

Eid Al-Adha 2009

... أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الله
عرفات من أفاضوا قد والحجيج العيد يوم صباح في ! أكبر الله
... الحج شعائر يتمون
... فأغنى وأعطى وأكرم أنعم ! أكبر الله
, نعمته علينا وأتمّ, ديننا لنا أكمل اليوم هذا في ! أكبر الله
... ديننا الإسلام لنا ورضي
به ونؤمن , ونستغفره ونستهديه ونستعينه نحمده ! أكبر الله
... عليه ونتوكل
الرحمن هو والشهادة الغيب عالم هو إلا إله لا الذي الله هو ! أكبر الله
... الرحيم
المؤمن السلام القدوس الملك هو إلا إله لا الذي الله هو ! أكبر الله
... المتكبر الجبار عزيزال المهيمن
... يشركون عما الله سبحانه
الحسنى الأسماء له المصور البارئ الخالق الله هو ! أكبر الله
... الحكيم العزيز وهو والأرض السموات في ما له يسبح
الدين على ليظهره الحق ودين بالهدى رسوله لنا أرسل ! أكبر الله
...المشركون كره ولو كله
ونذيراً ومبشراً شاهداً , ونبياً رسولاً عليه ونسلم نصلي محمد ! برك الله
...
!بعد أما

Sisters and brothers:

عليكم السلام

As our Eid this year has coincided with the Thanksgiving Holiday, my topic today is thanksgiving. While history conflicts on the origin of this holiday in America, the meaning of it, and the celebration in the spirit of gratitude to the Creator is commendable. While most Americans consider this to be a nonreligious national holiday, the religious tone is unmistakable, To thank God for the harvest is not but a human reaction built in as a human nature فطرة التي الله فطرة . To deny God is to reject natural tendency and to refuse to be thankful. Hence with gratitude to Allah we Muslim

Americans would take any opportunity to offer our thanks, joining all our fellow Americans in this holiday in its true meaning of thanksgiving. We further realize that: thanks is due to Allah for guiding this nation to choose such a day to celebrate together regardless of creed or origin a day of gratitude of the bounties the Lord has bestowed on us as a nation.

But we should always pause to look at the shortfalls, as humans' endeavors are always incomplete, or don't deliver what is promised; The holiday's telling of the story of the American Indians in this country is worth pondering; whether it was a true story or not, it reflects the opposite message of the Holiday; while, we are told, that the Natives taught the Pilgrims how to survive the harsh winter and helped them farm and fish, and they gathered together to celebrate a day of feasting, history goes on to record the worst treatment native people suffered at the hands of the new comers. Emptying the continent of its original inhabitants is indeed a clear example of ingratitude, and the absence of remorse regarding what was done to the native Americans is inexcusable. In Hadith by Imam Ahmad **Those who are not thankful for the little they are given they are not thankful for the plenty, and those who are not thankful to people they are not thankful to Allah.**

In Surat Al-haj which takes its name from the pilgrimage which we celebrate today we read this passage

فله واحد إله فالهكم الأنعام بهيمة من رزقهم ما على الله اسم ليذكروا منسكاً جعلنا أمة ولكل
22.34 الحج ٣٤ "المخبتين وبشر. أسلموا

" For every nation We made rituals to remember the name of Allah for what he gave them of the animals as sustenance. As your Lord is One, to him you shall submit and we give good tiding to those who are humble"

Nothing I heard or read about thanksgiving in this country would fit better than this Aya in summarizing the whole concept of the Holiday, and it happens to be in the Qur'an in the context of what we are celebrating today Haj and Eid of Sacrifice. Any ritual to thank Allah for his bounties is praised in here, underlining the unity of human kind as all being the subjects of one god. Intention always counts remembering the name of Allah while feasting and celebrating is the key, as some clergy mentioned a few years ago when Ramadan was upon us during thanksgiving that: Benjamin Franklin suggested a day of fasting and feasting in the true spirit of being thankful to God.

What is the tradition of thanksgiving in Islam? I will be spending the rest of the time explaining this point:

I like to start with the two Muslims' Holidays; we are ordered to celebrate Al-Fitr and Al-Adha both are the culmination of our own warship after a long month of fasting and after a long journey of pilgrimage. At the conclusion of the Aya about the month of Ramadan we read in Surat Al-Bakara:

هداكم ما على الله ولتكنبروا العدة ولتكملاوا العسر بكم يريد ولا اليسر بكم الله يريد"

2.185 البقرة ١٨٥ تشكرون ولعالمكم

" Allah wants to be easy on you, and not make you suffer hardship, so you may complete your rituals, thus glorifying Allah for his guidance and may be you will be among the thankful" This sentence "تشكرون لعالمكم" "you may be thankful" is repeated again in Aya 22.36 in the conclusion of the Haj when pilgrims are ordered to sacrifice the animals and feed the poor, this ritual it emphasizes will not benefit Allah but it will remind you of the bounty of goods given to you on this earth.

