



NIZAMIYE MOSQUE COMPLEX

"Where heart and mind meet"

FRIDAY SERMON – 2: RAMADAN: THE MONTH OF FASTING

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ
وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ
سورة البقرة

"The month of Ramadhan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it."

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

" مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ "

Allah's Messenger (saw) said, "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven."

Fasting Ramadan is one of Islam's foremost pillars and greatest symbols. Many of its purposes relate to God's Lordship and giving thanks for His bounties, and to humanity's individual and collective life, self-training, and self-discipline.

One purpose connected with His Lordship is that Allah (swt) displays His Lordship's Perfection and His being the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate upon the Earth's surface, which He designed as a table to hold His bounties in a way beyond human imagination. Nevertheless, people cannot perfectly discern this situation's reality due to heedlessness and causality's blinding veil. But during Ramadan, like an army waiting for its marching orders, believers worship as if they expect to be told to help themselves toward the end of the day. Thus they respond to that magnificent and universal Mercy with a comprehensive and harmonious act of collective worship. I wonder if those who do not worship or share in the honor of being so favored deserve to be called human.

From the viewpoint of its being related to gratitude to Allah (swt), one of the instances of wisdom in fasting during Ramadan is this: there is a price for the food brought by a servant from the king's kitchen. Obviously, it would be an incredible folly to tip the servant and not recognize the king, [for this would



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show] a clear disrespect for that gift. In the same way, God Almighty spreads His countless bounties on Earth and bestows them for a price: thanksgiving.

Fasting Ramadan is the key to a true, sincere, comprehensive, and universal thanksgiving. Many people cannot appreciate most of the bounties they enjoy, for they do not experience hunger. For example, a piece of dry bread means nothing to those who are full, especially if they are rich. However, the believers' sense of taste testifies at the time of breaking fast that it is indeed a very valuable bounty of God. During Ramadan, everyone is favored with a heartfelt thanksgiving by understanding the value of Divine bounties.

While fasting, believers think: 'These bounties do not originally belong to me, and so I cannot regard them as mere food or drink. Since the One owns and grants them to me, I should wait for His permission to eat them.' By thus acknowledging food and drink as Divine gifts, believers tacitly thank Allah (swt). This is why fasting is a key to thanksgiving, which is a fundamental human duty.

Fasting Ramadan contains many Divine purposes related to self-training and self-discipline, such as: The carnal self desires 'and considers itself' to be free and unrestricted. It even wishes, by its very nature, for an imagined lordship and free, arbitrary action. Not liking to think that it is being trained and tested through Allah (swt)'s countless bounties, it swallows up such bounties like an animal and in the manner of a thief or robber, especially if its wealth and power is accompanied by heedlessness.

Fasting Ramadan prevents the carnal self from rebelling and adorns it with good morals.

A person's carnal self forgets itself through heedlessness. It neither sees nor wants to see its inherent infinite impotence, poverty, and defects. It does not reflect on how it is exposed to misfortune and subject to decay, and that it consists of flesh and bones that disintegrate and decompose rapidly. It rushes upon the world with a violent greed and attachment, as if it had a steel body and would live forever, and clings to whatever is profitable and pleasurable. In this state it forgets its Creator, Who trains it with perfect care. Being immersed in the swamp of immorality, it does not think about the consequences of its life here or its afterlife.

But fasting the month of Ramadan causes even the most heedless and stubborn to feel their weakness and innate poverty. Hunger becomes an important consideration and reminds them of how fragile their bodies really are. They perceive their need for compassion and care and, giving up haughtiness, want to take refuge in the Divine Court in perfect helplessness and destitution, rising to



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knock at the door of Mercy with the hand of tacit thanksgiving' provided, of course, that heedlessness has not yet corrupted them completely.

Ramadan transforms the Muslim world into a huge mosque in which millions recite the Qur'an to Earth's inhabitants. Displaying the reality of: The month of Ramadan, in which the Qur'an was revealed (2:185), Ramadan proves itself to be the month of the Qur'an. While some in the vast congregation in the great mosque of the Muslim world listen to its recitation with solemn reverence, others recite it. It is most disagreeable to forsake that heavenly spiritual state by obeying the carnal self, and thus eating and drinking in the sacred 'mosque,' for this provokes the whole congregation's hatred. It is also most disagreeable, and must provoke the Muslim world's dislike and contempt, to counter and defy those Muslims who fast Ramadan.

