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BLESSINGS OF RAMADAN

By Shaykh Zulfikar Ahmad

Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran
[2:185]

The Successful Person

Allah ﷻ has sent humankind to Earth to worship Him. Man is but a passing visitor in this fleeting life and soon departs on his next journey. Only the person who values his time in this world and spends it wisely in remembering and obeying Allah ﷻ is truly fortunate and successful. Such a person lives spending every moment for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and adorns himself in the glorious sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

He...has already achieved the highest achievement [33:71]

Blessings of Shaaban

Shaaban is a very blessed month since it precedes the holy month of Ramadan. The night of the fifteenth of Shaaban, known as *Shabarat*, is a very special night which is dear to Allah ﷻ and in it, all of humankind's deeds are presented before Him. The names of all who are destined to die in the

coming year are passed on to the Angel of Death and the sustenance of the rest of humankind decided.

This night has also been praised in hadith literature as a very honorable one. Hadrat Mujaddid Alf-Thani (May the mercy of Allah ﷺ be upon him) writes in his *Maktubat* that the blessings of Ramadan start from this blessed night and increase every day until the beginning of the holy month of fasting, just as the white light slowly spreads all over the horizon before sunrise. Then, just as the sun glorifies the day with its magnificence, the immense blessings of the first day of Ramadan greet and warm the hearts of the believers.

The Prophet's ﷺ Practice During Ramadan

The Companions رضي الله عنهم used to say that with the start of Ramadan they would note an increase in three things in the practice of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

- The Messenger ﷺ of Allah would dramatically increase his worship, despite the fact that his normal worship was such that his noble feet would swell from standing in prayer for extensive periods of time.
- He was tremendously generous in giving for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and during this month, he would open his heart and hands even more in charity.
- He would increase his weeping in front of Allah ﷻ in fear and humility, seeking repentance.

Increasing worship, charity, and supplication are Prophetic examples that all Muslims should strive to follow with sincerity. Muslims tire their bodies every day in their work,

but there should be at least some time during their lifetime when the body gets exhausted in worship. There should come such a time when the eyes long for sleep, but the worshipper reminds himself that struggling to stay awake seeking Allah's ﷻ pleasure will earn him the honor of looking upon Allah ﷻ in Paradise. The eyes that stay awake now will sleep soundly in the grave.

*Only after death do restless hearts find peace
Only he sleeps soundly who remained awake.*

Ramadan is the month of staying awake during the night in worship. Believers should accustom themselves to less rest and sleep and respect this month for the holy month of struggle, sacrifice, and immense blessing that it is.

The Season For Righteousness

Vendors, grocers, and all sales professionals have a specific season that they prepare and work hard for. When their season for sales arrives, they set themselves aside, excuse themselves from all non-essential engagements and focus solely on the season at hand. Moreover, they pay less attention to eating and sleeping properly because they remain so absorbed in their trade and stay focused on how to take advantage of their particular season in the best manner. These people value this time and embrace hard work because their chance to make huge profits comes only once a year, after which they know they can afford to relax a little.

Likewise, the holy month of Ramadan is a season for righteousness for all those who wish to draw nearer to Allah

ﷺ and have their sins forgiven. The fasts of such people who remain restless for Allah's ﷺ sake are not only limited to abstinence from food and drink, but their eyes and tongue and all else also remains in a state of fasting. When Muslims remain thus in a state of fasting from head to toe and raise their hands in supplication at the breaking of the fast (*iftar*), then Allah ﷻ will grant whatever they wish for.

Paradise Adorned

During Ramadan, blessings shower down in such abundance, that it seems that the doors of blessing have become wide open. According to a hadith, Paradise is perfumed and decorated for the believers just before Ramadan, and on the first day of Ramadan Allah ﷻ instructs the angels to open the doors of Paradise for the believers. Thus Paradise is adorned for the believers like a bride is adorned for her groom.

The Prophet's ﷺ Waiting for Ramadan

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah used to wait anxiously for the month of Ramadan and had such great regard for it that he would supplicate to Allah ﷻ in the month of Shaaban to see the Muslims safely into Ramadan. The tremendous value of a month that even the Messenger ﷺ of Allah would pray for, cannot be weighed by anything on earth.

Excellence of Those Who Fast

This month is so blessed that the birds in the air, the fish in the seas, and the animals on the earth pray for the

forgiveness of all those who fast. Moreover, when they break their fast at *iftar*, the angels say *amin* to their duas.

