

Light Upon Light

Towards Correcting Our Beliefs and Practices

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Quran

"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion. So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan), he must fast that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number (of days which one did not fast must be made up) from other days. Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you."
(2: 185).

Hadith

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Ramadan has come to you. (It is) a month of blessing, in which Allah covers you with blessing, for He sends down Mercy, decreases sins and answers prayers. In it, Allah looks at your competition (in good deeds), and boasts about you to His angels. So show Allah goodness from yourselves, for the unfortunate one is he who is deprived in (this month) of the mercy of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted."
[Narrated by Tabarani]

Fasting Ramadan, Its virtues and rulings

Abu Umaamah radiAllahu anhu said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me of an action by which I may enter Paradise'. He said: 'Take to Fasting, there is nothing like it.' " [An-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Hibbaan, Al-Haakim, Saheeh]

In this hadeeth, the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) singled out fasting when asked about a deed that leads its doer to the best of rewards, Paradise. This fact alone is sufficient for us to understand the greatness of fasting.

Mere knowledge of the importance and superiority of fasting, however, is not enough for a Muslim to attain Allah's pleasure and then, in shaa' Allah, His great reward.

Indeed, the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) has said: **"Perhaps a person fasting will receive nothing from his fasting except hunger and thirst."** [Ibn Maajah, Ad-Daarimee, Ahmad, al-Baihaqee, Saheeh] This hadeeth should raise our concern about fasting and increase our desire to perform this act of worship with the best intention and in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam).

The first step for a Muslim to realise is the fact that fasting the month of Ramadhan is **obligatory** and that Allah has prescribed it for us in His Book:

"Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain taqwaa." [2:183]

Thus Allah Ta'aalaa teaches us that Fasting is an obligation and a means to attain taqwaa, that which increases believers in their ranks with Allah swt:

"The most honoured by Allah amongst you are those best in taqwaa." [49:13]

Furthermore, we should realise the words of the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) in which he tells us that Allah the Exalted said: "The most beloved deeds with which my slave comes closer to Me are the obligatory deeds." [Saheeh al-Jami']

Virtues of Fasting as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah

- **The reward for fasting is immense, as mentioned in the following Hadeeth:**

"Every action of the son of Adam is given manifold reward, each good deed receiving then times its like, up to seven hundred times. Allah the Most High said, 'Except for fasting, for it is for Me and I will give recompense for it, he leaves off his desires and his food for Me.' for the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord, and the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of musk." [al-Bukhaaree]

Also, Sahl ibn Sa'd said that the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) said: "Indeed there is a gate of Paradise called ar-Rayyaan. On the day of Resurrection those who fast will enter through it; no one enters it except for them, and when they have entered, it is closed so that no one enters it, so when the last of them enters it, it is closed, and whoever enters it drinks, and whoever drinks never becomes thirsty." [Ibn Khuzaimah, Saheeh].

- **Fasting is a shield against the Fire:**

"Fasting is a shield with which a servant protects himself from the Fire." [Ahmad, Saheeh]

- **On the Day of Judgement,** "Fasting will say: O My Lord I prevented him from food and desires so accept my intercession for him." [Ahmad, al-Haakim and Abu Nu'aim, Hasan]

- **Fasting is a means for one's sins to be forgiven.** The Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) said: "He who fasts Ramadhan, due to Iman and hoping for reward (from Allah) then his past sins are forgiven." [al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]

- **The supplication of the fasting person is answered:** "There are in the month of Ramadhan in every day and night those to whom Allah grants freedom from the Fire, and there is for every Muslim an supplication which he can make and will be granted." [al-Bazzaar, Ahmad, Saheeh]

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- **Fasting is expiation for various sins, as mentioned in the Qur'aan, in verses:** 2:196, 4:92, 5:89, 5:95 and 58:3-4.

