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Ramadan and Softening Hearts

**Question: Every year, the month of Ramadan comes like a heavenly serenity and assurance felt in the spirits; it softens believers’ hearts, virtually melts them, and gives them an otherworldly hue. What are your suggestions to make the most of this blessed month with respect to our individual and societal life?**

**Answer:** The month of Ramadan appears on our horizons with its charming beauties with fasting, the Prayers of Tarawih, the fast-breaking dinners, and the pre-dawn meals. Ramadan brings about a heavenly atmosphere of its own. Even at times when different tensions follow one another, violence and aggression become excessive, contradiction is seen as virtue, and ice-cold winds blow between the masses, Ramadan makes its influence by reconditioning souls, fostering sound hearts, feelings, and thoughts, along with abating every kind of hardness and harshness. Muslims already show serious respect toward this month, when peace and gentleness perceptibly prevail. For this reason, in spite of different adversities, if we give our willpower its due and manage to open our heart to this very special and distinguished segment of time with heartfelt trust in its blessings, and thus become oriented to it with sincere belief, awe and respect, then it will cuddle us and shower us with blessings. Anger, violence, and rages will cease, and an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation will prevail.

Not Variety of Dishes, but Richness of Guests

In order to put these ideas into practice, believers—a Muslim family residing in an apartment for instance—should invite their neighbors to a fast-breaking dinner, no matter what their philosophy of life is, preferably by letting them know of the dinner a few days in advance. They can present a very good example of kindness and hospitality. They can even say, “You have shown kindness to accept our invitation and bothered to come here. Please also accept this small present for your kindness.” If possible, the hosts should give presents to their guests’ children and make those innocent ones happy. Similarly, Muslims who teach at schools and universities or work at other establishments can contribute to societal peace by opening their table to everyone, without discriminating between different sections of society.

We should make use of this blessed month in such a fruitful way, to the degree of not having any fast-breaking dinners without guests. These dinners should be enriched with abundance and diversity of guests, rather than richness of dishes. As it is known, the Messenger of God stated, “A meal for two suffices for three, and a meal for three suffices for four.”[1] For this reason, there is no reason to worry about a multitude of guests in Ramadan, the month of abundance. Acting this way is an important means of diplomacy to eliminate the huge rifts between different sections of the society and of overcoming prejudices. So many problems that cannot be tackled with power or security forces can be solved by this means. If you sincerely open your heart to everyone, conquer the hearts of others with human virtues, and reserve in your heart a seat for all—and thus lean on the power of hearts—it will put a stop to unending grudges, hatreds, rages, bloodsheds, and killings. Indeed, in no time in the history of humanity has it ever been possible to resolve problems and cure troubles through threats. On the contrary, threats only serve to inflame grudges and intensify people’s inclination for destruction.

As it is expressed in a Turkish proverb, “One little cup of coffee is not to be forgotten for forty years.” Therefore, the sentimental value of a dinner invitation will similarly continue no less than forty years, insha’Allah. Thus, this act of kindness to effect very beautiful consequences should be carried out—perhaps the secret of the blessed Ramadan’s abundance lies in them. Namely, as we can attain otherworldly rewards by fasting and observing the Tarawih Prayers, we can also gain different blessings by gaining people’s hearts.

The Heavenly Call That Echoes in Hearts

The believers striving to serve humanity in all corners of the world can try to give Ramadan its due as a very important means of gaining hearts. Remember that the sacrificial meat collected for Eid al-Adha is taken to poor people in different corners of the world, from Africa to Asia; this is an indication of the benevolence and generosity of the people of Anatolia, and sacrificial meat is now a means of conquering hearts. For those who receive this meat, they feel that there still exists a people to inspire them trust. In the same way, it is possible to open the doors of fast-breaking and pre-dawn meals to all as a Ramadan campaign, and thus seeking the good pleasure of God by gaining so many hearts. This is especially evident when the guests who accept such invitations in different countries are so impressed by these activities that when you listen to their feelings, you better understand the significance of the issue. For example, they find the call to Prayer made right before fast-breaking so original and lovely. So it is necessary to take this opportunity in the best way to let others meet the beauties and richness of Muslim culture. Perhaps these activities will only build a positive opinion of Islam in their sight; even this much should definitely not be underestimated, I think. Who knows, though, maybe the guests who feel everything freshly will awaken to the beauties of Islam in a different way and then rocket to the horizons of their own spiritual perfection. In this respect, not just inviting them to dinner once in the month of Ramadan, but even spreading a table for them a few times a day is worth for the sake of having such positive changes.

Unfortunately, people of our time have been deprived of the beauties of Islam. They have not witnessed attitudes and behaviors that become true Muslims. So our most important duty is to show them the genuine Islam within our family structure, relationships between family members, invitations, and gentleness. If some see Muslims as monsters today, eliminating this image depends upon building good relations with them. Thus, whatever position Muslims are in, they should act with reason, logic, judgment, and consultation, and try to realize this issue in an agreeable way.

No Deed Can Make up for the One in Ramadan

The acts of worship that God Almighty holds us responsible for will assume a different nature depending on the way we offer them, and they will bear witness for us on the Day of Judgment. If we can give this month of forgiveness its due, it will bear witness in our favor and perhaps admit us to the highest level of Paradise through the gate of Rayyan. For this reason, we must respectfully observe the acts of worship that God has decreed for us, hold them in reverence, and strive to fulfill them in the best way.

In addition, a believer will know in the Afterlife which good, righteous deeds in the world brought the blessings he or she enjoys there; this will double the delight of those blessings. In the face of such benevolence, people will likely say: “Praise be to my Lord! First he honored me with good, righteous deeds, now he honors me with their reward.” There, believers will recognize the rewards of their good, righteous deeds committed with all their limbs.[2] In the same way, they will experience the otherworldly meanings of their hunger, of their efforts at the Tarawih Prayers, their excitement for waking up for the pre-dawn meal, and their generous treatment of others, and feel due delight.

Some acts of worship owe their depth to fulfilling their outer forms and conditions. This is true for worship offered in Ramadan, a month when deeds gain a different value, when people gain proximity to God very differently. No other fasting can be compared to the one in Ramadan. No other twenty-unit Prayer to be offered in other nights can replace the Tarawih. The same holds true for the rewards for the pre-dawn meals or waiting patiently before breaking the fast. In short, no deeds can substitute those done in Ramadan. It is for this reason that believers who feel this truth deeply in their consciences feel serious grief when this blessed month is gone, longing for it until the next Ramadan comes. We do not know; perhaps this yearning gains them an extra blessing of another Ramadan’s worth.

[1] *Sahih al-Bukhari, At’imah,* 11; *Sahih Muslim,* Ashriba, 179  
[2] *This is due to the fact that the believers protect their tongue, ears, eyes, feet, and all other limbs from every kind of evil, in addition to abstaining from food, drink, and sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset. (ed.)*