

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Ramadan has ended and we are going back to our pre-ramadan schedules. Let's not forget the good habits we acquired during ramadan. A few points to remember:

Living in this materialistic world, we tend to be bound by the clock. Ramadan demands change in our schedules. Ramadan impresses the importance of governing one's day according to the cycles of nature, as opposed to those of an industrial clock or 9 to 5 existence.

Ramadan begins with the new moon, and our daily fasts commence and conclude with dawn and sunset, respectively. Submission to the cycles of the sun and the moon affirms not merely living in harmony with nature, but submitting to Allah as Creator and Master of all things.

The modern world has parted with millennia of human experience, as it attempts to bend our will in submission to a full day of labor marked by the hour hand. With emphasis on spending time in worship and contemplation, we further change our schedules during the last ten days. Some people took time off from work, some sat in i'tikaf in masjid and homes for sisters. This emphasized, that our existence was not destined for capitulation to fleeting materialism and Ramadan reminded us of our grander purpose.

Ramadan, is a rejection of what the modern world forces us into: the constant exercise of yo-yo dieting, consumerism, the mechanization of time, and the obsession to control over our lives. Both Muslims and non-Muslims are increasingly looking for peace in modern life and seek purpose and meaning to replace the superficial accumulation of possessions.

Ramadan was the time to reorient ourselves towards Allah, redefining our relationship with time, community, and the natural world.

Allah-consciousness, or taqwa, is achieved not through sound bites, but as a lived reality of intentional living, transcending the impulses and needs of the body and ultimately, aspiring to a higher state of being. Let's continue that spirit.

We humans have physical and spiritual needs. Body requires food, drink, rest and material goods. We strive to provide those. Ramadan is like a boot camp or a training session. our bodily needs go down. we discipline ourselves not to succumb to our bodily desires. Spiritual life gets improved and better. By not feeding our body what it desires, we flourish our spirits. By suppressing the bodily needs, we attend more to the spirit.

Just like five times a day we pray for Spiritual needs, Ramadan is a month in which we attend to our spirit. In our fast paced world, Life trainers tell us to find time to slow down and meditate. they want us to take time off from our daily lives, sit down, think and focus. Our prayer is one such exercise built into our faith. One of the authors of self-help books gives an example of Muslims who go into a mosque at prayer times five times a day for a few minutes, they disconnect themselves from the world, and they come out refreshed. He was telling other readers to look at that example and take a break several times a day. So fasting also gets you away from day to day schedule which refreshes the mind and body.

Many times, we hear the following verses presented when talking about Ramadan:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous – (Baqarah 2:183)*

The focus is to achieve taqwa (righteousness). Taqwa happens when you have a spiritual connection. You nafs wants to provide all the material

comforts but your spirit or Ruh wants elevate you to higher levels and connect you with creator.

In Ramadan, I hope We achieved many goals. We are more punctual our prayers. We knew which day of Ramadan it was. We know the salah timings to the minute.

People become Better Muslims. We set goals of more worship which we don't normally do. A friend of mine finished reading the complete translation of the Quran. Alhamdulillah. May Allah increase his desire to go deeper into the study of Quran. This is a blessing of Ramadan.

Fasting trained our souls. Through Qiyam and Siyam we increased our awareness of Allah SWT. Increased our will power. We proved that we can control our passions and desires. We increased our patience and ability to abstain from what Allah SWT has forbidden. We realized that our needs are beyond the animal desires of eating, drinking, and procreation. We realized we have greater abilities and roles in life. No one except Allah was watching your fast but we still did it,

Those fasting sincerely beyond the meaningless rituals learned that they don't have to be slaves of their desires. If we can control our animal desires during Ramadan, we can do it after also. We proved that we can command and control our desires and needs.

In our material world where you are always competing for more. The more physical things you have, the more you desire. You took a break from that rat race during Ramadan for the sake of Allah. Let's keep that thought alive. Be close Allah, make time for worship. Serve humanity and less fortunate ones. (Shifa)

Besides remaining hungry and thirsty, you found joy in doing this for the sake of Allah. You enjoyed suhoor, Iftars, community spirit, and the joys of worship. Stay addicted to this spirit because this is the way to our salvation.

We hope that we have achieved some self-discipline, self-control, self training, self-restraint, self education and self evaluation during the holy month of Ramadan. Let's continue these practices.

