

FROM THE MINBAR

ISTIQAHAH: LIVING THE SPIRIT OF RAMADAN AFTER RAMADAN

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic at SNMC on August 24th, 2012 corresponding to Shawwal 6th, 1433 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, Khulafair Rashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ *As Salamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu!*

INTRODUCTION

As you read this article, Canadian Muslims have already celebrated the Eid festivities. Now, after the blessed guest – the month of Ramadan – has departed from us, we pray to God Almighty to accept good deeds of us ALL done during this great month and to help us persist in our faith after the month of Ramadan. We pray to Him to help us live the spirit of Ramadan after the month of Ramadan.

The special month of Ramadan, with all its virtues and with God's blessings, guidance, mercy, forgiveness has departed from us. But in many ways the spirit of Ramadan should remain present in renewed Taqwa – self-discipline, self-control, self-education, self-restraint and self-evaluation.

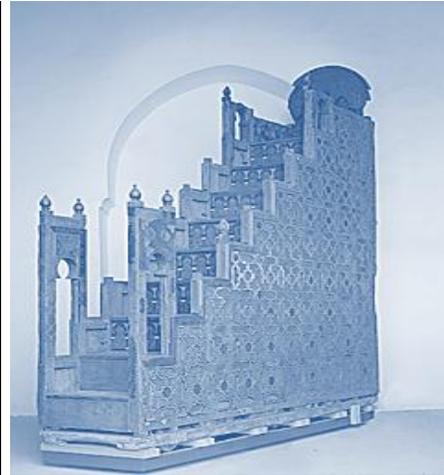
For Ramadan has engraved in every Muslim a renewal of pride, dignity and a sense of full obedience, as well as identity and submission. It has increased in us our sense of commitment and loyalty to Almighty God and His chosen Din for us; a sense of belonging and loyalty to the Canadian Muslim community and to this great nation of ours -- Canada.

It is well known fact that during the month of Ramadan, Muslims reach the culmination of their 'Ibadah (worship). It is also well known fact that Muslims' attitude and manners during Ramadan season are improved greatly. Their religious engagement during this month is evidenced through visiting Masjids, as well as through Salat, Siyam, recitation of the Qur'an, Zakat, Sadaqat ul Fitr, good manners, virtuous behavior and many other activities associated with spiritual strength and renewal as well as social benefits they and others around them receive.

But for too many Muslims the end of Ramadan also marks a sudden and often drastic reduction – sometimes even a complete cessation -- of religious activities and righteous actions. A true believer, however, is very conscious of the need to maintain constant awareness of Almighty God, a sense of connection and of the persistence of faith to carry out the obligations prescribed for us by the Creator.

MEANING OF ISTIQAHAH

Istiqaah is one of the important concepts of Islam. In every time and every place and under all



circumstances, Muslims should be steadfast and adhere to the noble principle of *Istiqaah*. *Istiqaah* emanates from strong faith and unshakable trust in God, and yields its ripe fruits in all spheres of life – in 'Ibadah as well as in one's daily social activities.

The literal meaning of "*Istiqaah*" is to go straight into the right direction, acting rightly, allowing no deviation. It is derived from the stem "Qiyam", which implies the continuity of doing something, following up with it and making sure that it is done in the right way and there is neither deviation nor swerving.

ISTIQAHAH: TEXTUAL REFERENCE

Almighty God addresses the believers and encourages them to be in *Istiqaah* in the following verse of the Qur'an: "*Verily, those who say, 'Our Lord is only Allah,' and thereafter Istaqamu (i.e. those who stand firm and straight on the Muslim faith by abstaining from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden and who perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained) on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*" [Al Ahqaf, 13]

Our role model – Muhammad (S) – was a great proponent of *Istiqaah*. Once, Sufyan ibn Abdullah (r.a) asked the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) for the words he would not need to ask anyone after him and the Messenger of God, Muhammad (S) told him: "*Say Amantu Billahi (I believe in God), then be in Istiqaah (be persistent in that what you have said).*" {Musnad Ahmad}

ISTIQAHAH & THE SAHABAH

Abu Bakr when asked about the meaning of *istiqaah*, replied: "*That you do not associate partners with God.*"

Umar ibn al-Khattab said: "*It is that you should be steadfast on the matters that are obligated and to abandon the prohibitions.*"

Uthman ibn Affan said: "*To have ikhlas (sincerity) to God only in doing actions .*"

Ibn Abbas (r) has defined Al *Istiqaah* in Din as one's persistence in carrying out all duties and obligations which He has prescribed to us for eternity and for our greatest good. The Qur'an explains: "*And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the Hour (the death) that is certain.*" (Al Hijr 99)

CONDITIONS OF ISTIQAHAH

According to Ibn al-Qayyim, there are five conditions to achieve *Istiqaah* in performing required deeds:

1. The act should be done for the sake of God alone (ikhlas).
2. It should be done on the basis of knowledge ('ilm).
3. Performing ibadah should be in the same manner that they have been commanded.
4. To do it in the best way possible.
5. Restricting oneself to what is lawful while performing those deeds.

