[Arabic du'á]

All praise is to Alláh, Whom we thank and seek for His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Alláh from the evils of ourselves and the burden of our evil deeds. Whomsoever He guides, will never be misled, and whomsoever He misguides, will never find enlightenment. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Alláh, and that Muhammad is His Messenger.

Dear Brothers!

Ramadhán is the month of the Qur’án, the month of Mercy, the month of Forgiveness, the month of prayer at night, the month of solidarity and mutual help, the month of many special blessings..

It was an act of supreme Mercy from Alláh towards us that He made us Muslims and Believers and that He extended our lives so that we could enjoy this Ramadhán. Ramadhán is a Mercy and a Blessing from Alláh, a gift and an opportunity that we may use to attain Taqwa, that wonderful state of awesome reverence towards Alláh, fearing his wrath and ever hopeful of his Mercy. It is another chance to purify our hearts and souls, to shed our sins and our evil deeds and come closer to Alláh.

Therefore, we have first of all to be thankful to Alláh that He allowed us to witness this Ramadhán, let us seize this chance, let us please Him during this month and be worthy of this gift, His forgiveness and His mercy. Let us not end Ramadhán in the same condition that we were when we started it. We should strive to end Ramadhán in a higher state of moral and spiritual excellence than we have ever been before. Let us be mindful of why we fast, what we can achieve and what blessings and rewards we may be able to gain by Allah’s Grace.

We fast for the same reason that we pray, or give Zakaat or Sadaqa or make Hajj. We fast because Alláh prescribes fasting, and because we are Muslims, we obey Alláh. Fasting is an important act of worship, ‘ibádah, and is a part of our Deen, our religion…Alláh says in the Qur’án:

*“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for people before you so that you may attain Taqwa” (2:183)*

The phrase ” O you who believe” is referring to: (I) those who submit to Alláh’s will and commands,(ii) those who believe in the articles of faith,(iii) those who testify that, ( Shahádah ), those who practice the pillars of Islam, and those who implement and obey Alláh’s injunctions in the Qur’án and follow the Sunnah of His prophet. None except Muslims satisfy these criteria of “O you who believe”. It is towards the Muslims that Alláh’s command is being directed. The commandment prescribed fasting as a compulsory duty for them, thus:

*“Fasting is prescribed for you” and, ” Whoever witnesses the month of Ramadhán should fast through it”. (2.185)*

Clearly, to fast during Ramadhán is a divine commandment mandatory for all able Muslims who are free from compelling excuses. Whoever deliberately forgoes fasting in Ramadhán, should know that he or she has disobeyed Alláh’s injunction and no amount of fasting thereafter can give her/him a reward equivalent to having missed fasting during Ramadhán.

The Prophet sws said; “Whoever did not fast one day of Ramadhán without a genuine excuse or disease then even if he fasted for a complete year, it would not compensate for that (missed Ramadhán) day.”

We all know the famous hadith where the Prophet defined Islam when he said:

*“Islam is to worship Alláh and not worship anything besides Him, to make Salaah, to pay Zakaah, to fast the month of Ramadhán and to make Hajj if you can. “*

Since Islam means submission to Alláh, as Muslims we have to submit ourselves to Him completely and obey His commandments.

We also fast because Alláh says:

*“and fast, it is better for you, if only you knew” [al-Baqarah, 2:184]*

Indeed when Alláh says that something is better of us, it really is better for us and we should strive to perfect it.

Out of His mercy towards us, Alláh has not only prescribed fasting for us, but he has also showed us how to fast, and explained its benefits and virtues. Ramadhán has many virtues which are expressed in the Qur’án and in the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet. If we really understood only one of these virtues, that would be enough motivation to perfect our fasting and to seek the reward of Alláh’s pleasure. Again, it is a sign of His Mercy that He taught us many virtues of fasting so that we get even more encouragement. Here are some of the virtues of Fasting:

**Fasting is a way to attain Taqwa**

Alláh says: “O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for people before you so that you will (learn how to) attain Taqwa” [ 2:183] As we explained before, taqwa is that state of awesome reverence towards Alláh, that is a mixture of Fear of arousing His anger, with the Hope of seeking His pleasure.