It is recommended that we fast 6 more days anytime during Shawwal except the day of eid. The reward for those is same as ramadan which is

10x. So you get reward for fasting the entire year. Keep the fasting practice alive by fasting on 13-14-15 of the month. Be regular in your prayers as you were during Ramadan. Try to show up at the masjid for at least one prayer per day or per week besides Jumah. Wake up a few minutes before fajr to say tahajjud. Research shows that it takes 21 days to form a habit. You have been forming some habits now for a month. Don't let it go.

As one philosopher has said, *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit."* Let's achieve excellence in our bodies and souls by continuing the habits we formed in Ramadan. Allah does not want us pray and pay zakat only in Ramadan. Salat him Daimun (Ma'arij). Perpetual prayer. Prophet PBUH said the most beloved deeds to Allah are those which are continuous even if they're small.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ " .

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) 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." (Recorded in Bukhari and Muslim)

As we come out of Ramadan, let us remember that all of our sins have been forgiven. Let's make an attempt to keep us free of sins during the year also, in light of this hadith.

Some people criticize the Christian brothers that they are Christian only one day a week. Let us not become Muslims for only one month in a year. Be a Muslim all the time.

Some lessons from Ramadan:

## 1. Implications of Prayers and Fasting

One of the beautiful characteristics of our faith is **that every aspect of our faith is tied to certain ethical outcomes.** Take the example of the five daily prayers.

If a person is praying five times a day his prayer should be connected to certain ethical outcomes and when it is divorced from those outcomes, it means something is wrong with that person's prayer. Allah says:

**Innasalata tanha a'nil fahshai wal munkar.**

*Indeed the prayer wards off indecency and lewdness.*

If we are praying five times a day and yet we are indecent and lewd people then something is wrong with our prayer. Similarly fasting is tied to certain

*He who does not give up uttering falsehood and acting according to it, Allah has no need of him to give up his food and drink.*

We should remember that in this month we are not only restraining from food and drink but also restraining from everything that influences our character in a negative manner. And here each one of us should contemplate and think.

What behavior do I have that is incorrect and that requires change on my part. We should try to be introspective and see where is it that we fall short? Is it that I lie? Is it that I backbite others? Is it that my love for wealth prevents me from spending freely in charity? We should identify those obstructions that prevent us from drawing nearer to Allah (SWT) and use the month of Ramadan and subsequent months to work on removing those obstructions.

## **2. Reading the Signs**

One of the things **we should learn in the process of introspection is to learn to read the signs**. Allah (SWT) reminds us of our current state in many different ways and it is only those whom Allah grants true insight and wisdom that they are able to read these signs in a manner to draw them nearer to Allah (SWT).

Imam Abu Hanifa once went to perform hajj. While performing one of the rituals he accidentally stepped on the toe of a young person. That person became furious and said to him “Do you not have any fear of Allah”. When Imam Abu Hanifa heard this he fainted. When he regained consciousness the people surrounding him said “this was only a young person you didn’t have to take him seriously”. What Imam Abu Hanifa said in response was very

profound. He said, “I feared that Allah had put these words in his mouth.” In other words Imam Abu Hanifa read it as a sign that Allah was reminding him to have fear of Him. So he read the signs in a very different manner than many of us would have read, in a manner that did not reflect his ego but reflected his inner state of nearness to Allah (SWT).

It is narrated that one day Imam Malik went to Masjid An-Nabawi after ‘Asar. Rasulullah (SAW) had commanded that no one who enters the Masjid should only sit until he first prays two rakaats of Salah, commonly known as *Tahiyatul Masjid*. But Imam Malik was of the opinion that Rasulullah’s forbiddance of praying after ‘Asar took precedence and so he would teach his students to not pray the tahiyatul masjid if they entered between ‘Asar and Maghrib prayers.

However, the moment Imam Malik sat down a young boy said to him: “Get up, and pray the two rakaats of tahiyatul masjid!” Imam Malik dutifully stood up and began praying the two rakaats. After he completed the salah, the students swarmed around him and asked him if he had changed his opinion. Imam Malik said, “My opinion has not changed, nor have I gone back on what I

taught you earlier. I merely feared that had I not prayed the two rakaats as the young boy commanded, Allah might include me in the ayat which stated:

*And when it is said to them, 'Bow (in prayer)', they do not bow. [77:48]*

So again, Imam Malik read the sign in a manner that his heart drew him nearer to Allah (SWT).

Now how are these stories relevant to our lives?

I'd like to mention another example to relate this to our personal experience.

