

Arab Republic of Egypt

Ministry of Awqaf

Sha‘ban ١٣, ١٤٤٠ A.H./April ١٩, ٢٠١٩ C.E.

Lessons and Insights from Changing the Direction of the *Qiblah*

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, Who says in His Glorious Book, “Piety is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the pious are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books, and the Prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, ‘needy’ travellers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in ‘the heat of’ battle. It is they who are true ‘in faith’, and it is they who are mindful ‘of Allah’.” I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that our Master Muhammad is His slave and Messenger; may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, his Household, Companions and upon those who follow him till the Day of Judgment.

The Divine bounties and Blessings given to the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the month of Sha‘ban are numerous. Among the great occasions that we celebrate in that month is changing the *Qiblah* (i.e. turning the direction of Prayer) from *Bayt Al-Maqdis* to the Holy Mosque in Mecca. In fact this is one of the greatest occasions in the history of Muslims, when the Almighty Allah fulfilled the wish of His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in turning the direction of Prayer to *Ka‘bah*, as was the same direction of prayer of his forefather, Prophet Abraham.

Before his migration, Prophet Muhammad used to direct his face in prayers towards *Bayt Al-Maqdis*, upon the Command of Allah.

He continued doing so for ۱۶ or ۱۷ months. However, He was longing for revelation to come down ordering him to turn his face in prayer towards the *Ka'bah*. He was asking Allah by his heart and invoking Him silently, trusting that Allah will fulfill his wish. The Almighty Allah responded to him and ordered him to turn his face during prayer towards the *Ka'bah*. Allah says, "Indeed, We see you 'O Prophet' you looking up into heaven turning this way and that. Now We will make you turn towards a direction 'of prayer' that will please you. So turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque 'in Mecca' – wherever you are, turn your faces towards it."

No doubt that when contrmplatng the story of changing the *Qiblah*, one learns many lessons and insights from this Divine honor to the Prophet (PBUH). Among the key lessons are:

The great status and position of the Prophet (PBUH): This is made clear in Allah's saying, "We will make you turn towards a direction 'of prayer' that will please you." It is a favor and bounty from Allah to show the great status of the Prophet. This is similar to Allah's saying, "And 'surely' your Lord will give so much to you that you will be pleased." It was a continuous Blessing from Allah to His Prophet (PBUH); how could one think the opposite while Allah said to Prophet Muhammad, "Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet]," and said, "and We removed your burden;" Also Allah addressed His Prophet (PBUH) saying, "Indeed, We have granted you a clear triumph 'O Prophet' so that Allah may forgive you for your past and future shortcomings." And Allah purified the Prophet's tongue saying, "Nor does he speak of his own whims;" and praised his mind saying, "Your fellow man is neither misguided nor astray;" praised his sight saying, "The 'Prophet's' sight never wandered, nor did it overreach;" and praised his teacher saying, "He has been taught by one 'angel' of mighty power;" and praised his morals saying, "And you are truly 'a man' of outstanding character," and praised his character in total saying, "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah

you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often.”

Among the learned lessons also is the necessity of adhering to the upright approach. This event has put the basis of moderation for this nation as the Almighty Allah says, “And so We have made you ‘believers’ an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity.”

This uprightness expands to cover all walks of life without exaggeration or negligence; it means uprightness, goodness, moderation and balance. We need to adhere to this moderation which the Almighty Allah has honored us with. We need to adhere to it in all of our affairs. For example Allah says, “Do not be niggardly, nor extravagant that you may later feel reprehensive and constrained.” Allah also says, “‘They are’ those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily, but moderately in between.” Imam Al-Awza’i says, “Whenever Allah (Glory be to Him) gives you a command, you will find the Satan trying to tempt you in either of two ways: either to be excessive or to be negligent with respect to it.” Thus, we have to abide by the approach of easiness and tolerance, not the approach negligence; it is the approach of moral adherence to the rules of Shari’ah without any degree of extremism.

Though the fact that the nation of Prophet Muhammad will be a witness to all other nations means honor, this honor obliges the Muslims nation to totally abide by its duties in order to deserve such honor. Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, “Noah will be brought (before Allah) on the Day of Resurrection, and will be asked, ‘Did you convey the message of Allah?’ He will reply, ‘Yes, O Lord.’ And then Noah’s nation will be asked, ‘Did he (Noah) convey Allah’s message to you?’ They will reply, ‘No warner came to us.’ Then Noah will be asked, ‘Who are your witnesses?’ He will reply. ‘(My witnesses are) Muhammad and his followers.’ Thereupon you (Muslims) will be brought and you will bear witness.” Then the Prophet (PBUH)

recited: 'And thus We have made of you (Muslims) an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity, and the Messenger a witness over you.'

Another lesson to be learned from changing the *Qiblah* is the immediate response of the Faithful to the commands of the Almighty Allah and the commands of His Prophet (PBUH). This event marked a special stance in proving Companions' trust in whatever the Prophet conveyed to them from the Almighty Allah. Allah says, "We assigned your former direction of prayer only to distinguish those who would remain faithful to the Messenger from those who would lose faith. It was certainly a difficult test except for those 'rightly' guided by Allah." They gave the finest examples in the immediate response to Allah (Glory be to Him) and His Prophet (PBUH). Once they heard the Divine command of Allah to change the *Qiblah* from Al-Aqsa mosque to the Holy Mosque of Mecca, they immediately changed their direction while they were performing a prayer at that moment. They never argued about this command or even waited till they end their present prayer. They never hesitated to obey the command; they turned immediately to face the Holy Mosque while they were in the position of bowing down. Ibn 'Umar (Allah be pleased with them) narrated: " While some people were offering Fajr prayer at Quba mosque, someone came to them and said, "Qur'anic literature" has been revealed to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) tonight, and he has been ordered to face the Ka`ba (of Mecca) so you too, should turn your faces towards it. Their faces were then towards Sham (Jerusalem), so they turned towards the Qibla (i.e. Ka`ba of Mecca)."

