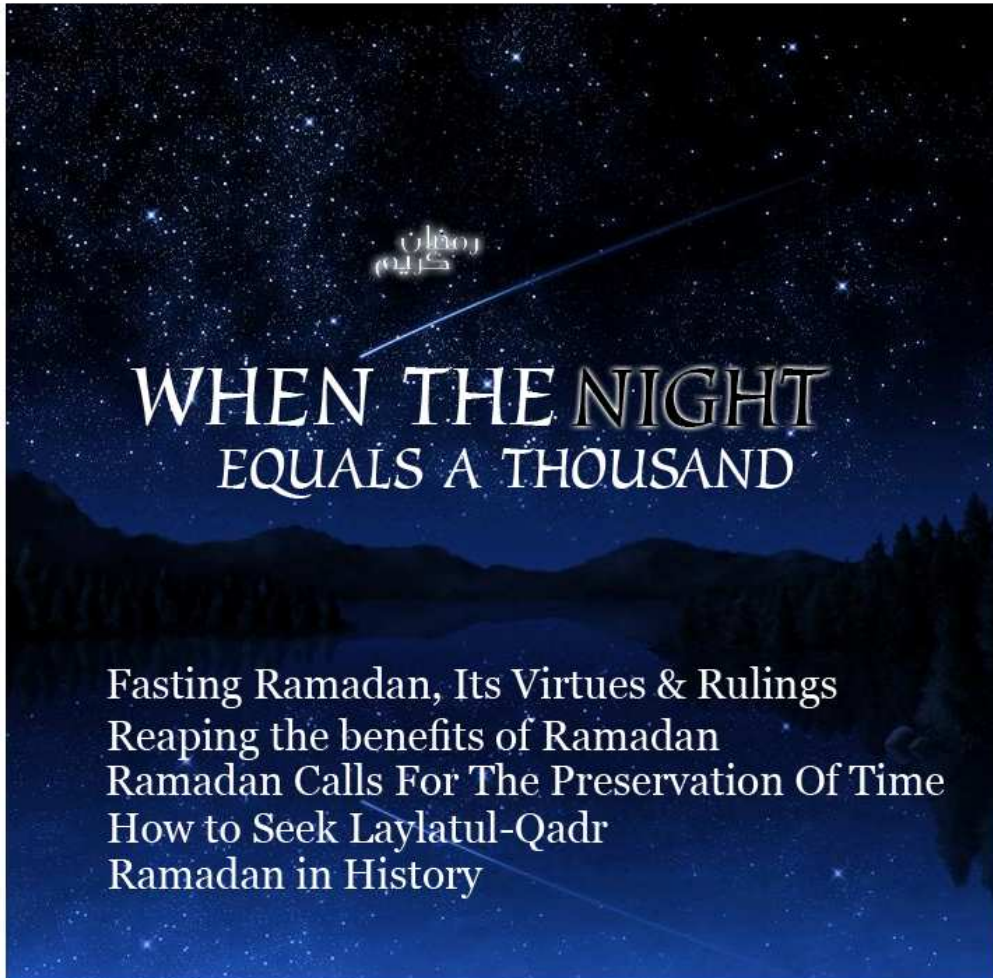


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WHEN THE NIGHT EQUALS A THOUSAND

Fasting Ramadan, Its Virtues & Rulings
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Fasting Ramadan, Its Virtues & Rulings

By Br. Isa al-Bosnawi

Abu Umaamah r.a.a. 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 (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.).