Fasting Ramadan has many purposes related to a person's spiritual rewards, as everyone is sent here to sow this world with the seeds of the next life. The following paragraphs explain one such purpose, as follows:

The rewards for good deeds done during Ramadan are multiplied by a thousand. One Tradition states that 10 rewards are given for each letter of the Qur'an. Reciting one letter means 10 good deeds and brings forth 10 fruits of Paradise. But during Ramadan, this reward is multiplied by 1,000 and even more for such verses as the 'Verse of the Throne.' The reward is even greater on Ramadan's Friday nights. Furthermore, each letter is multiplied 30,000 times if recited during the Night of Power.

During Ramadan the Qur'an, each letter of which yields 30,000 permanent fruits of Paradise, becomes like a huge blessed tree producing millions of permanent fruits of Paradise. Consider how holy and profitable this trade is, and how great a loss for those who do not appreciate the Qur'an's letters.

So Ramadan is the most proper time for such a profitable trade in the afterlife's name. It is like a most fertile field to cultivate for the afterlife's harvest. Its multiplication of rewards for good deeds make it like April in spring. It is a sacred and illustrious festival for the parade of those who worship His Lordship's Sovereignty.

This is why fasting Ramadan is obligatory, why believers are not allowed to gratify the carnal self's animal appetites and indulge in its useless fancies. Since they become like angels while fasting or engaging in such a trade, each believer is a mirror reflecting Allah(swt)'s Self-Sufficiency. They move toward becoming a pure spirit manifested in corporeal dress by abandoning the world for a fixed period. In fact, Ramadan contains and causes believers to gain, through fasting,

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permanent life after a short period in this world.

One Ramadan may enable believers to gain 80 years' worth of reward, for the Qur'an declares the Night of Power to be more profitable than 80 years having no such night (97:3). A king may announce a few holidays to mark a special occasion, like his enthronement, and then honor his faithful subjects on those days with special favors. Likewise, the Eternal and Majestic King of the 18,000 worlds revealed the Qur'an, His exalted decree, to each world during Ramadan. Thus wisdom requires that Ramadan be a special Divine festival during which Allah's Lordship pours out bounties and spirit beings come together. Given that Ramadan is a Divinely ordained festival, fasting is commanded so that people withdraw from their bodily preoccupations to some extent.

Fasting also enables people to abandon sins committed by their bodily senses or members and use them in the acts of worship particular to each. For example, those who fast should stop their tongue from lying, backbiting, and swearing by busying it with reciting the Qur'an, glorifying Allah(swt), seeking His forgiveness, and calling His blessing upon Prophet Muhammad(saw). They should prevent their eyes from looking at, and their ears from listening to, forbidden things; rather, they should look at things that give a spiritual lesson or moral warning and listen to the Qur'an and truths. When the factory-like stomach is stopped from working, other members (small workshops) can be made to follow it easily.

One purpose of fasting is to put people on a physical and spiritual diet. If the carnal self acts, eats, and drinks as it wishes, people's physical health is harmed. But, and more importantly, their spiritual life is harmed because they do not discriminate between the allowed and the forbidden. Such a carnal self finds it very difficult to obey the heart and spirit. Recognizing no principles, it takes the person's reins and drives him or her as it pleases.

Fasting Ramadan accustoms it to dieting, and self-discipline trains it to obey. The stomach is not harmed from overeating before the previous meal has been digested properly and, learning to forsake what is allowed, can follow the decree of reason and religion to refrain from what is forbidden. Thus the carnal self tries not to corrupt its owner's spiritual life.

Also, most people suffer hunger to various degrees. To endure a long-lasting hunger patiently, people should train themselves in self-discipline and austerity. Fasting Ramadan provides this patience-based training by causing people to feel hungry for 15 hours, or even for 24 hours if the predawn meal is missed. Thus fasting cures impatience and the lack of endurance, which double humanity's misfortune.

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Many bodily members somehow serve the stomach. If that 'factory' does not stop its daytime routines during a certain month, it keeps those members busy with itself and forgetful of their own worship and sublime duties. This is why saints always prefer austerity as a way to spiritual and human perfection. Fasting Ramadan reminds us that our bodily members were created for more than just serving the stomach. During Ramadan, many bodily members take and experience angelic and spiritual 'as opposed to material' pleasures.

As a result, fasting believers receive degrees of spiritual pleasure and enlightenment according to their level of spiritual perfection. Fasting Ramadan refines the person's heart, spirit, reason, and innermost senses. Even if the stomach complains, these senses rejoice.