- **The fasting person will be among the true followers of the prophets and the martyrs:** `Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhaanee radiAllahu anhu said: "A man came to the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what if I testify that none has the right to worshipped but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah, and I observe the five daily prayers, and I pay the zakaah, and I fast and stand in prayer in Ramadhan, then amongst whom shall I be?' He said: 'Amongst the true followers of the prophets and the martyrs.'" [Ibn Hibbaan, Saheeh]

- **Fasting is a shield against one's base desires,** as the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) told the youth: "O youths, whoever amongst you is able to marry then let him do so, since it restrains the eyes and protects the private parts, and he who is unable, then let him fast because it is a shield for him." [al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]

Once we realise the greatness of fasting and what achievement it leads to, we must put all our efforts in performing fasting in the best manner possible. And since fasting is worship, it must be done solely for Allah's sake, and no intention is accepted, other than pleasing Allah and seeking His Face with all one's sincerity. Without a correct intention, no deed is of any value in the Hereafter. We Muslims must constantly verify our intentions and consider why we perform fasting. Do we do so merely because it is the practice of our parents and friends, or do we do so because it is part of our tradition, or perhaps because we simply want to conform to our environment in order to avoid any problems? A Muslim who realises that only that which is with Allah remains, and that He is the only One who grants and withholds, would not be of those to which the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) alluded in the Hadeeth: **"On the Day of Judgement, a caller will cry out, 'Whoever performed a deed for someone other than Allah may seek his reward from that for which he performed the deed' "** [Saheeh al-Jami].

Certain Aspects and Rulings related to fasting

- For the obligatory fast in the month of Ramadhan, it is incumbent on everyone to have intention before the appearance of Fajr.

- Fast is performed between the time of True Fajr (that which makes food forbidden for the fasting person, and makes Fajr prayer lawful, as explained by Ibn `Abbaas radiAllahu anhu) and the time as soon it is seen that the sun has set.

- The interval between the end of suhoor (the pre-dawn meal) and the start of the obligatory prayer is the interval sufficient to recite fifty Aayaat, as indicated by the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) and related by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.

- Eating the pre-dawn meal (suhoor) contains many blessings and the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) ordered us to do take it, forbade us from leaving it and told us to take suhoor to make a distinction between our fast and the fast of the People of the Book. In spite of this, Ibn Hajar reports in Fathul-Baaree that there is Ijmaa` that it is mustahabb (recomm-ensation). Allah knows best.

- Falsehood, ignorant and indecent speech are to be avoided as they may render one's fasting futile.

- A fasting person can begin fasting while in the state of Janaabah (major state of impurity that requires bath due to a sexual intercourse), as explained in Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.

- Use of Siwaak (tooth-stick) is permitted. Likewise, washing the mouth and nose is permitted, but it should not be done strongly.

- The Prophet forbade a youth to kiss while fasting, while he allowed an old man since he is able to control himself.

- Giving blood and injections which do not provide nourishment does not break the fast. Also, there is no harm in tasting food, provided it does not reach the throat.

- Pouring cold water over one's head and taking a bath contain no harm to a fasting person.

- It is Sunnah of the Prophet and the practice of his companions to break the fast as soon as the Sun sets even if some bright redness remains upon the horizon. Muslims are strongly encouraged to hasten breaking the fast.

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Question & Answer

Question: Can you please tell me; is it necessary for Muslims to finish the whole Quran during the month of Ramadhan?

Response: Yes, it is mustahabb for the Muslim to read Qur'aan a great deal during Ramadaan and to strive to complete it, but that is not obligatory, i.e., if he does not complete the Qur'aan he is not sinning, but he has missed out on a great deal of reward.

It was the practice of the salaf (may Allaah be pleased with them) to strive to complete the Qur'aan in Ramadaan, following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Qataadah used to complete the Qur'aan in seven days, and when Ramadaan came, he would complete it every three days. When the last ten days came, he would complete it every night. Al-Siyar (5/276).

It was narrated from Mujaahid that he used to complete the Qur'aan every night in Ramadaan. Al-Tibyaan by al-Nawawi (p. 74). He said: Its isnaad is saheeh.

