

Dhu'l Hajj and Muharram; the common of sacrifice

Bilal 23.8.19 Juma

In the English calendar, the period of December and January is usually a reflective period. People tend to review the year, make resolutions and reflect on the future. For us Muslims, the corresponding moment is now, as we conclude Dhul Hajj and enter into Muharram.

It is interesting to note that both months are marked by the concept of 'sacrifice'. Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was told to sacrifice his son. We perform the Qurbani, which is a sacrifice of an animal. Then in Muharram, we again remember this important theme via Imam al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him). He sacrificed his life to uphold the religion of Islam.

So if this period is a period of reflection, perhaps Allah is asking us to do exactly that, and to specifically reflect on the concept of sacrifice.

What is a sacrifice?

'It is when you part company with something precious to you, knowing that you will receive something more precious in the future.'

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was willing to sacrifice his precious son in return for something even more precious, the pleasure of Allah.

Imam al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) sacrificed something precious to him - his life - in order to selflessly preserve something more important, the religion of Islam.

From these two examples, it is clear that in order for a person to perform a sacrifice, he automatically needs Tawakkul too. Why? Because he must have trust that after parting with the thing precious to him, Allah will most definitely grant him something more precious. Ibrahim had no doubt as he put the knife on his son's neck. Imam al-Husayn never doubted Allah for a moment, in the unbearable and scorching desert of Karbala.

Muslims and sacrifice

We Muslims are asked to sacrifice many things for Islam:

Our sleep for a Sajda at Fajr.

Our hunger in Ramadan.

Our comfort for Hajj.

Our time for children and for elders.

Time and sacrifice

In this day and age, we need to remember that any sacrifice requires time. And this gift of time is the one we need to refocus on in this day and age. Why? Because it seems that:

1. We are now willing to sacrifice *more* time for leisure

- Boxsets and the rise of binge watching
- Console games like Fortnite that occupy hours and hours

2. We are simultaneously willing to sacrifice *less* time for the religion

-In Ramadan, there is a national obsession with the speed of the Hafiz al-Quran at Tarawih. The issue is public led. People want us to quicken it. Left in our hands, we would read it at a much more comfortable pace.

-The Dars Nizami course is getting shorter.

-Books are getting shorter.

-Islamic articles are getting shorter.

-Jalsas are getting shorter.

-Clips are getting shorter.

How do value time more?

Remember death in abundance. With time, we behave like we are going to live forever.

*The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Remember often the ender of pleasures' (*Ihya Ulum al-Din*, V: 118, Sunan Ibn Maja, V: 326).

اكثروا من ذكر هاذم اللذات

*Sayyida Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him): 'Will anyone be raised with the martyrs [on the Day of Judgement]?' 'Yes', he replied. 'He who remembers death twenty times in one day and night.' (*Ihya Ulum al-Din*, V: 118).

قالت عائشة رضي الله عنه يا رسول الله هل يحشر مع الشهداء احد؟ قال نعم من يذكر الموت في اليوم و الليلة
عشرين مرة

Remembering death actually makes life more bearable and enjoyable too. This is because when a person knows he will eventually die and leave this world, he will value his remaining time here more. Hence, remembering death makes you happier not sadder. It makes a person question what is a worthwhile pursuit of my time and what is not.

Safiya (may Allah be pleased with her) told of an old woman who once complained to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) of the hardness of her heart. 'Remember death frequently' she told her, 'and your heart will be softened.'