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`aala 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 (s.a.w.) 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 menti-oned 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 (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) 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]
- Fasting is an 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 r.a.a. said: "A man came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) 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 (SwT) is the only One who grants and withholds, would not be of those to which the Prophet (s.a.w.) 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 r.a.a.) 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 (s.a.w.) and related by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.
- Eating the pre-dawn meal (suhoor) contains many blessings and the Prophet (s.a.w.) 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. The Prophet (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) 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 best du`aa' (supplication) is that reported from Allah's Messenger, pbuh. He used to say when breaking the fast: "Dhahaba-DH-DHama'u wabtallatil-`urooqu, wa thabatal ajru inshaa Allah." (The thirst has gone, the veins are moistened and the reward is certain, if Allah wills.) [Abu Daawood, al-Baihaquee, al-Haakim and others, Hasan]

- 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 (s.a.w.) 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." [al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]. That which is the most specific states, "seek it on the (twenty) ninth and the (twenty) seventh and the (twenty) fifth." [al-Bukhaaree]

- The Prophet (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) said: "Whoever stands (in prayer) in Lailatul Qadr out of Iman and seeking reward then his previous sins are forgiven." [al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]

- The supplication that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) 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 (s.a.w.) at night, `Aa'isha, radiyallaahu `anhaa, said: "Allah's Messenger did not increase upon eleven rak`ahs in Ramadhan, or outside it." [al-Bukhaaree, 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 (s.a.w.) 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.

By Br. Isa al-Bosnee [This article was published in the 11th issue of Nida'ul Islam magazine (<http://www.islam.org.au>), January-February 1996]

Reaping the benefits of Ramadan

Dr. Ali Al-Timimi

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

Allaah 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 SoraatulBaqarah (2):183) Taqwaa in this case means to make a shield between oneself and Allaah's anger and Hellfire. So we should ask ourselves, when we break our fasts, 'Has this fasting day made us fear Allaah more? Has it resulted that we want to protect ourselves from the hellfire or not?

LESSON 2: Drawing closer to Allaah

This is achieved by reciting and reflecting on Al-Qur'aan during night and day, attending the taraaweeh prayers, remembering Allaah, 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 Allaah, so as to bring oneself closer to Allaah (SWT). When one sins, one feels distant from Allaah. 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 Allaah and wants to worship Allaah more, because he is not shy from his sins.

LESSON 3: Acquiring patience and strong will

Allaah 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 Allaah as if one seeks Him, and even though one does not see Him, He sees all. Hasan al-Basree said, "By Allaah, 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 Allaah love this action? Is Allaah 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) Allaah 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 Allaah. For example, when one is praying or giving charity or making tawaaaf, 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 Allaah? 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 Allaah all

these years and doing scholarly teaching, and I am not certain that my intentions are purely for Allaah."

LESSON 5: Refinement of manners, especially those related to truthfulness and discharging trusts.

The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "Whoever does not abandon falsehood in word and action, then Allaah (SWT) has no need that he should leave his food and drink." (al-Bukhaaree) What we learn from this, is that we must pay attention to the purification of our manners. The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "was sent to perfect good manners." (Maalik) So we must check ourselves, are we following the behaviour of the Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him)? For example: Do we give salaam to those we don't know and those we do know? Do we follow the manners of Islaam, by telling the truth and only telling the truth? Are we sincere? Are we merciful to the creation?

LESSON 6: Recognizing that one can change for the better

The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "Every son of Adam sins and the best of the sinners are those who repent." (Ibn Maajah) Allaah provides many opportunities to repent to Him and seek His forgiveness. If one was disobedient they can become obedient.

LESSON 7: Being more charitable

Ibn `Abaas said, "The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) was the most charitable amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadaan when Jibreel used to meet him on every night of Ramadaan till the end of the month..." (al-Bukhaaree) The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "He who gives food for a fasting person to break his fast, he will receive the same reward as him, without nothing being reduced from the fasting person's reward." (at-Tirmidhee)

LESSON 8: Sensing the unity of the Muslims

The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "...Those of you who will live after me will see many differences. Then you must cling to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided khaleefahs. Hold fast to it and stick to it." (Aboo Daawood) In this month we sense that there is a possibility for unity, because we all fast together, we break fast together, we all worship Allah together, and we pray Salaatul-`Eid together. Therefore we sense that the unity of Muslims is possible. It is possible for Muslims to be a single body, but this will only be achieved when obedience is only to Allaah and His Messenger.