Indeed the person who has attained Taqwa has attained excellence in the worship of his Lord. The people of Taqwa are the successful people in this life and in the hereafter where they will be the dwellers of Paradise. Alláh says in the opening verses of Soora Al Baqara:

*“This is the Book; in it is guidance sure without doubt to the Muttaqeen [people of Taqwa]. Who believe in the Unseen are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee and sent before thy time and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true) guidance from their Lord and it is these who are the successful”. (1:1-5)*

He also says [meaning]:

*“Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth prepared for the Muttaqeen”…[people of Taqwa]. (3:133-136)*

**Fasting has its own special great reward**

The Prophet said, “Alláh said: The Fast is for Me and I will give the reward for it, as he (the one who observes the fast) leaves his desire, food and drink for My Sake. Fasting is a screen (from Hell) and there are two pleasures (moments of happiness or joys) for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord.”

The Prophet said, “(Alláh said), ‘Every good deed of the son of Adam is for himself except fasting; it is for Me. and I shall reward (the fasting person) for it.’

**Fasting is a Means of Forgiveness**

It is a reality that none of us is perfect. We all have some weaknesses and shortcomings and we find ourselves committing sins out of ignorance or out of submission to our desires and whims. We thereby drive ourselves away from Alláh. We darken our heart and we seal it from guidance. We overload our book of bad deeds. However, Alláh said of Himself that He is the Most Merciful the Oft-Forgiving. As part of this Infinite Mercy He offers us many ways of earning forgiveness and absolving our sins. Among the most important and beneficial of these ways of seeking Alláh’s forgiveness is fasting in general and in Ramadhán in particular. Let us discover this glad tiding from the sweet words of the Messenger of Alláh, who said:

*“Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadhán out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Alláh’s rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven.”*

*“Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadhán (and that is called Qiyám), faithfully and sincerely hoping for Alláh’s rewards (not for showing off), all his past sins will be forgiven”.*

**The supplication of the fasting person is granted**

Jabir relates that the Messenger of Alláh, said :” In every day and every night, during the month of Ramadhán, there are people to whom Alláh grants freedom from the Fire, and there is for every Muslim a supplication which he can make and it will be granted”.

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet, said: “There are three people whose supplications are not rejected: the fasting person when he breaks the fast, the just ruler and the supplication of the oppressed”.

The Messenger of Alláh, , said: “Indeed there is for the fasting person, when he breaks his fast, a supplication which is not rejected”.

**A Means of intercession on the Day of Judgement**

`Abdullah ibn `Amr reported that the Messenger of Alláh, said: “The fast and the Qur’án are two intercessors for the servant of Alláh on the Day of Resurrection. The Fast will say ‘O Lord, I prevented him from his food and desires during the day. Let me intercede for him.’ The Qur’án will say ‘I prevented him from sleeping at night. Let me intercede for him.’ And their intercession will be accepted.”

**In Ramadhán there is Laylatul Qadr (the night of Decree)**

“Indeed We have revealed it (Qur’án) in the night of Decree. And what will explain to you what the night of Decree is? The night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descends the Angels and the Spirit (Jibreel) by Alláh’s permission, on every errand: (they say) “peace” (continuously) till the rise of Morning!” (97:1-5)

The Prophet (S) said ” The blessed month has come to you. Alláh has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained. There is a night [during this month] which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived [of something great].

**Fasting in Ramadhán; a way to Paradise**

We have seen that Ramadhán saves us from Hell Fire and saves us from our past sins by leading to forgiveness. Besides all this (and it would have been enough if it were only that) Ramadhán leads the fasting believer to al-Jannah (Paradise). Paradise, that house that contains what no eye has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard, what never crossed the mind of a human being, and that contains all that the human soul desires.

If a person achieves Taqwa, he/she is among al-Muttaqeen, those who are fearfully aware of what angers Alláh, and who strive, ever hopeful of His Mercy. And Alláh, in many places in the Qur’an, says that the house of al-Muttaqeen is al-Jannah.

*“and fast, it is better for you, if only you knew” [ 2:184]*

Once a companion of the prophet came to him and said: “O Messenger of Alláh, tell me of an act which will take me into Paradise and keep me away from Hell-Fire. He said: you have asked me about a major matter, yet it easy for him for whom Alláh Almighty makes it easy…., You should fast in Ramadhán …. Then he the Companion (S) said : shall I not show you the gates of goodness ? Fasting is a shield”.

Sahl ibn Sa’d reported that the Prophet said: “There is a gate to Paradise that is called ar-Rayyan. On the Day of Resurrection it will say: ‘Where are those who fasted?’ When the last [one] has passed through the gate, it will be locked.”

We pray to Alláh to make this Ramadhán a means for us to attain Taqwa, to earn forgiveness for our sins, to gain access to Al-Jannah where we can meet our Lord and enjoy His good pleasure.

[du'á in Arabic]

Ameen. Aqeemus Salaah!