

Lessons from Ramadaan : Al-stiqaamah Magazine

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

RAMADAN LESSONS



Allaah -The Most High - said: **"The month of Ramaḍaan in which the Qur'aan was revealed, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance of the Criterion between right and wrong. So whosoever of you sights the crescent for the month of Ramaḍaan, he must fast that month."** [Soorah al-Baqarah, 2:185].

Allaah's Messenger (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said:

"Islam is built upon five: Testifying that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and the Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allaah, establishing the Prayer, giving the Zakaah performing Ḥajj to the House, and fasting in Ramaḍaan." [1]

He (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) also said:

"There has come to you Ramaḍaan, a blessed month, in which Allaah has made it obligatory to fast. During it the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the rebellious devils are chained.

In it is a night (Laylat al-Qadr) which is better than a thousand months. He who is deprived of its good has truly been deprived."[2]

From the many important lessons to be learnt from fasting are:

[1]: GAINING TAQWAA

Fasting has been legislated in order that we may gain taqwaa as Allaah - the Most High - said: "O you who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed upon those before you in order that you may attain taqwaa." [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:183].

Talq ibn Habeeb (d.100H) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"When fitnah (trial and tribulation) appears then extinguish it with taqwaa." So he was asked as to what taqwaa was, so he replied: "Taqwaa is to act in obedience to Allaah, upon a light (i.e. eemaan, faith) from Allaah, hoping in the Mercy of Allaah. And taqwaa is leaving acts of disobedience to Allaah, upon a light from Allaah, due to the fear of Allaah."[3]

"This is one of the best definitions of taqwaa. For every action must have both a starting point and a goal. And an action will not be considered as an act of obedience, or nearness to Allaah unless it stems from pure eemaan (faith in Allaah). Thus, it is pure eemaan - and not habits, desires, nor seeking praise or fame - that should be what initiates an action. And the preparation showed, to earn the reward of Allaah and to seek His good pleasure."[4] So Fasting is a means of attaining taqwaa, since it helps prevent a person from many sins that one is prone to. Due to this, the Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said: "Fasting is a shield with which the servant protects himself from the Fire."[5] So we should ask ourselves, after each day of fasting: Has this lasting made us more fearful and obedient to Allaah? Has it aided us in distancing ourselves from sins and disobedience?

[2]: SEEKING NEARNESS TO ALLAAH

The Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said:

"Allaah said: Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to me with anything more beloved to me than the obligatory duties that I have placed upon him. My servant continues to draw nearer to Me with optional deeds so that I shall love him."[6]

The Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said:

"Whosoever reaches the month of Ramaḍaan not have his sins forgiven, and so enters the Fire, then may Allaah distance him."[7]

So drawing closer to Allaah - the Most Perfect - in this blessed month, can be achieved by fulfilling one's obligatory duties; and also reciting the Qur'aan and reflecting upon its meanings, increasing in kindness and in giving charity, in making du'aa (supplication) to Allaah, attending the Taraaweeḥ Prayer, seeking out Laylat al-Qadr (the Night of

Power and Pre-Decree), a night which is better than a thousand months, attending gatherings of knowledge, and striving in those actions that will cause the heart to draw closer to its Lord and to gain His forgiveness. Our level of striving in this blessed month should be greater than our striving to worship Allaah in any other month, due to the excellence and rewards that Allaah has placed in it. Likewise from the great means of seeking nearness to Allaah in this month is making I'tikaaf (seclusion in the mosque in order to worship Allaah) - for whoever is able.

Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim (d.751H) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"Allaah also prescribed i'tikaaf for them, the objective being that the heart becomes fully preoccupied with Allaah - the Most High - concentrated upon Him alone, and cut-off from being preoccupied with the creation. Rather, the heart is only engrossed with Allaah - the Most Perfect - such that loving Him, remembering Him, and turning to Him takes the place of all the heart's anxieties and worries, so that he is able to overcome them. Thus, all his concerns are for Allaah, and his thoughts are all directed towards remembering Him and thinking of how to attain His Pleasure and what will cause nearness to Him which leads him to feel content with Allaah instead of people. This, in turn, prepares him for being at peace with Allaah alone, on the day of loneliness in the grave, when there will be no one else to give comfort, nor anyone to grant solace, except Him. So this is the greater goal of I'tikaaf." [8]

[3]: ACQUIRING PATIENCE

Imaam Aḥmad (d.241H) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"Allaah has mentioned ṣabr (patience) in over ninety places in His Book." [9]

The Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said:

"The month of Patience, and the three days of every month, are times for fasting." [10]

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d.464H) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"What is meant by the month of Patience is the month of Ramaḍaan ... So fasting is called patience because it restrains the soul from eating, drinking, conjugal relations and sexual desires." [11]

He (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said:

"O youth! Whoever amongst you is able to marry then let him do so; for it restrains the eyes and protects the private parts. But whoever is unable, then let him fast, because it will be a shield for him." [12]

So fasting is a means of learning self-restraint and patience. With patience we are able to strengthen our resolve to worship Allaah alone, with sincerity, and also cope with life's ups and downs. So - for example - with patience we are able to perform our Prayers calmly and correctly, without being hasty, and without merely pecking the ground several times! With patience we are able to restrain our souls from greed and stinginess and thus give part of our surplus wealth in Zakaah (obligatory charity). With patience we are able to subdue the soul's ill temperament, and thus endure the ordeal and hardships of Ḥajj, without losing tempers and behaving badly. Allaah - the Most High - said:

"O Prophet, urge the Believers to fight ... So if there are one hundred who are patient, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there be one thousand, they shall overcome two thousand, by the permission of Allaah. And Allaah is with the patient ones." [Soorah al-Anfaal, 8:65-66].

Thus, without knowledge and patience, nothing remains, except zeal and uncontrolled emotions, shouts and hollow slogans, speech that does not strengthen, but rather weakens, and actions that do not build, but rather destroy! So in this month, we should strive to develop a firm resolve for doing acts of obedience, and to adorn ourselves with patience - having certainty in the saying of our Messenger (ﷺ): "And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship." [13]

[4]: CULTIVATING GOOD MANNERS

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whosoever does not abandon falsehood in speech and action, then Allaah the Mighty and Majestic has no need that he should leave his food and drink." [14]

He (ﷺ) also said:

"Fasting is not merely abstaining from eating and drinking. Rather, it is also abstaining from ignorant and indecent speech. So if anyone abuses or behaves ignorantly with you, then say: I am fasting, I am fasting." [15]

These narrations point towards the importance of truthfulness and good manners. Thus, this blessed month teaches us not only to abstain from food and drink, but to also abstain from such statements and actions that may be the cause of harming people and violating their rights - since the Messenger (ﷺ) said whilst describing the true Believer: "A Muslim is one from whom other Muslims are safe from his tongue and his hand." [16] Thus it is upon us as individuals, to examine the shortcomings in our character, and to then seek to improve them - modeling ourselves upon the character of the last of the Prophets and Messengers, and their leader, Muḥammad (ﷺ) - aspiring also for the excellence which he mentioned in his saying: "I am a guarantor for a house on the outskirts of Paradise (or whosoever leaves off arguing, even if he is right; and a house in the centre of Paradise (or whosoever abandons falsehood, even when joking; and a house in the upper-most part of Paradise for whosoever makes his character good)." [17] So by shunning oppression, shamelessness, harbouring hatred towards Muslims, back-biting, slandering, tale-carrying, and other types of falsehood, we can be saved from nullifying the rewards of our fasting - as Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "It may be that a fasting person, receives nothing from his fast, except hunger and thirst." [18]

[5]: SENSING MUSLIM UNITY

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Fast when they fast, and break your fast when they break their fast, and sacrifice the day they sacrifice." [19]