LESSON 9: Learning discipline

The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) made us adhere to discipline and strictness, strictness that does not lead to fanaticism or going outside the bounds that Allaah has laid down. One cannot knowingly break the fast before the sunset, as this will not be accepted by Allaah. Muslims should learn to be very strict in their lives, because they are people of an important message, which they mold their lives around.

LESSON 10: Teaching the young to worship Allaah

It was the practice of the people of Madeenah, that during the fast of `Aashooraa (which is now a recommended fast of one day) to get their children to fast with them. When the children would cry of hunger and thirst, their parents would distract their attention by giving them some sort of toy to play with. The children would break their fast with their parents. (as mentioned in al-Bukhaaree).

So the young should be brought to the masjid and they should pray with their parents, so that they are able to get into the habit of becoming worshippers of Allaah. If one does not encourage children to fast when they are young, they will find it very difficult to fast for thirty days at the age of puberty. This is why the Prophet (may Allah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "Command your children to pray at the age of seven and beat them at the age of ten (if they do not pray)." (Haakim)

LESSON 11: Caring for one's health

Fasting has many medical benefits and it teaches Muslims to take care of their health and too build strong bodies. The Prophet (may Allaah send His blessing and peace upon him) said, "A strong believer is better and is more beloved to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in everyone." (Muslim)

Ramadan Calls For The Preservation Of Time

Shaykh `Aa'id Abdullah al-Qarnee

Allah describes the discourse between Himself and the reckless and negligent on the Day of Judgement: '[And] He will ask [the doomed]: "What number of years have you spent on earth?" They will answer: "We have spent there a day, or part of a day; but ask those who [are able to] count time... [Whereupon] He will say: "You have spent there but a short while: had you but known [how short it was to be]! Did you then think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you not have to return to Us? [Know,] then, [that] God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: there is no deity save Him, the Sustainer, in bountiful almightiness enthroned!"' (23:112-16).

One of the righteous predecessors noted: life is short, do not shorten it with negligence. This is, certainly, true. Negligence shortens the hours and consumes the night. Hence the Prophet sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam said: *'Two favours that many people are deceived by: health and spare time.'* The lesson being that many people are healthy and have a lot of time on their hands yet their lives pass by quickly before them without their using them or benefiting anyone. He also warned: *'The foot of a believer will not move on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about four things and mention his life span and how he utilized it.'* Life is, undoubtedly, a treasure, whomsoever spends it in obedience to Allah will find his treasure on the Day when wealth and sons will be of no avail but instead only those who returned to Allah with clean hearts. Thus, those who spent their lives in negligence, disobedience and play will on that Day regret in such a manner that will never be equalled thereafter. They will say: 'Alas for us, that we disregarded our lives.'

In effect, both the night and day are like riding animals that transport man to either eternal happiness or loss. Our righteous forbears used to take every initiative to preserve their time. There are strange stories about them concerning this matter. There were among them those who used to read the Quran and they were on the threshold of death. Such an example was Junaid ibn Muhammad. His sons said to him, 'You are exhausting yourself.' He replied, 'And should there be among the people one who exerts himself more than me?'

Al Aswad ibn Yazid used to stand in prayer for most of the night. Some of his friends advised him to relax at least for a small portion of the night. He told them it is this very relaxation he is in search of; meaning in the Hereafter.

Sufiyan al Thowri once sat in the Sacred Mosque speaking to some people. Then suddenly he arose terrified and said; we are sitting here and the day is doing its work. There were among our forbears those who used to divide their days and nights into hours. Hence they allocated specific hours for prayers, recitation, remembrance, meditation, acquisition of knowledge, work and sleep. They ascribed no time for merriment.

As for their successors, they have been afflicted by the calamity of time-wasting. Except, of course, those to whom Allah has shown mercy. They indulge in excessive sleep, idleness, aimless wandering, spending on amusements and sittings in which there is no benefit; or in meetings which, if they do not involve disobedience, are definitely the cause of disobedience.