STEPS TO ACHIEVE ISTIQAHAH

According to other scholars of suluk, i.e. behavior, there are certain steps to be followed in order to achieve *Istiqaah*:

1. Always being aware of the final destination, i.e. the Day of Judgment (Akhirah)...and to use this awareness in a positive way as to motive us to do good deeds. One way to do it is through remembering that a person's journey towards Akhirah starts the minute he/she passes away and leaves this world. One of the early scholars said: "If you live until the morning do not wait for the evening and if you live until the evening do not wait for the morning."
2. Commitment (Musharatah). One has to make a commitment that he/she will be steadfast and will do things in the right way and in the best way possible, and to adhere to conjunctions of Islam. Unfortunately many Muslims are being lenient in making such a commitment.
3. To make continuous efforts (Mujahadah) to bring that commitment to reality. Some Muslims dare to make the commitment, but dare not to make the effort to make the commitment a reality.
4. Continuous checking and reviewing of one's deeds (Muraqabah). Being honest with oneself so as not to give false excuses for failing to fulfill a commitment.

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents:

⇒ **ISTIQAHAH: Living the Spirit of Ramadan After Ramadan**

⇒ In next issue: **Akhlak of a Muslim**

Khutbah Prepared & Delivered
by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic
Email: imam@snmc.ca
Phone: 613.898.7662

Please EMAIL your comments to the author

5. Self accountability (Muhasabah). This should be done twice: Firstly, before we start doing something, ensuring that it pleases God (planning), that we do it for His sake only, realizing the right way it should be done. Secondly, after the action has been done, to check whether we have achieved what we aimed for, and to check for defects and shortcomings, and that we still could have done it better by not being satisfied with our action (evaluation).

6. Self-criticism for not doing it perfectly after it has been done. Self criticism is a positive way to motivate oneself and aim for improvement and having the intention of doing things better next time. This leads to making another commitment and continual commitments to improve our performance in the future actions.

7. Striving for improvement (Tahsin). We have to make improvements in all that we do (daily activities, work, actions, good deeds, ibadah, etc.) as one of our objectives. The believer's two days cannot be equal in achievement.

8. To be humble towards God, realizing that no one is perfect except Him, seeking His forgiveness, guidance and support.

It should be emphasized that these steps/conditions apply to worldly matters as well as ibadah and good religious deeds.

WHAT WEAKENS ISTIQAMAH?

There are some factors that lead to the weakening of Istiqamah. Here are some of them:

1. Committing sins (ma'siah), insisting on repeating them again and again, without istighfar (seeking God's forgiveness) and without practicing true repentance.

2. Riyya' or showing off. Riyya leads to deviation in Istiqamah.

3. Nifaq (hypocrisy). There are two forms of nifaq: in belief and in action. The Muslim who surrenders totally to the will of God and accept Islam based on his/her choice is free from the first form of hypocrisy. However any Muslim is subject to and should avoid the second form of nifaq which the Prophet (S), warned us about: Not keeping promises and breaking them continuously without good reasons or excuses, not fulfilling commitments we make with others, being aggressive and unjust to others in quarrels, and disputes, failing to shoulder responsibilities/burdens we are entrusted with, etc.

All these awful qualities should be avoided since they lead to the weakening of our Istiqamah.

There are other factors that also contribute to the weakening of Istiqamah, such as: recklessness, reluctance, heedlessness, being overwhelmed by a deceiving enjoyment, and being misled by self interests and desires -- egocentrism.

ENTHUSIASM OF RAMADAN

Now, after a month of total submission to God's will -- a month in which we have demonstrated that obedience through our physical and spiritual beings, and through all the activities mentioned in the foregoing verse, is over -- now, we must ask ourselves how we can best keep that Islamic enthusiasm in our hearts until the next Ramadan.

Now is the ideal time to focus on maintaining that accumulated Islamic energy of Ramadan, so that it can provide light and strength for us in all religious and social affairs during the entire coming year.

