OFFICIAL AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY WEBSITE

www.alislam.org has been recently upgraded and a wealth of information is available online for the benefit of Jamaat members and humanity at large. May Allah bless all those who sacrifice their time and energies to spread His message to the world. All of this information is available on the Internet free of charge for the benefit of Humanity. Please make full use of this material for your learning as well as *Tabligh* and spread the word to other Ahmadi Muslims and non-Ahmadis. The following material is available at the website <http://www.alislam.org>. The only official website of the Jamaat. From the main web page, the following links led to the respective information:

Muslim Television – CyberMTA: You can listen to MTA live broadcast as well as listen to old sermons. You can also listen to dozens of Nazms sung at different occasions from *Durr-e-Sameen*, *Kalaam-e-Mehmood* and *Kalam-e-Tahir* at your own convenience!

Holy Quran – Articles as well as complete English translation of the Holy Quran (by Maulvi Sher Ali).

Askislam – Huzoor’s English Q/A Sessions: Recordings of questions and answers are organized topic by topic. You can hear Huzoor answer the questions directly. The questions cover almost all aspects of religion and religion-political history of Islam. This is most informative for the *Tarbiyat* of our youth.

Alislam Online Library – A wealth of articles of traditional and contemporary issues related to Islam. The articles are mostly taken from *Review of Religions*.

Books and Articles – A number of Jamaat English books: *Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* (by the Promised Messiah (a.s.)), *Elementary study of Islam* (by Huzoor (a.b.a.)), *Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction* (by Huzoor (a.b.a.)), *Invitation to Ahmadiyyat* (translation of Dawat ul ameer), *Jesus in India* (translation of Maseeh hindustaan main), portions of *Gardens of the Righteous (Hadith)* and others as well. Entire books can be read online. Allah has truly blessed the Jamaat with this spiritual *maidah*.

Online Salaat Guide: A guide to daily prayers, most beneficial for the youth of our Community.

Alislam Online Store: Now you can purchase books online if you have Visa or MasterCard. This online store has a fine collection of Islamic books e.g. *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*, *Murder in the name of Allah*, *Gulf Crisis and New World Order*, the Holy Quran and its translation into 31 languages, and more than forty other books and two video cassettes. The shipping is done worldwide from New York (USA).

Urdu Section: Introductory articles about the Jamaat’s beliefs with good references.

Multi-Lingual: Currently the site has additional sections in Arabic, Chinese and Swahili.

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**THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM
TALIM DEPARTMENT
AWARD OF TALENT SCHOLARSHIPS AND NEED BASED GRANTS/LOANS**

An amount of **\$80,000** was approved by Amir Sahib for the award of Talent Scholarships and Need Based Grants/Loans for the academic year 2001-2002 to Ahmadi students studying in the USA. This year, **84** students applied for the awards,

while last year **43** applications were received. The applicants were evaluated for the award of the following scholarships/grants/loans by the Scholarships Award Committee of the Talim Department:

i. Two Fazle Omar Scholarships	\$2,500.00 Each	\$5,000
ii. Two Professor Dr. Abdus Salam Scholarships	\$2,500.00 Each	\$5,000
iii. One Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad Scholarship	\$2,500.00	\$2,500
iv. Need Based Grants	\$1,000.00 to 2,000 Each	\$43,500
v. Need Based Loans	\$500.00 to 2,000 Each	\$24,000
	Total:	\$80,000

Respected Amir Sahib has approved the following recommendations of the Educational Scholarships Award Committee with regards to the

award of the Talent Scholarships and Need Based Educational Grants/Loans for the 2001-2002 academic year.

TALENT BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

Fazle Omar Scholarship	Aaitfa Kalim Khan, Landover, MD	\$2,500
Fazle Omar Scholarship	Anas Ahmad Chaudhry, Los Angeles/East	\$2,500
Professor Dr. Abdus Salam Scholarship	Tahira Rehmatullah, Cleveland, OH	\$2,500
Professor Dr. Abdus Salam Scholarship	Ahmad Tariq Malik, Detroit, MI	\$2,500
Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad Scholarship	Athar Naveed Malik, Detroit, MI	\$2,500

NEED BASED GRANTS AND LOANS AWARDED

Forty seven Need Based Educational grants varying from \$1,000 to \$2,000 to each student applicant.

Nineteen Need Based Loans varying from \$500 to \$2,000 to each student applicant.

BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS ADVANCEMENT OF AFRO-AMERICANS

Besides the **5** talent scholarships and **66** need based grants/loans from the Talim Department's Educational Funds, **7** Afro-American students have been awarded \$1,000 to \$2,500 to each student from the Board of Education and Economic Advancement of Afro-Americans Funds (Amount awarded: \$13,500).

Congratulations to all the awardees of the scholarships. May God Almighty help them to excel in their studies and make them excellent representatives of the Jama'at.

Karimullah Zirvi,
National Secretary Talim