Among the greatest things that organize time and work are the five daily prayers. Allah the Sublime and Most Excellent Speaker affirms in the Quran: 'Verily, for all believers prayer is indeed a sacred duty linked to particular times [of day]' (4:104).

The month of Ramadan is a school in which the Muslim's time is organized and invested in matters that lead to closeness to Allah. Notwithstanding, some people do not know the meaning of fasting. They engage in ample negligence and deep slumber. They spend their days sleeping and their nights in wasted wakefulness.

O Allah! Preserve for us our lives. Plant our feet firmly on Your path, and make us obey You always. O Lord of all the worlds.

How to Seek Laylatul-Qadr

Shaykh Muhammad Nasir-ud-Deen al-Albani

Laylat ul-Qadr is the most blessed night. A person who misses it has indeed missed a great amount of good. If a believing person is zealous to obey his Lord and increase the good deeds in his record, he should strive to encounter this night and to pass it in worship and obedience. If this is facilitated for him, all of his previous sins will be forgiven.

Praying Qiyaam

It is recommended to make a long Qiyaam prayer during the nights on which Laylat ul-Qadr could fall. This is indicated in many hadeeths, such as the following:

Abu Tharr (radhiallahu `anhu) relates:

"We fasted with Allah's Messenger (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) in Ramadaan. He did not lead us (in qiyaam) at all until there were seven (nights of Ramadaan) left. Then he stood with us (that night - in prayer) until one third of the night had passed. He did not pray with us on the sixth. On the fifth night, he prayed with us until half of the night had passed. So we said, 'Allah's Messenger! Wouldn't you pray with us the whole night?' He replied:

'Whoever stands in prayer with the imaam until he (the imaam) concludes the prayer, it is recorded for him that he prayed the whole night.'..." [Recorded by Ibn Abi Shaybah, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmithi (who authenticated it), an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, at-Tahawi (in Sharhu Ma`an il-Athar, Ibn Nasr, al-Faryabi, and al-Bayhaqi. Their isnad is authentic.)]

[Point of benefit: Abu Dawud mentioned: "I heard Ahmad being asked, 'Do you like for a man to pray with the people or by himself during Ramadan?' He replied, 'Pray with the people' I also heard him say, 'I would prefer for one to pray (qiyaam) with the imaam and to pray with him as well, for the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "When a man prays with the imaam until he concludes, it is recorded that he prayed the rest of that night." [Masaa'il]]

Abu Hurayrah (radhiallahu `anhu) narrated that the Messenger (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said:

"Whoever stands (in qiyaam) in Laylat ul-Qadr [and it is facilitated for him] out of faith and expectation (of Allah's reward), will have all of his previous sins forgiven." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim; the addition "and it is facilitated for him" is recorded by Ahmad from the report of `Ubaadah Bin as-Samit; it means that he is permitted to be among the sincere worshippers during that blessed night.]

Making Supplications

It is also recommended to make extensive supplication on this night. `A'ishah (radhiallahu `anha) reported that she asked Allah's Messenger (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam), "O Messenger of Allah! If I knew which night is Laylat ul-Qadr, what should I say during it?" And he instructed her to say:

"Allahumma innaka `afuwun tuh. ibbul `afwa fa`fu `annee - O Allah! You are forgiving, and you love forgiveness. So forgive me." [Recorded by Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and at-Tirmithi. Verified to be authentic by Al-Albani]

Abandoning Worldly Pleasures for the Sake of Worship

It is further recommended to spend more time in worship during the nights on which Laylat ul-Qadr is likely to be. This calls for abandoning many worldly pleasures in order to secure the time and thoughts solely for worshipping Allah. `A'ishah (radhiallahu `anha) reported:

"When the (last) ten started, the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) would tighten his izaar (i.e. he stayed away from his wives in order to have more time for worship), spend the whole night awake (in prayer), and wake up his family." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

And she said:

"Allah's Messenger (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) used to exert more (in worship) on the last ten than on other nights." [Muslim]

Ramadan in History

Dr. Abdullah Hakim Quick

All praises to Allah, Lord of the worlds. He who revealed in His Glorious Qur'an, "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those who came before you that you may keep your duty to your Lord (having taqwa)," (2:185). And may blessings and peace of Allah be upon His last Messenger Muhammad ibn Abdullah, forever.

