

REAL PIETY IS TO SPEND IN MODERATION & RESPECT THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Written by ramadan
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Jumuah lecture on Friday 1 June 2018 (16 Ramadaan 1439)

at the Ahlul Bait (a.s) Masjid, Ottery, Cape Town

delivered by Mowlana Syed Aftab Haider

In our series of discussions about the qualities of Ibadur Rahman (servants of the most Merciful), in the light of verses 63 – 76 of Surah Furqaan (chapter 25 of the Holy Quran), we discussed some of those qualities mentioned.

Last week we discussed their immense love for Ibadah (acts of worship), as mentioned in verse 64 of Surah Furqaan:

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“Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrate and standing”

The other quality which we discussed last week was their fear of Almighty Allah (SWT).

IBADUR RAHMAN ARE NOT OPULENT NOR ARE THEY STINGY

The fifth quality which the Holy Quran speaks about in verse 67 of Surah Furqaan, in reference to Ibadur Rahman, is their attitude in this world when it comes to spending.

“Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)”

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Over here, the Quran explains the principle in life of the Ibadur Rahman when it comes to spending. They are moderate and balanced in their spending. This verse uses the word “infaq”, which refers to general spending for personal needs as well as charity. They spend in moderation for both. They are not miserly nor are they ostentatious.

In fact, moderation is one of the crucial qualities of the Ibadur Rahman. The lifestyle of the people who are servants of the Rahman is one of moderation and spend accordingly with moderation.

Of course, the Holy Quran very clearly condemns excessive opulence (Israf). Islamic teachings take Israf to another level, beyond simply spending excessively. There is a Hadith from Rasulullah (SAWA) in this regard, which is particularly relevant for us these days. He says that beyond lavish spending, even consuming too much water for wudhu is regarded as Israf! The Hadith goes further to say that there is Israf in everything.

So this is very important for us to understand.

BEING STINGY IS A TERRIBLE QUALITY ACCORDING TO IMAM JAFAR SADIQ (A.S)

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At the same time, it is important to note that the exact opposite of this is also not admired in Islam. In fact, it is frowned upon when you are stingy! Our 6th Imam of Ahlul Bait (a.s), Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) explained this verse by picking a pebble and keeping it in his hand. He then picked more stones and held them in his hand. He then opened his hand and everything fell! The point he was making is that Islam does not agree this approach to one's wealth.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) did this for a third time, but he now kept part of his palm open and part of it closed. As a result, some fell and some remained in his hand. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said that this is the moderate position which the Quran is referring to in verse 67 of Surah Furqaan. A balanced approach is very important!

We have Hadith narrations which state that Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) asked an affluent person in the community why he resides in such extremely primitive conditions and tortures his family with poor ventilation, when Almighty Allah (SWT) has blessed him with enough wealth to afford decent accommodation.

This person responded to Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) by saying that it is his ancestral home and therefore he has great sentimental attachment to it. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) replied by asking this rich man whether he would follow his forefathers if they were stupid?!

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Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) explained to him that it is perfection for a Muslim that he must have a good wife with strong religious values, and mode of convenience (eg. Car) and a comfortable house. Again, it should not be extreme luxury, but at the same time must not be at the level where you are placing your family in a difficult situation.

IBADUR RAHMAN STAY FAR AWAY FROM SHIRK

There is lots of discussion we can have on this point, but let us move this discussion to the next quality of Ibadur Rahman, which is also very important. Verse 68 of Surah Furqaan explains the sixth quality of Ibadur Rahman, and that is, they are very far away from Shirk!

“And they who do not call upon another god with Allah”

Again, this is a very detailed discussion about what is Shirk, but this verse is talking specifically about the Ibadur Rahman, namely people whose supreme qualities have already been explained in the prior verses such as verse 64 ie. they spend their nights in acts of worship.

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So what does it mean that people with such sublime qualities do not commit Shirk? What this means is that Shirk has a much wider meaning than worshipping idols or associating partners with Almighty Allah (SWT), which is of course the worst form of Shirk.

The meaning of Shirk goes to the limit where it is explained in Hadith that if someone listens to somebody in a manner that he surrenders to that person, then that has the hallmarks of Shirk. It is a level of Shirk as soon as you surrender yourself to something other than Almighty Allah (SWT). A good example of this is when one surrenders to oppressive rulers.

There is a very interesting Hadith narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) where he clarifies the meaning of Shirk even further. He says that Bani Umayyah, the oppressive and merciless Umayyad dynasty who usurped power, allowed for people to learn faith (Imaan), but did not allow for people to be educated about Shirk! He further explains that people would not surrender to them if they were to understand the comprehensive meaning of Shirk. Instead, they would realise that surrendering and committing to these illegitimate rulers is Shirk!

Hence, Bani Umayyah allowed people to learn the important rituals of Islam such as praying, fasting, Hajj, etc. They had absolutely no problem with this, but they made sure that people do not develop an understanding of Shirk!

Somebody came to our fifth Imam of Ahlul Bait (a.s), Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s) and asks what is the least that someone has to do to be considered a Mushrik. Imam Muhammad

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al-Baqir (a.s) responds by saying that if someone takes seeds (eg. of dates or fruit, etc.) and calls it pebbles, and vice versa, and actually believes in it, then this is the lowest level of Shirk!

The well-known Persian poet of the 17th century, Mohsen Fayz Kashani, explains this beautiful Hadith from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s) by saying that if you make a statement about something, without any disclaimer or proviso, it indicates that you believe in it. How can you believe in something which is not stone (for example) to actually be stone? How is this possible? Mohsen Fayz Kashani explains that to do so means that you have surrendered to your desires of your soul, and becomes you surrender to something other than Allah (SWT), it is a direct indicator of Shirk.