During the month of Ramadan, we follow the hadith of the Prophet to try to seek *Laylatul Qadr* in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. There is another hadith of the Prophet (SAW) wherein he said:

*Whosoever is deprived of it, is deprived of all good; and none is deprived of its good except an unfortunate person. (Ibn Majah)*

Now imagine a person who makes his intention to get up earlier in the morning, sometime before his regular time for suhoor so he could spend some time worshipping Allah (SWT). So goes to sleep on the first night and sleeps through the night and is not able to get up. Then he makes a similar intention



for the following odd nights yet misses the worship during the other odd nights as well. Now there are two ways one could look at this. You could have a person who says: well I made the intention yet was not able to get up so there isn't much I could do about it. Another way of looking at this would be that maybe I'm involved in some kind of practice that is displeasing to Allah (SWT) and because of that Allah did not allow me to benefit from this night. Now this may be a very frightening thought but it is only through an honest assessment of our inner condition with Allah (SWT) that we'll be able to rid ourselves of the diseases of heart and will be able to take up a course of action that would help us draw nearer to Allah (SWT). This is what introspection is all about; this is what self-reflection is all about.

### **3. Change from Within**

The nature of change is that it should come from within as Allah says:

**Innallaha laa yughayyiru maa bi qawmin hatta yughayyiruu maa bi anfusihim**

*Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change it themselves*

And we see many examples of this in the Quran. So when Maryam (AS) as is described in the Quran was pregnant with Isa (AS), she was told:

**Wa huzzee ilayki bi jiz'in nakhlati tusaaqit 'alayki rutaban janiyya**

*Shake the trunk of the palm tree towards yourself and fresh and ripe dates shall fall upon you*

Now you could have ten strong men try to shake a palm tree and they wouldn't be able to shake it, let alone have fruits fall off it. But Allah (SWT) is telling us that we have the responsibility of initiating a change after which we should leave the rest to Allah.

## **5. Tools for Sustaining Change after Ramadan**

There are many ways through which we could sustain the momentum that we developed during the month of Ramadan. I would just like to mention a few of these:

## **1. Recitation of Quran**

## **2. Reflecting on Allah's Names & Attributes**

We cannot love someone unless we know them. The characteristics of Allah (SWT) are unlike the characteristics of His creatures:

- **Difference between 'Alim and 'Aleem**

In the Arabic language, it helps to know that there are many ways, with shades of nuances, to describe the actor or the doer of something. A person who knows is a 'Alim but Allah is 'Aleem. In the Arabic language the structure between the 'Alim and 'Aleem or the structure fa'il and fa'eel, is that when you use 'Alim, the person knows, makes mistakes sometimes, doesn't know at other times. So a 'Alim may not necessarily know every single moment but when we use the word 'Aleem then knowledge becomes inseparable constant quality or characteristic of Allah (SWT).

- **Degrees of Knowledge**

We know that every characteristic of Allah (SWT) is unlike the characteristics of His creatures. So many human beings have knowledge and we all know that there are grades in knowledge so a person who has a PhD in Physics would understand the law, say  $W = mg$  in a much more profound manner than a beginning student in high school who has just started to study Physics. And so Allah (SWT) knows and whatever we know is incomparable to what He knows.

- **No acquisition of Knowledge**

Not only that but 'How Allah knows'. As human beings, we don't know then we know. There is no such a thing for Allah (SWT) that He didn't know then He knew.

- **No evolution in Knowledge**

When we know, we know something in this way one day and then we know that thing better the following day. So there is an evolution in our knowledge. But 'Aleem for Allah (SWT), there is no such evolution in His knowledge. There is no change in His knowledge. So even when things change, His

knowledge of them has never changed. And that's very important to keep in mind.

## DUAS

1. May Allah reward those who fasted during the month of Ramada.
2. May Allah reward those performed taraweeh and Qiyam prayers during the month of Ramadan.
3. May Allah reward those who recited the whole of Quran or listened to it during the month.
4. May Allah reward those observed the night of power.
5. May Allah reward those Brothers and sisters and increase their sustenance who invited people for iftar in their homes or supported iftars in masjid. (iftar reduction message)
6. May Allah reward those who woke up early in the morning in order to be blessed during the time of Suhoor.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " تَسَحَّرُوا فَإِنَّ فِي السَّحُورِ بَرَكَاتًا " .

**It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said:**

"Take Sahur, for in Sahur there is blessing." (Nasai)

for this reason it is a Baraka a blessing and reward for those who wake up for suhoor.

7. May Allah bless and reward those who paid their zakatul fitr.
8. May Allah reward those who paid their zakat for their wealth and property. As Allah SWT said in Taubah :

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا

Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase.

9. May Allah bless and reward all those who used to wake up after midnight or early Before Dawn for Tahajjud.