It was narrated that Mujaahid said: 'Ali al-Azdi used to complete the Qur'aan every night in Ramadaan. Tahdheeb al-Kamaal (2/983).

Al-Rabee' ibn Sulaymaan said: al-Shaafa'i used to complete the Qur'aan sixty times in Ramadaan. Al-Siyar (10/36).

Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, commenting on how often the Qur'aan should be completed: The best view is that that varies from one person to another. The one who is seeking to understand it and ponder its meaning should limit himself to as much as he can understand fully when he reads, and the one who is busy spreading knowledge or other religious works, or working for the public interests of the Muslims, should limit himself to what will not cause him to neglect his work.

If he is not among the categories mentioned here, then he should do as much as he can without reaching the point of boredom. End quote.

Al-Tibyaan (p. 76)

However it is mustahabb to read Qur'aan and complete it in Ramadaan, and that remains mustahabb but it is not one of the obligatory duties and the Muslim is not sinning if he does not do it.

Islam QA

Are You Sincere??

As Ramadan rolls around we all must ask ourselves this... are we being sincere??

Once 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azîz (rahimahullâh) was advised, "O 'Umar, beware of being the ally of Allâh in open, while being His enemy in secret. If one's nature in open and secret do not equate then he is a hypocrite, and the hypocrites occupy the lowest level in the Hellfire."

From amongst the most difficult things one can acquire is sincerity and because of this, the pious predecessors would try to block off all their acts of worship from *riyaa* (showing off) by hiding their good deeds just as they would hide their evil deeds.

They would advise each other with words such as "Do not be an enemy to Shaytaan in public and his friend in private"; or in other words, make sure you are the same person in public as you are when in seclusion. Because of this, they loved to be alone and busy in acts of worship wherein only Allah could see them.

As for those deeds which were public, then the following story would suffice: a student of Abdullah bin Mas'ood once hosted a blind man for a meal and decorated his meal as if he could see. When the people inquired as to why he was decorating the food to for a man who couldn't even see, he replied by saying "**But Allah can see!**"

Because of this, one of the best definitions of sincerity is to forget about the creation by constantly looking at the Creator (in terms of gaining admiration for your deeds); thereby not caring whether or not the people see any single act of worship. So when a man gets up to worship, he does not think about the people's thoughts and does not care whether they praise him, or if they criticize him because he only sees Allah in front of him, thereby reaching the level of *ihsan*.

...Then he (the man) said, "Inform me about Ihsan." He (the Messenger of Allah) answered, "It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, and even though you cannot see Him yet He sees you." [Muslim]

So when one reaches *ihsan*, he does not become like those who Ali bin Abi Talib said regarding the insincere: "**The one who shows off has three characteristics: he is lazy when by himself, he is lively and energetic when with others and he increases in his actions when he is praised and decreases in them when he is criticised.**"

Because of the difficulty of sincerity, they (as-salaf) considered themselves to be hypocrites as it was said by Abin Aby Mulaikh, a Tabi'e, "**I have met thirty of the companions of the Messenger (sallahu alayhi wa sallam) and all of them feared hypocrisy in themselves**". "

These were the companions of the Prophet, those men and women who Allah was pleased with and who were pleased with Allah. So how about someone lower than them, people like us who act as if we have been granted Paradise while living on earth. And what is even more astonishing than this is Umar bin al-Khattab's asking

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The Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) said: "The Deen will not cease to be uppermost as long as the people hasten to break the fast, since the Jews and the Christians delay it." [Abu Daawood, Ibn Hibbaan, Hasan]

- The Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) used to break his fast before praying and he used to break it with fresh dates, if not then with older dates. And if not with dates, than with some mouthfuls of water.

- The supplication of the fasting person when he breaks his fast is not rejected.

- The Prophet said: "He who gives food for a fasting person to break his fast, he will receive the same reward as him, except that nothing will be reduced from the fasting persons reward." [Ahmad, at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan, Saheeh]. Also, a fasting Muslim should not reject invitation of another Muslim to break fast.