O you who believe, Ramadan is a sacred month wherein Almighty Allah is constantly testing His creation and giving humanity the opportunity to achieve infinite, endless Bliss. Fasting is a complete purification and a means to developing the consciousness of Allah's presence. The consciousness of Allah (Taqwa) is a protection against the schemes of Shaitan, and the suffering of this world. Allah has informed us that, "Whoever keeps his duty to Allah (has taqwa), He ordains a way out for him and gives him sustenance from where he imagines not. And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him. Surely Allah attains His purpose. Allah has appointed a measure for everything." (65:2)

Many Muslims today have a misconception about fasting and the activities of a fasting person. They go into a state of semi-hibernation, spending most of their daylight hours in bed. If they fear Allah, they wake up for prayer, but then return to sleep immediately. This unnatural sleep makes them become lazy, dull-witted and often cranky.

Ramadan is actually a time of increased activity wherein the believer, now lightened of the burdens of constant eating and drinking, should be more willing to strive and struggle for Allah. The Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, passed through approximately nine Ramadans after the Hijrah. They were filled with decisive events and left us a shining example of sacrifice and submission to Allah.

In the first year after the Hijrah, the Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, sent Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib with thirty Muslim riders to Saif al Bahr to investigate three hundred riders from Quraish who had camped suspiciously in that area. The Muslims were about to engage the disbelievers, but they were separated by Majdy ibn Umar al-Juhany. The Hypocrites of Madinah, hoping to oppose the unity of the Muslims, built their own masjid (called Masjid ad-Dirar). The Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, ordered this masjid to be destroyed in Ramadan.

On the seventeenth of Ramadan, 3 A.H., Almighty Allah separated truth from falsehood at the Great Battle of Badr. The Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, and 313 of his companions set out to intercept a caravan of their own goods that had been left in Makkah. It was led by Abu Sufyan himself, and estimated at 50,000 dinars. They were met, instead, by a well-equipped army of the nobility of Quraish, intend on putting out the light of Islam. Despite being outnumbered three to one and appearing weak and unseasoned, the Muslims defended their faith with a burning desire to protect the Prophet and meet their Lord through martyrdom. Allah gave them a decisive victory on this day of Ramadan, that would never be forgotten.

In 6 A.H., Zaid ibn Haritha was sent to Wadi al-Qura at the head of a detachment to confront Fatimah bint Rabiha, the queen of that area. Fatimah had previously attacked a caravan led by Zaid and had succeeded in plundering its wealth. She was known to be the most protected woman in Arabia, as she hung fifty swords of her close relatives in her home. Fatimah was equally renowned for showing open hostility to Islam. She was killed in a battle against these Muslims in the month of Ramadan.

By Ramadan of 8 A.H., the treaty of Hudaibiyya had been broken and the Muslim armies had engaged the Byzantines in the North. Muhammad, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, felt the need to strike a fatal blow to disbelief in the Arabian Peninsula and conquer the city of Mecca. Allah has declared His Sanctuary a place of peace, security and religious sanctity. Now the time had come to purify the Ka`bah of nakedness and abomination. The Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam set out with an army having more armed men than al-Madinah had ever seen before. People were swelling the army's ranks as it moved toward Makkah. The

determination of the believers, guided by the Will of Allah, became so awesome that the city of Makkah was conquered without a battle, on 20 Ramadan. This was one of the most important dates in Islamic history for after it, Islam was firmly entrenched in the Arabian Peninsula. During the same month and year, after smashing the idols of Makkah, detachments were sent to the other major centers of polytheism and al-Lat, Manat and Suwa, some of the greatest idols of Arabia, were destroyed.