One of the lessons to be deduced also is the importance and status of prayer and showing the Allah's Infinite Mercy. In this regard, the Noble Quran links between prayer and two of the most remarkable events in the Islamic history, that is, the miracle of the Journey of Night and Ascension, as prayers were prescribed upon Muslim during that Journey, to show how great and important

they are. Also, the Quran links prayer to the incident of changing Muslims' direction to prayer, and even employs the term *Iman* "i.e. faith" in reference to it; Allah, Most High, says: "and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless ..." Commenting on this verse, Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with them) said: "when the Prophet (PBUH) was ordered to direct his face to the Ka'abah in prayer, the Companions asked about the conditions of their Muslim brothers who died before that new order? So, Allah, Most High, revealed down His Saying: "and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless ...," meaning that directing Al-Aqsa Mosque in prayer was an act of obedience, and so is the case right now with directing your face to the Ka'abah, which makes them rest assure that their previous prayers towards Al-Aqsa were accepted. Then, He, the Almighty, concluded the verse in a way that makes the believers feel peace and mercy, saying: "most surely Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people." That is to say that Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people, so how would His Affection and Mercy to Muslims look like?!

One of the lessons, as well, is to show the tight bond and strong relation between the Sacred Mosque in Holy Mecca and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The Sacred Mosque is the first Mosque ever to be built in the earth for worshipping Allah, while Al-Aqsa is the second. Abu Dharr (Allah be pleased with him) narrated: " I said, "O Allah's Messenger (PBUH)! Which mosque was built first?" He replied, "Al-Masjid-ul-Haram." I asked, "Which (was built) next?" He replied, "Al-Masjid-ul-Aqs-a (i.e. Jerusalem)." I asked, "What was the period in between them?" He replied, "Forty (years)." He then added, "Wherever the time for the prayer comes upon you, perform the prayer, for all the earth is a place of worshipping for you."

Changing Muslims' direction of prayer has actually closely linked the Two Mosques to each other, exactly as has been done by the

miraculous Night and Ascension Journey; Allah, Most High, says: "Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing," which means that they should be protected and kept away from any carelessness or negligence, for they are a trust which Muslims all over the world should preserve to the end of time.

This is my speech to you, I ask Allah to forgive me and you

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds; I bear witness that there is no God but Allah; and I bear witness that our Master Muhammad is His slave and Messenger; may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, his family, companions and those who follow them to the Day of Judgment.

Muslim brothers,

The various stages of the Prophet's life has been characterized by positivity. For example, when he was ١٥, he (PBUH) witnessed *Hilf Al-Fudul* (the Alliance of Al-Fudul) to which the different clans of Quraysh tribe were invited to conclude an agreement not to leave an oppressed person, be he from Mecca or any other place, unless they should support him until he would get his right back. On that Alliance, he (PBUH) said "I had witnessed a pact of justice in the house of Abdullah ibn Jud'an that was more beloved to me than a herd of red camels. If I were called to it now in the time of Islam, I would respond."

At the age of ٣٥, he (PBUH) took part in the re-construction of Ka'aba as he used to carry stones. Not only that, but he (PBUH) also managed to settle the conflict that was about to take place

among the different clans of Quraish when each of them wanted to have the honor of placing the Black Stone in its position; they accepted the opinion of the Prophet (PBUH) who asked them all to participate in carrying the Stone after which he himself put it in its due position.

After being assigned as a Messenger, he (PBUH) was a role model of positivity and all the other aspects of life. He was the best, the most courageous and the most generous human being. 'Ali (Allah be pleased with him) said: "when fight grew fierce, we used to seek protection by the Prophet (PBUH); there would be none closer to the enemy than him (PBUH)." He (PBUH) himself took part in digging the trench.

In truth, the Prophet (PBUH) has urged his Ummah to be positive and warned them against passivity, saying: " "Do not let yourselves be 'yes-men', saying: 'If the people are good then we will be good, and if they are wrong then we will be wrong. 'Rather, make up your own minds, if the people are good then you are good, and if they are evil, then do not behave unjustly."

Positivity means that man should shoulder his/her responsibility towards religion and country. In fact, man's love to his country is not restricted only to feelings and emotions, but should rather be interpreted to behavior and work. A positive man is the one who reacts to the issues of his society, is affected by the surroundings, and exerts good effect on it.

There is no doubt that one of the true features of positivity is to participate in all what serves the society and leads to building countries and maintaining their peace, stability and progress, whether through defending them, working hard, solidarity and mercy among the members of the one country, or positive

participation in all the constitutional and national entitlements, taking into account to be extremely honest in doing all what can achieve the high rank of our country in accordance with what the free national conscience tells every honest patriot to do, as Shawqi puts it:

In the blood of every free man, countries

Have a favor and a due debt