- Deliberate eating and drinking, making oneself vomit, menstruation, after-birth bleeding, injection containing nourishment and sexual intercourse all nullify the fast.

- As for Lailatul-Qadr, the Night of Decree, that is better than a thousand months (see Soorah Qadr (97)), the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) told us: "Seek it in the last ten, and if one of you is too weak or unable then let him not allow that to make him miss the final seven." [Bukhari, Muslim]. That which is the most specific states, "seek it on the (twenty) ninth and the (twenty) seventh and the (twenty) fifth." [Bukhari]

- The Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) used to exert himself greatly during Lailatul-Qadr. He would spend the nights in worship, detaching himself from women and ordering his family with this. So every Muslim should be eager to stand in prayer during Lailatul Qadr out of Iman and hoping for the great reward.

The Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever stands (in prayer) in Lailatul Qadr out of Iman and seeking reward then his previous sins are forgiven." [Bukhari, Muslim]

- The supplication that the Messenger of Allah (sallahualayhi wa sallam) taught 'Aa'isha, radiyallaahu 'anhaa, to say when seeking the Night of Decree is:

"O Allah you are the one who pardons greatly, and loves to pardon, so pardon me." [at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, Saheeh]

- It is Sunnah to pray Taraweeh in congregation and the one who knew the best the practice of the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) at night, 'Aa'isha, radiyallaahu 'anhaa, said: "Allah's Messenger did not increase upon eleven rak'ahs in Ramadhan, or outside it." [Bukhari, Muslim]

- All who are capable should take advantage of the month of Ramadhan and perform I'tikaaf, i.e. fully attach oneself to worshipping in the mosque. One should inquire how the Prophet (sallahualayhi wa sallam) performed I'tikaaf.

- Zakaatul Fitr is prescribed by Allah as a purification for those who fasted from loose and indecent talk, and to feed the poor Muslims as a provision for 'Eidul Fitr. One should inquire further about rulings related to it, especially upon whom it is obligatory and what is its quantity.

- The last but not the least, we should strive to constantly improve our worship and obedience of Allah the Most High, including once the month of Ramadhan is over, inshaa' Allah.

Br. Isa al-Bosnee

Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman if he (Umar) were among the hypocrites!

So one can never be sincere if he thinks himself to be sincere; since sincerity is to lose the vision of sincerity in oneself. And because of the greatness of sincerity, they (as-salaf) would say **“whoever had a single instance in his lifetime which was purely and sincerely for the sake of Allah will be saved”** since it has the capacity to purify you from all your sins. One of the salaf once remarked on how happy he would be if he only knew Allah accepted even two rakaat of salaah from him!

Because of their sincerity they lived a pure life, free from anxiety and grief since it was to Allah that they turned to in both good and bad times. And perhaps ibn al-Qayyim reflected on this when he said: ***Ikhlaas and Tawheed are a tree in the heart, its branches are good actions and its fruits are a good life in this world, and eternal comfort in the Hereafter; and just like in Paradise where the fruits whose supply is not cut off, nor are they out of reach, likewise are the fruits of Tawheed and Ikhlaas in this world.***

[Ibn al-Qayyim – ‘al-Fawa'id' 292]

So be sincere O servants of Allah and leave the inner cravings for attention for indeed the short-term pleasure attained from people's admiration is not worth the anger and wrath of Allah and He is not unaware of what you do. And if you were to reflect on the people of insincerity, you would realize how pathetic their situation is, for indeed the one who is insincere cannot see anything except for what is in front of them, thereby unable to have high aspirations and unable to undergo hardship for anything worthy.

“They know only the outside appearance of the life of the world (i.e. the matters of their livelihood, like irrigating or sowing or reaping, etc.), and they are heedless of the Hereafter.” {30:7}

And if they could see beyond the outside appearance of this world, they would know with certainty that the only thing that separates them from looking up at the face of Allah is death; and they would never risk insincerity for a miserable gain such as fame in this world for how quick is the passing of this world and how forgetful do people become of each other and finally how useless is the deed that is bereft of sincerity; for indeed the only one Satan is able to lead astray is the one who is insincere.

