**The Holy Month of Ramadan**

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In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.The month of Ramadan in which the Qur’an was revealed, a guidance for humanity, clear signs of guidance and the criterion. (2:158)

**First point:** 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 God 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.

**Second point:** Another purpose is to show that 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, a clear disrespect for that gift. In the same way, Allah(SWT) Almighty spreads His countless bounties on the Earth and bestows them for a price: thanksgiving.

The apparent causes of those bounties or those who bring them to us are like the servant in the above example. We pay the servants, feel indebted to them and sometimes thank them, even though they are only causes or means. Thus we show them a degree of respect they have not merited. The true Giver of Bounties is infinitely more deserving of thanks for these bounties. Such thanksgiving assumes the form of acknowledging one’s need for the bounties, appreciating them fully, and ascribing them directly to Him.

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 suffer no hunger. For example, a piece of dry bread means nothing to those who are full, especially if they are rich, although even their sense of taste testifies that it is a very valuable bounty of God in the sight of believers breaking their fast. During Ramadan, everyone is favored with a heartfelt thanksgiving by understanding the value of Divine bounties.

While fasting, believers think: “As these bounties do not originally belong to me, 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 thank God tacitly. This is why fasting is a key to thanksgiving, a fundamental human duty.

**Third point:** Fasting is related to humanity’s collective life, for God’s decision not to give each person livelihood means that the rich are to help the poor. Without fasting, many rich and self-indulgent people cannot perceive the pain of hunger and poverty, and to what extent the poor need care. Care for one’s fellow-beings is a foundation of true thanksgiving.

There is always someone poorer, so everyone must help such people. If people do not suffer hunger, it is nearly impossible for them to do good or help others. Even if they do they can do so only imperfectly, for they do not feel the hungry one’s condition to the same extent.

**Fourth point:** 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 God’s countless bounties, it swallows up such bounties like an animal, in the manner of a thief or robber, especially if its wealth and power is accompanied by heedlessness.

During Ramadan, everyone’s selfhood understands that it is owned by One Other, not by itself; that it is a servant, not a free agent. Unless ordered or permitted, it cannot do even the most common things, like eating and drinking. This inability shatters its illusory lordship and enables it to admit its servanthood and perform its real duty of thanksgiving.

**Fifth point:** 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, 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 bad morals, it does not think about the consequences of its life here or its afterlife.

But fasting Ramadan causes even the most heedless and stubborn to feel their weakness and innate poverty. Hunger becomes an important consideration, and reminds them 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, and rise to knock at the door of Mercy with the hand of tacit thanksgiving—provided, of course, that heedlessness has not yet corrupted them completely.

**Sixth point:** God began revealing the Qur’an during Ramadan. This has many implications, such as: Just as if the Qur’an were to be revealed during every Ramadan, believers should try to be like angels and abandon eating and drinking, and divest themselves of the carnal self’s vain preoccupations and gross needs. During Ramadan, they should recite or listen to the Qur’an as if it were being revealed for the first time. If possible, they should listen to it as if they were hearing Prophet Muhammad(SAW) recite it, or Gabriel(Jibril)(A.S.) reciting it to Muhammad(SAW), or God revealing it to Muhammad(SAW) through Gabriel(A.S.). They should respect the Qur’an in their daily actions and, by conveying its message to others, demonstrate the Divine purpose for its revelation.

Ramadan transforms the Muslim world into a huge mosque in which millions recite the Qur’an to the Earth’s inhabitants. Displaying the reality of b828.gif

*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. It also is most disagreeable and must provoke the Muslim world’s dislike and contempt to oppose those Muslims who fast Ramadan.

**Seventh point:** Fasting during 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.”[[1]](#footnote-1) 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 (the night when the Qur’anic revelation started). 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 name of the afterlife. It is like a most fertile field to cultivate for the harvest of the afterlife. Its multiplication of rewards for good deeds make it like April in spring. It is a sacred, 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 God’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, a 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(Leyletul Kadr) 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, 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 God’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.

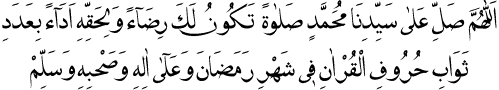
Fasting also enables people to abandon sins committed by the bodily senses or members and use them in the acts of worship particular to each. For example, those who fast should stop their tongue from lying, backbiting, and swearing and busy it with reciting the Qur’an, glorifying God, seeking His forgiveness, and calling His blessing upon Prophet Muhammad. 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.

**Eighth point:** 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 lawful and the unlawful. 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. However, 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 the lawful, it can follow the decree of reason and religion to refrain from the unlawful. 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.

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. In Ramadan, many bodily members 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 a person’s heart, spirit, reason, and innermost senses. Even if the stomach complains, these senses rejoice.

**Ninth point:** Fasting Ramadan breaks the carnal self’s illusory lordship and, reminding it that it is innately helpless, convinces it that it is a servant. As the carnal self does not like to recognize its Lord, it obstinately claims lordship even while suffering. Only hunger alters such a temperament. God’s Messenger relates that God Almighty asked the carnal self: “Who am I, and who are you?” It replied: “You are Yourself, and I am myself.” However much God tormented it and repeated His question, He received the same answer. But when He subjected it to hunger, it replied: “You are my All-Compassionate Lord; I am Your helpless servant.”

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*"O God, grant peace and blessings to our master Prophet Muhammad(SAV) in a way to please You and to give him his due, to the number of the rewards for reciting the Qur’an’s letters during Ramadan, and to his family and Companions. Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Honor and Power; exalted above what they falsely ascribe to Him. Peace be upon the Messengers, and all praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds." Amen.*

1. *God! There is no god but He, the Living, Self-Subsisting, Supporter of all. Slumber and sleep do not seize him. Everything in the heavens and on the Earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede in His presence unless He permits it? He knows what (appears) before and after and behind His creatures, and they can only acquire as much of His knowledge as he permits. His Throne extends over the heavens and the Earth. He feels no fatigue while guarding and preserving them, for He is the Most High, the Supreme.* (2:255) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)