Imaam at-Tirmidhee (d.275H) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"Some of the People of Knowledge explained this ḥadeeth by saying: Its meaning is to fast and break the fast along with the Jamaa'ah and the majority of people." [10]

Thus, in this blessed month we can sense an increased feeling of unity and of being a single Ummah due to our fasting and breaking our fast collectively. We also feel an increased awareness about the state of affairs of the Muslims and of the hardships that they endure, because: "During the fast a Muslim feels and experiences what his needy and hungry brothers and sisters feel, who are forced to go without food and drink for many days - as occurs today to many of the Muslims in Africa." [21] Indeed, the unity of the Muslims - and their aiding and assisting one another - is one of the great fundamentals upon which the Religion of Islaam is built, as Allaah - the Most High - said: **"And hold fast altogether to the rope of Allaah and do not be divided."** [Soorah aal-'Imraan 3:103]. **Allaah - the Most High - also said: "The Believers - men and women - and friends and protectors to one another."** [Soorah al-Tawbah 9:44].

Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah (d.728) - raḥimahullaah - said:

"The welfare of people will not be complete - neither in this world, nor in the Hereafter - except with ijtimaa' (collectiveness) , ta'aawun (mutual cooperation), and tanaasur (mutual help); mutual cooperation in order to secure benefits, and mutual help in order to ward off harm. It is for this reason that man is said to be social and civil by nature." [22]

Thus, we see that Islaam lays great importance in bringing hearts together and encouraging ijtimaa' (collectiveness). This is not only reflected in the month of Ramaḍaan, but also in the other acts of worship as well. So, for example, we have been ordered by the Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) to pray the five daily Prayers in congregation, and that it has been made twenty-seven times more rewarding than praying it individually. [23] Likewise, this similar collective spirit is demonstrated in the act of Ḥajj (Pilgrimage). Even in learning knowledge and studying it, blessings have been placed in collectiveness, as Allaah's Messenger (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said: "No people gather together in a house from the houses of Allaah, reciting the Book of Allaah and studying it amongst themselves, except that tranquility descends upon them, mercy envelops them, the angels surround them, and Allaah mentions them to those that are with Him." [24] Likewise, even in our everyday actions such as eating, Islaam teaches us collectiveness. Thus, when some of the Companions of the Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said to him: O Messenger of Allaah, we eat but do not become satisfied. He replied: "Perhaps you eat individually?" They replied, Yes! So he said: "Eat collectively and mention the name of Allaah. There will then be blessings for you in it." [25] Indeed, even in the etiquette of sitting the spirit of collectiveness is demonstrated. So, one day the Prophet (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) came across the Companions who were sitting in separate circles, so he said to them: **"Why do I see you sitting separately!"** [26] Similarly, Aboo Tha'labah al-Khushanee (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu) said: Whenever the people used to encamp, they used to split-up into the mountain passes and valleys. So Allaah's Messenger (ṣallallaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam) said: **"Indeed your being split-up in these mountain passes and**

valleys is from Shayṭaan." Thereafter, whenever they used to encamp, they used to keep very close together, to such an extent that it was said: If a cloth were to be spread over them, it would cover them all. [27]

Thus, Ramaḍaan is a time to increase our sense of unity and brotherhood, and our commitment to Allaah and His Religion. And there is no doubt that this sense of unity necessitates that: "We all work together as required by Islaam as sincere brothers - not due to ḥizbiyyah (bigoted party spirit), nor sectarianism - in order to realize that which is of benefit to the Islamic Ummah and to establish the Islamic society that every Muslim aspires for so that the Sharee'ah (Prescribed Law) of Allaah is applied upon His earth" [28] So we must examine ourselves during the month of Ramaḍaan and ask: What is my role? - and each of us has a role - in helping this precious Ummah to regain its honour, and return to the Ummah its comprehensive unity and strength, and victory that has been promised to it? Likewise, we should reflect upon our own character and actions and ask: Are they aiding the process of unity and brotherhood, or are they a harm and a hindrance to it?