Those who are fortunate and wise enough to take advantage of the blessings of this month are honored with the special status such as that of a *wali* and *abdal*. Muslims should learn valuable lessons from their elders and regard each moment of this month as a precious opportunity to earn righteousness so that they may also earn the special regard of Allah ﷻ.

Golden Opportunity

The wonderful season of spring greets us with the blessings of lush vegetation, delicious fragrances of beautiful flowers, and trees laden with fruit. Likewise, the holy month of Ramadan is a month of springtime for the believer, where Allah's ﷻ blessing and mercy surrounds the believer at every point throughout the day and night.

Hence, surrounded by such awesome mercy, this is truly a golden opportunity for anyone wishing for nearness to Allah ﷻ and forgiveness from sin. It seems that the phrase *golden opportunity* was coined with the holy month of Ramadan in mind, because this phrase perfectly fits the description of this month.

The Righteous Predecessors

Imam Abu Hanifa

During the holy month Ramadan, Imam Abu Hanifa (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) would complete one reading of the Holy Quran in the morning, a second in the evening, and would listen to three complete recitals of the

Holy Book in *tarawih* for a total of sixty-three completions during the month.

Hadrat Raipuri

A famous routine of Hadrat Raipuri (May the mercy of Allah ﷺ be upon him) was that he would gather together all of his followers on the fifteenth of Shaaban, meet with them all and say that he would now see them after Ramadan if he lived until then. He would also hand a sack to one of his attendants, instructing him to collect any mail he receives so that he would tend to it after the holy month.

He would spend the entire month in seclusion and worship, not wishing to check mail or be disturbed in this precious month. So many people would come to spend the whole of Ramadan in the mosque that there would be no room for anyone's bedding after the nineteenth of Shaaban. In this manner, the mosque would come alive with worship and the remembrance of Allah ﷺ.

Hadrat Mujaddid Alf-Thani

Hadrat Mujaddid Alf-Thani (May the mercy of Allah ﷺ be upon him) wrote in his *Maktubat* that all the year's blessings are a drop in the ocean when compared to the vast blessings of Ramadan. He continues to say that this is the reason why all the Holy Books were revealed in this holy month. Ramadan has a strong connection to the Word of Allah ﷺ which is why Muslims should excessively recite the Holy Quran in this month.

Increase in Reward

Allah ﷻ increases the reward for deeds in this special month. For an optional (*nafl*) act, a person is rewarded according to the reward of a mandatory (*fard*) deed, and the reward for a *fard* is multiplied at least seventy times.

Excellence of the Ten Day Periods

Ramadan is a special month for seeking the mercy and forgiveness of Allah ﷻ. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said about the month of Ramadan:

The first part of it is mercy; the middle of it is forgiveness, and its last part is freedom from the Hellfire

The first ten days of Ramadan are days of mercy; the second period of ten days is for forgiveness, and the final period of ten days is for seeking refuge from Hellfire.

Allah's ﷻ Mercy Searches for Excuses

Bani Qalb Nami was a village outside Madinah Munawwarah whose families owned large numbers of sheep and goats and subsequently, it became very famous for sheep herding. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah once said that in a night of Ramadan, Allah ﷻ frees people from Hell in numbers as large as the number of hair on all the sheep of Bani Qalb Nami.

This and many miracles like this illustrate that Allah's ﷻ mercy searches out excuses for the salvation of Allah's ﷻ people.

*Price, the Mercy of Allah ﷻ desires not
But excuses for forgiveness.*

Obstacles to Worship

Allah ﷻ opens the doors of His mercy and forgiveness in this blessed month and chains the major devils so that they do not molest the Muslims. However, Muslims who still fail to worship or fulfill the minimum despite these tremendous favors, fail to overcome and train a major obstacle which is their own lower-self (*nafs*).

Ramadan is a month of struggle and sacrifice during which Muslims need to persevere against their *nafs* and earn the blessed fruits of this month. If Muslims fail to overpower the *nafs* throughout the year, they need to try their utmost during Ramadan when the rewards are so great and Allah's ﷻ mercy ever so abundant.

Standard of Recognizing a Sage

Our righteous predecessors would honor a person as a venerable individual and sage by the number of Ramadans he had seen during his lifetime. This was the standard that they used to determine status and honor.

Unfortunately today, standards by which people are judged have deteriorated to worldly wealth and education, but people can never reach the superior way of thinking of the elders of Islam.

Paradise for Sale

At certain times during the year, vendors arrange sales of various items at their stores where items such as shoes and clothes can be bought at relatively inexpensive prices.

Women in particular are often very attracted to such sales since they can save a lot of money on items that are on sale.