So are the two Muslims Holidays days of thanksgiving? we might say so, but Islam always takes every concept and advances further for those who seek a higher level achievement. To understand this point we need to review the Arabic word شكر which is translated in English as thanksgiving. In Lisan Al-Arab dictionary: Al-shukr is always a gratitude for a favor, showing of gratitude could be with similar deed or with a praise, mentioning the favor is a praise and a thank. تشكرون لعالمكم لكم سخرناها كذلك :

Shukr is specified in the Qur'an to be one of the most praised action of human's toward their Creator, attaining the value of being thankful شاكر deserves praise and reward: We read in Surat Al-Israa, for example, that Allah wanted to praise Noah so He describes him as a "grateful subject" 17.3 "الاسراء" شكوراً عبداً كان إنه "Shukr also is equated with Iman as the antonym of Shukr is Kufr , the word Kafer is often translated as non-believer, actually in its origin it means ungrateful, and often it is mentioned in the Qur'an to mean just that, hence denying God who is the life giver is being ungrateful to everything the Lord has given us. No doubt the word Kafer has gained the meaning of non-believer as it is used to describe those who denies the existence of God or associate others in His worship. We read "ثلاثة ثالث الله إن قالوا الذين كفر لقد" and we understand it as those who said Allah is one of three are nonbelievers, but we might as well understand it to mean; those who said Allah is one of three are ungrateful, because they actually do believe in Allah, they are not denying God, but by associating others with Allah they are not thankful for what the Lord has given them of life sustenance and guidance.

In the Qur'an the meaning of gratitude might take three different words in three different degrees of intensity; First: To mention the name of Allah اسم لتذكروا " عليه الله" thus just mentioning the name of Allah when we sacrifice an animal for food and when we sit down to eat a meal is the minimum showing of gratitude to the provider of the materials which sustain our life. Second: is to be thankful الشكر as we mentioned earlier in the context of fasting and pilgrimage, in both places there is emphasis on the fact that achieving the degree of the Thankfulness as Noah did is not an easy task. Finally the word "تكبروا" to glorify, this is an ultimate in thanks because it can't be used to thank anyone

other than Allah, and in both places; fasting and pilgrimage it was used to show gratitude for Allah for his guidance " هَذَاكُمْ مَا عَلَى اللَّهِ لَتُكَبَّرُوا لَكُمْ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ كَذَّ " الحج ٢٢-٣٧
Guidance from Allah deserves the utmost degree of thanks; glorification.

Shukr is mentioned in the Qur'an to be due when material giving is mentioned but also it was also mentioned to be important when intangibles deserve our gratitude; as we saw earlier that guidance from Allah deserves our utmost of thanks, another example we found in Surat Lukman 31/12 to 14 which add the dimension of thanking humans in addition to thanking Allah.

Let us read together

غني الله فإن كفر ومن لنفسه يشكر فإنما يشكر ومن الله اشكر أن الحكمة لقمان أتينا ولقد " ووصينا " عظيم لظلم الشرك إن بالله تشرك لا بني يا يعظه وهو لإبنه لقمان قال وإذ " حميد المصير إليّ ولو اليك لي اشكر أن عامين في وفصاله وهن على وهنا أمه حملته بوالديه الإنسان

In this context Lukman who was given the wisdom by Allah is asked to give thanks, The gift of wisdom should make the one who is blessed with such gift more humble toward Allah who gave it to him and not be arrogant about his superiority, the reasoning here is that giving thanks would serve the person himself not Allah, as Allah is not in need for our thanks, nor of those who are ungrateful. We should notice here that Shakar and Kafar were used as antonyms in comparative fashion.

The wise man Lukman advises his son as every parent should, and he starts with identifying the unity of God as of utmost importance because the act of associating Allah with others is a grave injustice. The text takes a detour here to take this opportunity to advise all of us that next to Allah our gratitude shall be given to both parents, the father who was given the wisdom to advise and nurture and the mother who is singled out here to outline her role in bringing every man to life, yes " Give thanks to your Lord and to both of your parents, to Allah you shall return"

We pray that Allah gives us the wisdom and guidance, to make us among those he has blessed of being thankful for his guidance, for the sustenance and for our lives.

We thank you Allah for our parents for our children for our health and for our fellowship

... أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الله

" لشديد عذابي إن كفرتم ولئن لأزيدنكم شكرتم لئن ربك تأذن وإذ"

Your Lord proclaimed: if you give thanks Allah will increase His giving and if you show ungratefulness the punishment is indeed severe"

All we have covered so far is being grateful for what was given to us, but Islam as I said earlier always challenges us and pushes us above and beyond what is the basic requirement, no one captured this concept better than Rabeaa Al-adwya she is quoted to utter this prayer:

العبادة تستحق إله لأنك أعبدك إني بل نارك من خوفاً أو جنتك في طمعاً أعبدك لا إني اللهم

Oh Allah I don't worship you hoping for your Paradise nor for fear of your hellfire, but I

worship you because you are god and you are deserving of my worship.

In Lisan Al-Arab dictionary The word Shukr is gratitude for favor given, while the word Al-Hamd is gratitude with or without a prior favor, this is a meaning well captured by Rabaa Al-adawya. In all the passages we read so far today the word Shukr is always mentioned with a gift or a bounty bestowed on us, sometime material bounty and some time intangible gift like guidance or wisdom. But when we read Al-fatha (the Opening) الحمد لله it is absolute, the word Al-Hamd encompasses glorifying and gratitude; The thanks and praise are given without a reason except that Allah is رب العالمين the Lord of the universe and the absolute thanks and glorification belong to him alone.

If the nation celebrate a day of thanksgiving the Muslim life is a life of gratitude to the Creator the Sustainer the Merciful and the King of the day of judgement. Everyday when every Muslim starts his day reading Al-fatihah he starts with glorifying and thanking Allah for being our Lord.

We pray again to be a nation of Thankful people who are just to all nations and to all creators.

قضيت ما شرعنا وارفع عافيت فيمن وعافنا هديت فيمن اهدنا اللهم
النار من العتق والعافية العفو نسألك إنا اللهم
لجلالك الحامدين لنعمك الشاكرين من اجعلنا اللهم
وسلم وصحبه وآله محمد سيدنا على الله وصلى

وكل بخير اذهبوا ... أكبر الله أكبر الله أكبر الله
بخير وأنتم عام