Such was the month of Ramadan in the time of the Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam. It was a time of purification, enjoining the good, forbidding the evil, and striving hard with one's life and wealth. After the death of the Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, Muslims carried on this tradition and Allah used the true believers to affect the course of history. Ramadan continued to be a time of great trials and crucial events.

Ninety-two years after the Hijrah, Islam had spread across North Africa, Iran, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. Spain was under the tyrannical rule of King Roderic of the Visigoths. Roderic had forced his six millions serfs and persecuted Jews to seek the aid of the Muslims of North Africa in order to be delivered. Musa ibn Husair, the Umayyad governor of North Africa, responded by sending his courageous general Tariq ibn Ziyad at the head of 12,000 Berber and Arab troops. In Ramadan of that year, they were confronted with a combined Visigoth army of 90,000 Christians led by Roderic himself, who was seated on a throne of ivory, silver, and precious gems and drawn by white mules. After burning his boats, Tariq preached to the Muslims warning them that victory and Paradise lay ahead of them and defeat and the sea lay to the rear. They burst forth with great enthusiasm and Allah manifested a clear victory over the forces of disbelief. Not only was Roderic killed and his forces completely annihilated, but also Tariq and Musa succeeded in liberating the whole of Spain, Sicily and parts of France. This was the beginning of the Golden Age of Al-Andalus where Muslims ruled for over 700 years.

In the year 582 A.H., Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi, after battling with the Crusaders for years, finally drove them out of Syria and the whole of their occupied lands in the month of Ramadan. The Muslim world was then destined to meet one of its most frightening challenges.

In the seventh century A.H. the Mongols were sweeping across Asia destroying everything that lay in their path. Genghis Khan called himself "the scourge of God sent to punish humanity for their sins". In 617 A.H., Samarkand, Ray and Hamdan were put to the sword causing more than 700,000 people to be killed or made captive. In 656 A.H., Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan, continued this destruction. Even Baghdad, the leading city of the Muslim world, was sacked. Some estimates say that as many as 1,800,000 Muslims were killed in this awesome carnage. The Christians were asked to eat pork and drink wine openly while the surviving Muslims were forced to participate in drinking bouts. Wine was sprinkled in the masjids and no Azan (call to prayer) was allowed. In the wake of such a horrible disaster and with the threat of the whole Muslim world and then Europe being subjected to the same fate, Allah raised up from the Mamluks of Egypt, Saifuddin Qutuz, who united the Muslim army and met the Mongols at Ain Jalut on 25th of Ramadan, 458 A.H. Although they were under great pressure, the Muslims with the help of Allah, cunning strategy and unflinching bravery crushed the Mongol army and reversed this tidal wave of horror. The whole of the civilized world sighed in relief and stood in awe at the remarkable achievement of these noble sons of Islam.

This was the spirit of Ramadan that enabled our righteous forefathers to face seemingly impossible challenges. It was a time of intense activity, spending the day in the saddle and the night in prayer while calling upon Allah for His mercy and forgiveness.

Today, the Muslim world is faced with drought, military aggression, widespread corruption and tempting materialism. Surely we are in need of believers who can walk in the footsteps of our beloved Prophet, sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam, the illustrious Sahabah, Tariq ibn Ziyad, Qutuz, Salahuddin and the countless heroes of Islam. Surely we are in need of believers who are unafraid of the threats of the disbelievers, yet kind and humble to the believing people; Muslims whose fast is complete and not just a source of hunger and thirst.

May Allah raise up a generation of Muslims who can carry Islam to all corners of the globe in a manner that befits our age, and may He give us the strength and the success to lay the proper foundations for them. May Allah make us of those who carry out our Islam during Ramadan and after it, and may He not make us of those who say what they do not do. Surely Allah and His Angels invoke blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad. O you who believe, send blessings and peace to him forever.

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