This helps us understand that Shirk has a very, very broad meaning from that Shirk and Tauheed which we understand from a theoretical ideological level to Shirk and Tauheed on a much different level when we commit or surrender in our family life, practical life and our thoughts, ideologies and approaches. What is our criterion? Who do we surrender to? Whose preference do we accept other than Almighty Allah (SWT)?

IBADUR RAHMAN TREASURE LIFE'S SACREDNESS

The seventh quality which the Quran speaks about in regards to the Ibadur Rahman is that they never commit murder. This is also listed in the continuation of verse 68 of Surah Furqaan (chapter 25):

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“nor take the life which Allah hath forbidden save in (course of) justice, nor commit adultery - and whoso doeth this shall pay the penalty”

These people never kill the soul which Almighty Allah (SWT) has forbidden to be killed, except by right. Ibadur Rahman are extremely sensitive about the sacredness of life. For them, killing is no trivial matter. They are very sensitive and very committed to stay away from this greatest of sins.

Verse 93 of Surah Nisaa (chapter 4 of the Holy Quran) is quite explicit and unequivocal on what the fate is for someone who kills deliberately:

“If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (forever)”

This verse again highlights the value of life and its sacredness. There are many verses of the Quran and many Hadith which highlight this very fact. The approach of Islamic law is that life is sacred. There are endless examples to prove this. This is unfortunately the mess we find

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ourselves in today, where a group of people who claim to represent Islam go on mindless killing sprees as if it is a recreational activity! For them, killing is the best Ibadah (act of worship), where they believe in the great reward of the Hereafter for killing innocent people.

Look at the culture of Islam! Giving a death sentence to a criminal who is found guilty is one of the most difficult jobs. We have a principle that capital punishment can be delayed by the smallest of doubt. If the judge comes across something in the judicial process which creates the smallest doubt, then he cannot conclusively apply the death penalty.

Then also, if someone is sentence to death and is brought to the execution chamber in public, but somehow runs away, we are not supposed to chase after him to make sure that he is killed. Life is so sacred in Islam!

Let us leave killing one side. In Islam, we are not supposed to hit our children either. Even as a form of discipline, corporal punishment is seriously frowned upon. You are allowed to hit until a point where you child's skin does not turn red. Islam does not believe that punishment is a form of development. So if you hit your child and his/her skin turns red, they have every right to claim compensation money from the parents! The child can claim this even once he/she becomes an adult, and the parents will be obliged to pay the penalty.

This again highlights Islam's great sensitivity towards violence, which Islam never accepted as an option to resolve issues.

The eighth quality which we will discuss in the next Jumuah lecture is that the Ibadur Rahman do not have unlawful sexual relations. They maintain their chastity at all times.

SECOND KHUTBAH

15 RAMADAAN – BIRTHDAY OF IMAM HASSAN (A.S) WITH INTERFAITH IFTAR

15 Ramadaan was the birthday of Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba (a.s), who is the first grandson of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAWA). Upon the birth of Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba (a.s), Rasulullah (SAWA) said that Imam Hassan (a.s) is the gift to him from the Lord of the Universe (SWT).

Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba (a.s) has a unique personality in the history of Islam, due to the conditions he was in, which resulted in him establishing an amazing position in regards to sacrifice for the greater unity of the Muslim nation (Ummah). His visionary position preserved peace and unity, and saved needless bloodshed in the Ummah. This is symbolic of Imam

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Hassan al-Mujtaba (a.s).

According to some Hadith narrations, Rasulullah (SAWA) said that his Hassan (a.s) will bring 2 groups of people together in peace. With this background and stance of Imam Hassan (a.s), along with his very well-known generosity, we started a beautiful program 11 years ago, called "Sharing the Blessings of Ramadaan". The objective of this program was to reach out to the broader Muslim community, our neighbours and fellow citizens, who do not share with us in religion, but share with us in humanity.

Our position is that Ramadaan is the greatest favour of Almighty Allah (SWT) to the whole of humanity, and let us therefore share this greatest of blessings of Ramadaan with our fellow citizens of our beloved South Africa.

Alhamdu Lillah, like many different things, we once again see that the followers of Ahlul Bait (a.s) are trend-setters! This interfaith iftar is not a unique phenomenon to Ahlul Bait (a.s) Mosque, and Masha Allah we see this trend of interfaith Iftar spreading with other mosques also doing the same. This is very good, Alhamdu Lillah.

This interfaith iftar allows us to share the inclusive message of mercy and compassion of Islam and our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).

8 JUNE – INTERNATIONAL QUDS DAY

The last Friday of Ramadaan was declared by our beloved Imam Khomeini as Quds Day, which is the international day of the oppressed. In addition to this, we will be hosting a very important program relating to our relationship towards the issue of Palestine, on Saturday 9 June.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS UNITY

We discussed last week and the week before, that there are positive changes in the leadership of the broader Muslim community and our society in general towards unity, and if not unity, then at least peaceful co-existence - which is also something to be appreciated, although not the ideal!

It is not about tolerance, as tolerance is the minimum requirement. It is about acceptance. Tolerance is out of no option. Acceptance is out of choice! Our unity with our Sunni brothers and vice versa as Muslims to each other is not a matter of tolerance. Rather, it is a matter of acceptance, which is an ideological position we take and believe that we are part of one Ummah and followers of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).

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Our differences and diversity does not stop us from being united. I think the positive development lately is a realisation of our greater goal of unity. We welcome and embrace these positive steps towards unity which is being taken by the Muslim leadership in the form of the Cape Accord and other initiatives to propel our South African Muslim community in a positive direction. This is clearly, one of the major favours and blessings from this holy month of Ramadaan.

We hope and pray for the sustainability of this movement, and for the continuous commitment to this mission