We cannot afford to lose this regained enthusiasm and energy! We cannot allow the Noor (light) of obedience, kinship and unity which we have brought into our hearts, homes, Masjids and communities to disappear until the next Ramadan comes along.

Therefore, I beg my brothers and sisters not to let our Masjids become empty now that Ramadan is over, for the saddest Miskin (orphan) is a Masjid without its Zinat (ornaments) -- and those Zinat are none other than believers who attend them as we did during the blessed month.

Similarly, we must not leave the Qur'an gathering dust on the shelves until next Ramadan, for the true place of the Qur'an is in our hands, our hearts, and our actions.

Then let us resolve to demonstrate our Islamiyyat (the presence of belonging to our faith) in every moment of our lives; for none of us knows when the angel of death will come.

Once, Sufyan ibn Abdullah asked the Messenger of God (S) for the words he would not need to ask anyone after him and Muhammad (S) told him: "*Say 'Amantu Billahi' (I believe in God), then be in Istiqamah (be persistent in that what you have said).*" {Agreed upon}

In fact, being a believer is not about concentrating only on one season of the religious year; a Muslim is not a seasonal believer.

MAINTAIN THE SPIRIT OF RAMADAN

In Surah Al Ahzab, verse 35, Allah says that He has prepared forgiveness and a great reward for those believers -- men and women -- who endeavor to accomplish following duties toward Him: *surrendered themselves to God ; the believers; obedient and truthful to God; patient and constant; humble themselves (before their Lord); give Sadaqat; fast; guard their chastity; remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues.*

Now, as Ramadan and the festivities of Eid would become fond memories, we still have many opportunities to maintain the enthusiasm and energy which we have accumulated during this momentous month. Some of these duties are mentioned in the mentioned verse above. Here are some additional opportunities which are available to us all the time:

- Continue worshiping our Creator: praying, fasting... We should fast during six days of Shawwal: "*Any person who fasted the month of Ramadan and then followed it by six days of the month of Shawwal, [it is] as if he/she fasted the whole year.*" {Al Jama'ah}

- We should continue maintaining the strong faith in God Almighty and each day grow as stronger believers since the faith is the base of the believer's life.

- We should further develop ourselves individually and be strong personalities.

- We should improve our behavior and always regard Islam as the filter of our thoughts, words and actions. Others judge our faith on the basis of Muslims' manners and behavior.

- Only strong personalities and good character individuals can help in building the strong Canadian Muslims community.

- Thus, we should support all those community projects that contribute to building prosperous Canadian Muslim communities. (Please support

SNMC's projects and specifically "*a prayer spot*" project -- <http://www.snm.ca> or a building block.)

- We should also remind ourselves that we can never be a strong and positive factor in our own country unless we attain some sort "unity of purpose." I am not talking here about uniformity. It is naturally impossible for Canadian Muslims to be alike, to think alike, to understand alike...Unity of purpose is not an option; it is a must! Almighty God calls upon us in the Qur'an to: "*... hold fast all together by the rope of Allah, and be not divided among yourselves.*" {Ali 'Imran 104}

The unity of purpose which we gain during the month of Ramadan grows and strengthens as a direct result of the serious efforts made by each and every individual in our community. We are all enjoined to work hard toward the goal of bringing peace, love, mercy and kinship to our Jama'at -- our collective Canadian Muslim congregation -- and to work just as hard on translating that sense of peace, love, mercy and kinship into Canadian society-at-large. This is our-not-only social obligation but a religious duty as well.

- Finally, we are obliged, as a strong and successful Canadian Muslim community, to contribute maximum to the well-being of this great nation and each its citizen. Canada is our home and our home deserves ONLY the best.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be inferred that Istiqamah means to stand firm and steadfast to what we have been commanded by God, i.e. to fulfill obligations and to avoid all prohibitions. Also, we should not allow ourselves to follow or be misled by desires (whether it is our desires or the desires of others) as it will cause deviation and lead us astray. It means, in the context of Ramadan and what we have gained in it, to persist in all what God Almighty will be happy with and to avoid all what He is not happy with.

AN ACTION ITEM

If YOU like this *Khutbah* and what we, at your SNMC, do, PLEASE:

Support our activities & projects

Please Donate ONE Prayer Spot for \$2,500 or ONE Block for \$1,000 and be the ONE who will build the Masjid and the Center so that it could help us and our children maintain Islamic Identity and build strong Canadian National Identity, Insha Allah.



South Nepean Muslim Community (SNMC)

Web: www.snm.ca
Email: info@snmc.ca