

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 2 – August 13

Topic: Allah

“And Allah’s are the best names, so call on Him thereby¹ and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names.² — 7:180

“Say: Call on Allah or call on the Beneficent.³ By whatever (name) you call on Him, He has the best names. And do not be loud in your prayer nor be silent in it, and seek a way between these.⁴ — 17:110.

Notes:

1 By *the best names* are meant *names expressing the most excellent attributes of the Divine Being*. By *calling on Him thereby* is meant that man should always keep the Divine attributes before his mind, endeavouring to possess those attributes.

2 Violation of the sanctity of His names is of two kinds: firstly, giving Him an improper or inaccurate attribute; and secondly, to interpret His attributes in a manner which does not befit Him.

3 The name *Rahmān* (Beneficent) seems to have been particularly objectionable to the Arabs, who objected to its use even so late as the truce at Hudaibiyah. The Christians also do not recognize Allah to be *Rahmān*, because it means that Allah shows mercy to His creatures without their having done anything to deserve it, while the Christian doctrine of atonement is based on the belief that Allah cannot show mercy to His creatures without receiving some satisfaction (which allegedly took the form of the punishment that Jesus suffered on the cross for the sins of mankind).

4 The two extremes with regard to prayer are its utterance in a very loud voice or not uttering any word at all with the tongue, thinking that God knows what is in the hearts. Muslims are told to take the middle course between the two extremes. Utterance of words makes the prayer go deeper down into the heart of man, and thus makes it more effective.

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Topic: Abraham

Chapter 2

258 Have you not thought of him [the king of the time called *Nimrod*] who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingdom? When Abraham said, My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die, he said: I give life and cause death. Abraham said: Surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the East, so you make it rise from the West. Thus he who disbelieved was baffled. And Allah does not guide the unjust people.

Notes:

Abraham lived approx. 2000 B.C.

Allah promised Abraham a *spiritual* kingdom, which means that people would follow his teachings and receive spiritual life. As against this, the king claims to give life and cause death, meaning that he has absolute power over the lives of his subjects. This claim is made by rulers in the world, and also by the modern materialistic world which claims to have the power to give life and cause death by use of science and technology.

Abraham says to the king: You haven't got power over nature, you can't reverse the laws of nature which control life and death to a far greater extent than you do (as the sun does). Merely having control in the land over people's lives doesn't give you control over the entire system of life and death.

Secondly, Abraham is concerned with spiritual life and death. He says: Allah has sent His life-giving guidance to rise from the East, but you with all your worldly might cannot create the like of His guidance in the West by your human, material means. The conclusion is that it is God Who will make the same guidance to shine from the West which He sent in the East.