So we ask Allaah to grant us the ability to change ourselves for the better, during this blessed month, and not to be of those who are prevented from His Mercy and forgiveness. Indeed He is the One who Hears and He is the One to Respond.

Footnotes:

[1] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by al-Bukhaaree (1/48) and Muslim (no.16), from Ibn 'Umar (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[2] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Soorah al-Nisaa'ee (no.1992), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by Shaykh al-Albaanee in Takhreejul-Mishkaat (no.1962).

[3] Related by Ibn al-Mubaarak in Kitaabuz-Zuhd (p.473) and Ibn Abee Shaybah in his Kitaabul-eemaan (no.99).

[4] Risaalatut-Tabookiyyah (p.26) of Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim

[5] Ḥasan: Related by Aḥmad (3/241), from Jaabir (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by Shaykh al-Albaanee in Ṣaḥeeḥut-Targheeb (no.970).

[6] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by al-Bukhaaree (11/481). from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[7] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Aḥmad (2/246) and al-Bayḥaqee (4/204), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by Shaykh 'Alee Ḥasan al-Ḥalabee in Ṣifat-Sawmin-Nabee (p.24).

[8] Zaadul-Ma'aad (2/87) of Ibn al-Qayyim.

[9] Related by Ibn al-Qayyim in Madaarijus-Saalikeen (2/152).

[10] Related by Aḥmad (2/163) and Soorah al-Nisaa'ee (1/327), from Aboo Hurayrah. It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in Irwá'ul-Ghaleel (4/99).

[11] At-Tamheed (19/61) of al-Ḥaafiz Ibn 'Abd al-Barr.

[12] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by al-Bukhaaree (123) and Muslim (no.123), from Ibn Mas'ood (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[13] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Aḥmad (1/203) and at-Ṭabaraanee in al-Kabeer (11/100), from Ibn 'Abbaas (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee in as-Sabrul-Jameel (p.43).

[14] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by al-Bukhaaree (4/99), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[15] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Ibn Khuzaymah (no.1996) and al-Ḥaakim (1/130) who authenticated it. Refer to Ṣaḥeeḥut-Targheeb (no.1075).

[16] Related by al-Bukhaaree (1/53) and Muslim (no.40), from 'Amr Ibn al-'Aas (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[17] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Aboo Daawood (no.4800) and al-Bayḥaqee (10/249), from Aboo Umaamah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in al-Ṣaḥihah (no.273).

[18] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Aḥmad (2/441) and Ibn Maajah (1/539), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated in Ṣaḥeeḥut-Targheeb (no.1076).

[19] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by at-Tirmidhee (no.693), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in al-Ṣaḥihah (no.224).

[20] Jaami'ut-Tirmidhee (3/311).

[21] From the words of Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez Ibn Baaz, as occurs in Majmoo'ul-Fataawaa wal-Maqalaatul Mutanawwi'ah (5/211).

[22] Al-Hisbah fil-Islam (p.9) of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymeeyah.

[23] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by al-Bukhaaree (2/109) and Muslim (no.650), from Ibn 'Umar (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[24] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Muslim (no.339), from Aboo Hurayrah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[25] Ḥasan: Related by Aboo Daawood (no.3764), from Wahshee Ibn Harb (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu). It was authenticated by al-Ḥaafiz al-'Iraaqee in Takhreejul-Iḥyaa (2/4).

[26] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Muslim (no.331), from Jaabir Ibn Samurah (raḍee Allaahu 'anhu).

[27] Ṣaḥeeḥ: Related by Aboo Daawood (1/409) and Ibn Hibbaan (no.1664). Shaykh al-Albaanee authenticated in Takhreejul-Mishkaat (no.3914).

[28] Su'aal wal-Jawaab Hawla Fiqhil-Waaqi' (p.24) of Shaykh Naasir al-Deen al-Albaanee.

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