

Explaining Some Benefits of Fasting in Ramadan¹

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Introduction

My brothers, a precious month and a great time is upon us. During it, Allah increases rewards and bestows gifts in abundance. He opens the doors to goodness for whoever wishes for it. It is the month of benefits and blessings, the month of endowment and gifts.

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ ﴾

The month of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed – guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion.²

¹ This article is a collection of points explained by Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn in his book, "Majālis Shahr Ramaḍān" (pp. 7-18).

² The Quran, Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:185.

From the virtues of fasting is that Allah has prescribed it for all nations and has made it a commandment upon them. He (تعالی) said:

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

Oh you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you like it was prescribed for those before you so that you may become righteous.³

If fasting were not such a great form of worship and essential deed by which to worship Allah and connected with such great rewards, Allah would not have made it an obligation upon all people, past and present.

The First Ḥadīth

One of the benefits of fasting in Ramadan is that it is a means by which sins are forgiven and bad deeds are expiated. In the two authentic collections of ḥadīth (“Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī” and “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim”), Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ »

Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and hope for reward, his past sins will be forgiven.⁴

³ The Quran, Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:183.

⁴ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1901) and Muslim (no. 760).

This means that the person fasts out of true belief in Allah, being pleased with the obligation of fasting that Allah has placed on him and hoping for Allah's reward. The person should not hate his obligation or doubt his reward. So if his belief and hope is correct, then Allah will surely forgive whatever sins he may have made in the past.

And in "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim," there is a ḥadīth in which Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« الصَّلَوَاتُ الْخَمْسُ وَالْجُمُعَةُ إِلَى الْجُمُعَةِ وَرَمَضَانَ إِلَى رَمَضَانَ مُكَفِّرَاتٌ مَا بَيْنَهُنَّ إِذَا اجْتَنِبْتَ الْكَبَائِرَ »

The five prayers, one Friday to another Friday, and one Ramadan to another Ramadan expiate whatever sins are committed between them as long as the major sins are avoided.⁵

The Second Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said that he heard the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) say:

« قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : كُلُّ عَمَلٍ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَهُ إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ، هُوَ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ »

⁵ Recorded by Muslim (no. 233).

Allah (تعالی) said, “Every deed of the Son of Adam is for himself except fasting – it is for me and I will personally reward it.”⁶

« It is for me » Of all the deeds a person may do, Allah has specifically chosen for himself and connected himself to fasting. He did so because of a certain honor he holds for fasting and a certain love he has for it. When a person fasts, his genuine sincerity is made apparent to Allah because fasting in itself is a secret between a worshipper and his lord; no one other than Allah is aware of it. When someone who is fasting is in a place away from others, it is possible for him to eat or drink which Allah has made forbidden to him. However, he does not do so because he knows he has a lord who is aware of everything he does, even when he is alone, and he knows Allah has forbidden him from eating and drinking at that time. So he prevents himself from eating and drinking only for Allah, fearing his punishment and hoping for his reward. And for that, Allah thanks him for his genuine sincerity and specifically chooses his fasting for himself from all the other deeds a person may do. About this, Allah says in another ḥadīth:

« يَتْرُكُ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ وَشَهْوَتَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي »

“He leaves his food, his drink, and his desire just for me.”⁷

The virtue of Allah especially choosing fasting will also be made apparent on the Day of Resurrection, Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyaynah said:

⁶ This ḥadīth is recorded by Muslim (no. 1151).

⁷ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1894) and Muslim (no. 1151).

On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will take his worshipper to account and compensate for any oppression the person had done to others by taking away from the person's good deeds (and giving them to those he may have oppressed) until no good deeds remain except fasting. Allah will then give up any remaining acts of oppression and enter him into paradise by the act of fasting.

« and I will personally reward it » As Allah has connected fasting to himself, he has also generously connected its reward to himself. Good deeds have their rewards multiplied in number: one reward is multiplied by ten to seven hundred times or even more. However, with fasting, Allah has associated its reward with himself without specifying a certain number. And remember, he is the most giving and the most generous and a gift is only as good as its giver. So the reward given to a fasting person is certainly great and without limit.

Fasting also includes all three types of patience: having patience upon obedience to Allah, having patience while staying away from what Allah has forbidden, and having patience with the natural decree of Allah such as the pain one feels from hunger, thirst, and fatigue. So fasting contains all of those three types of patience and those who fast are truly considered the patient ones, Allah (تعالی) says:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يُوفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴾

Certainly, the patient will be given their reward without account.⁸

⁸ The Quran, Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:10.

