

DAY 18

ANSWER: 'Arafāt

SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH: VERSES 198-199

Later, when you flow down from 'Arafāt, recite the name of Allah near *Al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Monument) and recite His name as He has guided you while before it, you were among the astray. Then flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

COMMENTARY

In the series of injunctions appearing under the theme of 'righteousness' which has started from **verse 177**, the eleventh injunction relates to the Ḥajj. Since it is tied to Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ka'bah, the House of Allah, therefore, some relevant questions have been covered partly under the subject of Qiblah from **verse 125 to 128**, then, at the conclusion of the discussion on Qiblah, the injunction of *S'ay* between *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* has been taken up in **verse 158**, as a corollary. Now, **Verse 196 – 203**, the eight consecutive verses, present injunctions and questions about *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah*.

Staying in 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah:

The verse (198) tells us that, on the way back from 'Arafāt, it is necessary (*wajib*) to stay overnight in Muzdalifah and to recite the name of Allah there, specially as taught.

Literally, 'Arafāt is plural in number. This is the name of a particular plain. Its geographical boundaries are well-known. This plain is located outside the limits of *Ḥarām*. All *ḥujjāj* (Ḥajj pilgrims) must reach and stay there between noon (*zawāl*) and sunset (*ghurūb*) hours. This is the most important obligation of Ḥajj for which, if missed out, there is no alternative in the form of *kaffārah* (expiation) or *fidyah* (ransom).

Several causes have been cited for the name, 'Arafāt. Out of these, the clearer explanation is that 'Arafāt is a plain where man gets to know his Lord and, through his *'ibādah* and *dhikr*, learns how to get closer to Him, and in addition to that, Muslims from the East and the West meet and know each other by direct contact.

Emphasis has been laid in the text on the stay near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* on the way back from 'Arafāt after having spent the day there and after having departed the plain soon after sunset. *Al-Mash'ar Al-Ḥarām* is the name of a mountain which is located in Muzdalifah. The word, '*al-mash'ar*' means 'sign' or 'symbol', and '*ḥarām*' being 'sacred', the name signifies that this mountain is a sacred monument to Islām. The plain adjacent is called Muzdalifah. It is necessary (*wājib*) to spend the night on this plain and offer the combined prayers of Maghrib and 'Ishā' at one time in Muzdalifah. The Qur'ānic expression translated as '**recite the name of Allah near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām***' certainly includes all kinds of the

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remembrances of Allah , but here it particularly means the offering of two prayers at one time, that is, offering Maghrib with 'Ishā'. This is the special act of *'ibādah* peculiar to the plain of Muzdalifah. Perhaps, the sentence that follows: **(recite His name as He has guided you)** is indicative of this aspect. It is said that one should remember Allah and recite His name in the manner He has taught without adulterating it with personal opinions because personal deduction would have demanded that the *Ṣalāḥ* of *Maghrib* be offered at the time set for it and the *Ṣalāḥ* of *'Ishā'* at its own time. But, on that day, Allah Almighty favours that the *Ṣalāḥ* of *Maghrib* be delayed and offered along with *'Ishā'*. From the Qur'ānic statement cited above, **recite His name as He has guided you'**, we see the emergence of yet another basic ruling that man is not independent in worshipping and remembering Allah, that is, he cannot worship Him as he wishes and he cannot remember Him as he chooses. Instead, every *'ibādah* and *dhikr* of Allah demands the observance of special rules of etiquette. These have to be performed as stipulated; doing it otherwise is not permissible. Then, Allah Almighty does not like any subtraction or addition, nor any change in its prescribed time or place, even though the change may lead to an increase in the act of worship. It is observed that people tend to add some features in voluntary prayers and acts of charity from their side without having any reason approved by the Sharī'ah, and going a step farther, they take it upon themselves as something necessary while Allah and His blessed Messenger did not declare it as necessary, and last but not the least, such people have the audacity to regard those who do not do all that as in error. This verse exposes their false position by saying that such additional forms of worship reflect the practice of Jāhiliyyah when the disbelievers had used their personal opinions and choices to concoct forms of worship and had limited the serious act to few customs.

The third verse (199): **(Then, flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful)** was revealed in a particular background. The Quraysh of Arabia being the custodians of the Ka'bah enjoyed a unique position of influence and distinction in the country. During the days of Jāhiliyyah, while everyone went to 'Arafāt, the Quraysh would, in order to demonstrate their unusual importance, stop at Muzdalifah and stay there. They said that, being the custodian of the Ka'bah and the care-takers of the *Ḥarām*, it was not proper for them to go out of the limits of the *Ḥarām*. Since Muzdalifah is located within the sacred limits of the *Ḥarām* and 'Arafāt is out of it, they would seize upon the excuse, stay in Muzdalifah and it was from there that they came back. The truth was that they loved to show off their pride and arrogance and made it a point to keep common people at a distance. Their erroneous conduct thus apprehended, Allah Almighty commanded them to go where everyone goes, that is, into the plain of 'Arafāt, and then, return from there with everyone else (it will be noted that in the accompanying translation of the text, the Qur'ānic word *afīdū* has been rendered into English literally with the word, 'flow' which succinctly suggests mingling with the multitude, something shunned by the Quraysh of Jāhiliyyah).

To begin with, behaving special and staying disconnected from others is a standing act of arrogance which

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must almost always be avoided, particularly during the days of Ḥajj where the garment of *Iḥrām* and the homogeneity of place and purpose teach the lesson that all human beings are equal, the distinction of rich and poor, learned and ignorant, big and small does not exist here, therefore, such display of assumed distinction, and that too in a state of *Iḥrām*, further increases the degree of crime.

Human equality in practice

This statement of the Holy Qur'ān teaches us an important principle of social living which demands that the people of a higher status should not cut off their relations with those of a lower status; they should rather behave like members of a large family in their different forms of subsistence, stay and movement. This creates mutual brotherhood, concern and love, removes the walls between the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee. It was during his last sermon of Ḥajj that the Holy Prophet ﷺ openly declared for all times to come that no Arab is superior to non-Arab and no white person is superior to a black person. Superiority depends on *Taqwā* and *Iṭā'ah* (the fear of Allah and the obedience to His command). Therefore, those who wanted to establish a distinct status for themselves by staying at Muzdalifah, contrary to the rest, were told that this act of theirs was a sin and they must seek forgiveness for it so that Allah Almighty may forgive them and bless them with His mercy.

This concludes the commentary for Day 18.