(Modified from an article on: <http://shadows15.wordpress.com>)

In the month of Ramadaan it is very important that we spent a few moments to understand some of the wisdoms and lessons that we can learn from this month of fasting.

Unfortunately, many Muslims come in to this month and they are as a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Let it not be that the day that you fast and the day that you break fast be equal." Meaning, one's behaviour, attitude and outlook are the same whether one fasts or not, i.e. fasting has no effect upon that person. This is why we need to reflect on some of these lessons.

LESSON 1: Gaining Taqwaa

Allah legislated fasting for gaining taqwaa, **"O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed upon you as it has been prescribed upon those before you, so that you may attain taqwaa."** (meaning of Suratul Baqarah (2):183) Taqwaa in this case means to make a shield between oneself and Allah's anger and Hellfire. So we should ask ourselves, when we break our fasts, 'Has this fasting day made us fear Allah more? Has it resulted that we want to protect ourselves from the hellfire or not?

LESSON 2: Drawing closer to Allah

This is achieved by reciting and reflecting on Al-Qur'aan during night and day, attending the taraaweeh prayers, remembering Allah, sitting in circles of knowledge and, for those who can, making 'umrah. Also for those who can, making I'tikaaf (seclusion) in the last ten nights of Ramadaan, so as to leave all worldly pursuits and seclude oneself in a masjid just thinking of Allah, so as to bring oneself closer to Allah(SWT). When one sins, one feels distant from Allah. That is why one might find it hard to read the Qur'aan and come to the masjid. However, the obedient worshipper feels closer to Allah and wants to worship Allah more, because he is not shy from his sins.

LESSON 3: Acquiring patience and strong will

Allah has mentioned patience more than seventy times in the Qur'aan and has commanded patience in more than sixteen ways in His Book. So when one fasts, and gives up one's food and drink, and one's marital sexual relations for those hours, one learns restraint and patience. This Ummah needs men and women that are strong willed, who can stand upon the Sunnah and the Book of Allah and not waver in front of the enemies of Allaah. We do not need emotional people, who just raise slogans and shout, but when the time comes to stand upon something firm, they cannot do so, they waver.

LESSON 4: Striving for Ihsaan (righteousness and sincerity) and staying away from riyaa' (showing off)

Ihsaan means to worship Allah as if one seeks Him, and even though one does not see Him, He sees all. Hasan al-Basree said, **"By Allah, in the last twenty years, I have not said a word or taken something with my hand or refrained to take something with my hand or stepped forth or stepped back, except that I have thought before I have done any action, 'Does Allah love this action? Is Allah pleased with this action?'** So when one is fasting, one should gain this quality of watching oneself and also staying away from riyaa' (showing off). That is why Allah said in a hadeeth qudsi, **"Fasting is for Me and I reward it."** (al-Bukhaaree) Allah singles out fasting from all other types of worship saying, "Fasting is for Me", because no one knows whether you are fasting or not, except Allah. For example, when one is praying or giving charity or making tawaa'af, one can be seen by the people, so one might do the action seeking the praise of the people. Sufyaan ath-Thawree used to spend the nights and the days crying and the people used to ask him, **"Why do you cry, is it due to the fear of Allah?"** He said, **'No.'** They said, **"Is it due to the fear of the Hellfire?"** He said, **'No. It is not the fear of Hellfire that makes me cry, what makes me cry is that I have been worshipping Allah all these years and doing scholarly teaching, and I am not certain that my intentions are purely for Allah.'**

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“Worship and obedience illuminate the heart and make it strong and steadfast, until it becomes like a clear mirror, shining with light.

When Shaytaan draws close, he is struck by its light like those who try to eavesdrop [in the heavens] are struck by the shooting stars, and Shaytaan flees from this heart with more terror than a wolf fleeing from a lion.”

Ibnul Qayyim in *Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi*, p. 64