An examination of the Holy Quran and hadith reveals that Allah ﷻ offers Paradise for sale during the holy month of Ramadan through His infinite mercy. Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Quran:

But Allah calls to the Home of Peace [10:25]

Allah ﷻ opens wide the gates of mercy and invites His servants to Paradise. Thus, they need to make every effort to work righteously and earn the right to go there.

O Creator, we ask from You Paradise and seek refuge from the Fire [Hadith]

Hadrat Maulana Muhammad Zakariya

Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariya (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) used to say the following about himself:

My routine was to spend the holy month of Ramadan in solitary worship following in the footsteps of our noble elders. I would spend the whole day reciting the Holy Quran, taking breaks from this only for mandatory and optional prayers.

One day, an old friend who lived in another neighborhood and who was unaware of my strict Ramadan schedule came to see me. I replied to his greeting and retired to my private room to continue my recitation. He followed me into the room where he sat quietly as I read until Asr, at which time he accompanied me to join the prayer.

After Asr prayer, I once again retired to my room and continued my recitation, and my friend again followed me in only to see that I had already started my recitation. After waiting patiently for a while he said, “My friend, Ramadan also comes to us but never like such a fever.” He meant that it seemed as if the month of Ramadan would overwhelm me like a fever overwhelms its victim.

Hadrat Zakariya further stated that he would remain in such an enthusiastic state for the entire month.

Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind

Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood Hasan’s (May the mercy of Allah ﷺ be upon him) *tarawih* would conclude at the time of the pre-dawn meal (*suhur*), at which time he would eat and get ready for Fajr prayers. Thus, he would spend the entire night in worship.

After a few days of following this strict regimen, the women of his household grew concerned about his health after noticing grave symptoms of fatigue. Therefore, they implored Hadrat to take a break and rest, after which he could continue after getting refreshed. However, Hadrat would reply that he may not be alive to see another Ramadan.

Then, the women sent a message to the *qari* leading the *tarawih* explaining the situation to him and requesting him to end the *tarawih* early, with the excuse that he was tired. They were well aware that Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind was very considerate of others’ welfare and would accept that excuse without question. The *qari* agreed because he too wanted his *shaykh* to be able to get some rest.

Consequently, the *qari* completed the *tarawih* after just one or two *juz* because he had already informed his *shaykh* that he was tired and could only recite so much. After *tarawih*, Hadrat insisted on having the *qari* sleep on his bed on the mosque grounds instead of going home. Hadrat's *murid* had to comply with this request and lay down on his *shaykh's* bed. Hadrat shut off the lights and urged his *murid* to sleep.

The *qari* dozed off, but was awakened soon thereafter by someone pressing his feet. He got up and upon looking closely was shocked to realize that it was none other than Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind! He said incredulously, "Hadrat! What are you doing?" Hadrat replied, "You yourself said that you were tired so I thought I should press and massage your feet so that you may feel better."

At this, the *qari* got out of bed and said, "Hadrat, if you intend to be awake all night anyway, let us go into the mosque and I will read the Holy Quran to you so that you can pass the night listening." So both of them went into the mosque where Hadrat's *murid* started reciting in prayer and Hadrat lined up behind him listening to his recitation of the Holy Quran.

The Methodology of Pleasing Allah ﷻ

The righteous predecessors used to worship Allah ﷻ like someone who works hard to appease an annoyed beloved. If a house servant erred gravely and was caught, he would beg forgiveness from his master and vow to be more careful in the future. Such was their worship.

Our attitude needs to be the same in this blessed month. We must acknowledge and understand the gravity of our sins, be ashamed in front of Allah ﷻ, beg forgiveness, and vow righteousness in the future.

Peace and Rest

The noble elders would sacrifice their rest during this month for the sake of worship, and we need to follow their example. If we sleep and awaken according to our own will eleven months out of the year, then surely we can sacrifice our sleep and rest for the blessed month of Ramadan.

People experience no difficulty in staying awake all night for worldly purposes, and it would also be good if for once, the eyes and body are forced to stay awake for the sake of worship and consequently, cry out for rest. When raised in front of Allah ﷻ on the Day of Judgment, we will at least be able to say that there was one month out of the year during which the eyes and body were fatigued and wanted to rest, but were forced to stay awake and working for the sake of worship.

Today's Laziness

Muslims today find it difficult to listen to one Holy Quran to completion and search out mosques where *tarawih* prayers are completed in the shortest amount of time. This is the sad extent of laziness today that Muslims try to search for places where they can save five minutes.