The Third Ḥadīth

Ḥudhayfah (رضي الله عنه) said that Allah's messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ، فَلَا يَرْفُثُ وَلَا يَجْهَلُ، وَإِنْ أَمْرٌ وَقَاتَلَهُ أَوْ شَاتَمَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ: إِنِّي صَائِمٌ -
مَرَّتَيْنِ -. وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَخُلُوفُ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ،
يَتْرُكُ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ وَشَهْوَتَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي، الصِّيَامُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ، وَالْحَسَنَةُ بَعِشْرَ
أَمْثَالِهَا »

Fasting is a means of protection, so the person should not speak badly or act rudely. And if someone fights him or insults him, let him say twice, "I am fasting." I swear by the one in whose hand is my soul, the smell of a fasting person's mouth is better to Allah than the scent of perfume. (Allah says) "He leaves his food, his drink, and his desire just for Me. Fasting is just for Me and I will reward it, and a good deed is worth ten like it." ⁹

« Fasting is a means of protection » meaning it is a defense or shield that the fasting person uses to protect himself from saying useless, obscene, or rude things. For this, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, "The person should not speak badly or act rudely." And fasting also protects a person from the fire; Imam Ahmad narrates a ḥadīth in which the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is reported to have said, "Fasting is a means of protection by which the worshipper is protected from the Fire."

⁹ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1894) and Muslim (no. 1151).

« And if someone fights him or insults him, let him say, “I am fasting, I am fasting.” » Also in this ḥadīth, the fasting person is instructed that if someone insults him or tries to fight with him, he is not to confront the aggressor in the same manner so as not to encourage the insulting and fighting and thus prevent it from intensifying. And so that the fasting person does not seem weak or cowardly by simply remaining silent, he is instructed to tell the person that he is fasting as an indication that he refuses to confront the aggressor in the same manner out of respect for his own fast, not out of weakness or inability to stand up and retaliate. In this way, the arguing, insulting, and fighting may stop. Allah says:

﴿ اَدْفَعْ بِالتِّي هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ • وَمَا يُلَقَّاها
اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلَقَّاها اِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ ﴾

Repel (evil) by that which is better; and thereupon the one who between you and him is enmity may become as though he were a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion (of good).¹⁰

« The smell of a fasting person’s mouth is better to Allah than the scent of perfume. » The Arabic word used here (khulūf) refers to the change in smell in the mouth when the stomach is empty. It is a disgusting smell in the sight of people yet in the sight of Allah, it is better than the fragrant scent of perfume because it originates from the worship of Allah and obedience to him. And anything that results from worshipping Allah and

¹⁰ The Quran, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat, 41:34-35.

obeying him is beloved to him, and he will give the worshipper in exchange something that is better and more pleasant.

So the breath of a fasting person's mouth is better to Allah than the smell of perfume because it is a sign of fasting. It is pleasant to Allah and he loves it. This also confirms the great status fasting has with Allah in that something hateful and disgusting to people becomes beloved and pleasant to Allah because it originates from a person's obedience to Allah by fasting.

The Fourth Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said that he heard the messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) say:

« إِنَّ لِلصَّائِمِ فَرَحَتَيْنِ إِذَا أَفْطَرَ فَرِحَ، وَإِذَا لَقِيَ اللَّهَ فَرِحَ »

There are two times of happiness for the fasting person: when he breaks his fast he is happy and when he meets Allah he is happy.¹¹

As for a person's happiness at the time of breaking his fast, he is happy that Allah has blessed him with the completion of fasting that day as a means of worship since fasting is one of the best deeds a person can do. How many people were prevented for whatever reasons and were unable to fast that day? Also, the person is naturally happy

¹¹ Recorded by Muslim (no. 1151).

with what Allah has now made permissible for him of food, drinks, and intimate relations that were earlier forbidden for him during his fast.

As for a person's happiness at the time he meets his lord, he is happy with his fast when he finds its reward, saved in full for him, with Allah at a time when the person needs it most, a time when it will be said:

« أَيْنَ الصَّائِمُونَ؟ فَيَقُومُونَ »

“Where are the fasting people?” Then they will stand.¹²

My brothers, reaching the month of Ramadan is a great reward in itself for those who do so and sincerely take advantage of it by returning to their lord: returning from disobeying him to obeying him, from forgetting him to remembering him, and from distancing themselves from him to repenting and turning to him.

Oh Allah, wake us from the sleep of negligence, grant us an increase in awareness of you before it is too late, bless us with the ability to take advantage of our time in what benefits us for our appointed time, and forgive us, our parents, and all Muslims by your

¹² Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1896) and Muslim (no. 1152). The full text of this ḥadīth is:

« إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ بَابًا يُقَالُ لَهُ الرَّيَّانُ، يَدْخُلُ مِنْهُ الصَّائِمُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، لَا يَدْجُلُ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُهُمْ، يُقَالُ: أَيْنَ الصَّائِمُونَ؟ فَيَقُومُونَ، لَا يَدْجُلُ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُهُمْ، فَإِذَا دَخَلُوا أُغْلِقَ، فَلَا يَدْجُلُ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ »

In paradise, there is a gate called “al-Rayyān.” The fasting people will enter through it on the Day of Resurrection; no one other than they will enter through it. It will be said, “Where are the fasting people?” So they will stand. No one but they will enter through it. And when they all pass through it, it will be locked and then no one else will enter through it.

mercy, for you are the most merciful of the merciful. And may the prayers and peace of Allah be upon our prophet Muhammad and upon his family and companions.