Women's Connection to the Holy Quran

Women would also attend *tarawih* prayers at Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind's (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon

him) residence where his son would lead and the women would listen behind the curtain. One day, when his son was ill, Hadrat sent another *qari* to lead the *tarawih*.

The next morning when Hadrat Shaykh ul-Hind came home for *subur*, he noticed that the women of the house seemed very annoyed. He asked them what was wrong and his wife said, “That *qari* that you sent ruined our whole *tarawih*!” Hadrat grew concerned and asked why and his wife continued, “I don’t know what his hurry was that he just recited four *juz* and ran away.” It was later learned that these women were accustomed to listening to a total of seven completions of the Holy Quran every Ramadan.

This is the manner in which our righteous predecessors strove hard and pushed themselves to the limits during this precious month to earn righteousness. Ramadan is the month of tiring oneself in the pursuit of rich rewards.

The Month of Striving

Although waking up for tahajjud might prove difficult the rest of the year, we wake for *subur* anyway during Ramadan, so a few *rakats* should be easy to pray at this time. For this one month, we should strive to spend our waking hours reading the Holy Quran, staying away from gatherings that waste time, and control our tongue from vain and hurtful speech such as backbiting.

Every Muslim should cut all negative ties with society at least for this month and view it as the month of working diligently on oneself. This is the month of earning and we should work hard to earn reward and righteousness.

Hadrat Jibril's ﷺ Curse

Hadrat Jibril ﷺ once came to the Messenger ﷺ of Allah and cursed to eternal Hellfire anyone who did not repent and have himself forgiven in Ramadan, to which the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said *amin*.

An Archangel's curse would have been more than enough on its own as a stiff warning, but the Prophet's ﷺ *amin* and stamp of approval makes this curse all the more potent. There is no doubt that whoever is fortunate enough to live through Ramadan but does not seek repentance, will be sentenced to Hellfire.

The Cure to Laziness

We will be terribly ashamed on the Day of Judgment when the righteous predecessors present worthy deeds in front of Allah ﷻ such as forty years' regular tahajjud. At that time, we will wish that we had enormous number of fasts and recitations of the Holy Quran to present to Allah, had we not been lazy during Ramadan.

If we are lazy and unable to conquer our nafs eleven months out of the year, we should be able to say to Allah ﷻ that there was one month in which we tried our utmost to worship and win Allah's ﷻ favor.

*Please accept O Lord,
These flowers that I have picked for You*

An Elderly Woman's Love for Hadrat Yusuf ﷺ

When Hadrat Yusuf ﷺ was put up for sale in Egypt, an elderly woman set out for the slave auction with just a ball of yarn and needles. Someone asked her where she was

going and she replied that she was going to buy Hadrat Yusuf ﷺ.

The man said in amazement, “Rich people and statesmen will be gathered from across the land to buy (Hadrat) Yusuf. How do you think you will be able to buy him?” To this, the elderly woman replied, “I am fully aware that I will not be able to purchase him. However, at least I’ll be able to join in the group when Allah ﷻ commands all the bidders of Hadrat Yusuf ﷺ to come forward on the Day of Judgment.”

Likewise, the Muslims today may not be able to compete on any level with the righteous predecessors on the Day of Judgment, but at least, they should be able to put forth the worship and hard work of the holy month of Ramadan.

A Bird’s Love for Hadrat Ibrahim ﷺ

King Nimrud had Hadrat Ibrahim ﷺ put in a fire that was so strong that it blazed for forty days and was so fierce that no one could approach it. All this time, a small bird would fill water in its small beak and pour it over the fire.

Another one of the birds questioned the futility of this act since it was obvious that such small efforts would have no effect on such a huge fire. In reply, the bird carrying the water said, “I know that, but at the same time, Hadrat Ibrahim *KhalilUllah* ﷺ is a friend and I must fulfill the rights of friendship.”

A Way to Salvation

The Muslim nation today is weak and the baggage of sins is very heavy and unlikely to decrease because of this very same

weakness. The only way to forgiveness and salvation is to humbly admit this weakness and beg for Allah's ﷻ mercy and forgiveness during this holy month.

Even a rich man of this world will open his door if a beggar knocks and cries at his doorstep for a month. In the month of Ramadan, Muslims knock at the door of the "Most Merciful of the merciful ones", and if they humble themselves and repent with true sincerity, then Allah's ﷻ infinite mercy will be awakened and will envelope them in forgiveness. The fate and destiny of a Muslim depends on but a glance from the Lord.

Nor is that (at all) difficult for Allah [35:17]

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