



Lessons from the Month of Ramadan

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Dear brothers and sisters: The blessed month of Ramadan has come and gone. In a few days, we will receive the day of ‘Id and celebrate our achievements, our spiritual victories. We should stop to review some of the most important lessons we have, or should have learned from this exercise. We should also continue in doing good deeds as much as we can.

The first lesson we learned is how to gain *Taqwa*. During Ramadan we have learned how to achieve piety [*taqwa*]. Fasting has been prescribed in order that we may gain *taqwa*, as Allah said: ‘***O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed upon those before you in order that you may attain taqwaa.***’ [2:183] So fasting is a means of attaining *taqwa*, since it helps prevent many sins that one is prone to and it teaches us to be conscious of Allah at all times and in all places. The Prophet [pbuh] said: ‘Fear Allah wherever you are, and increase your good deeds for good deeds remove bad ones.’

The second lesson we learned is to feel [*Muraqabah*] that Allah watches us, knows what we do in secret or in public, open or hidden. The Qur’an says, ‘***To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it...***’ [2:284] we learned to reckon and watch ourselves, and avoid committing sins during fasting because we know that Allah watches us all the time. The Qur’an says, ‘***Say, ‘Whether you conceal what is in your breasts or reveal it, Allah knows it...***’ [3:29]

Dear brothers and sisters: The other lesson is discipline. We learn in this month how to discipline ourselves for the sake of Allah. In the morning and evening, we follow a strict schedule of eating and drinking. We change the habits of our daily routine because we learn that we are not the servants and slaves to our habits, but always the servants of Allah. Then after Ramadan, we have to keep this spirit of discipline in other modes of our life and must continue with our submission to the commands of Allah.

Another lesson we learn is to be a committed Muslim, a practicing Muslim and to take care of the Hereafter, because this is our purpose. The Qur’an says ‘***And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah], Who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him.***’ [2:46] Our spiritual discipline in Ramadan taught us how to constantly remember Allah and the Last Day, whatever activities we are engaged in.

The other lesson we have also learned to respond to Allah by submitting to His will and following His orders. Among these orders is to fast this noble month. The Qur’an says, ‘***Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward.***’ [3:172]

We have learned to get closer to Allah, to be near Him. The Prophet [pbuh] said: ‘Allah said: ‘...My servant continues to draw nearer to Me with optional deeds so that I shall love him.’ So drawing closer to Allah in this blessed month can be achieved by fulfilling one’s obligatory duties. So we should continue to do that.

Dear brothers and sisters: We have learned in this month the taste of ‘*Ibadah* [worship and devotion of Allah]. It is narrated that among the signs of the true believers is that he feels happy if does a good deed, and feel sad if he does a bad deed. The Prophet [pbuh] said, ‘Whoever feels happy if does a good deed, and feels sad if he does a bad deed is a true believer.’ [at-Tirmidhi]

We have learned from Ramadan a very important lesson which is to keep performing prayer regularly and in their fixed time, and not to neglect them. The Qur’an says, ‘***By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity: their [only] fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed [in a world wholly new],***’ [24:37] We also learned from Ramadan to pray a lot of *Nawfil* [voluntary prayers].

Dear brothers and sisters: We have learned to renew our contact with the Qur'an. Ramadan and the Qur'an are linked together from the beginning. It was in this month that this divine message was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet [pbuh] said, 'Fasting and reading the Qur'an will intercede for the person on the Day of Judgment.' So, we should continue our relationship with the Book of Allah.

We have learned from Ramadan to acquire Patience. Ahmad said: 'Allah has mentioned sabr [patience] in over ninety places in His Book.' So fasting is called patience because it restrains the soul from eating, drinking, conjugal relations and sexual desires.'

So fasting is a means of learning self-restraint and patience. With patience we are able to strengthen our resolve to worship Allah alone. We have learned from Ramadan to cultivate good manners. The Prophet [pbuh] said: 'Whosoever does not abandon falsehood in speech and action, then Allah has no need that he should leave his food and drink.'

We have learned from Ramadan to recite the Qur'an regularly, to learn Islamic knowledge, and issues of Islam. The Qur'an says, '*Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and establish prayer and spend [in His cause] out of what We have provided them, secretly and publicly, [can] expect a profit that will never perish ...*' [35:29]

We also learned to seek knowledge and to read different books about Islam. So, keep reading and seeking knowledge for the best thing to gain is knowledge whether it is worldly knowledge such computer science, maths, or geography...etc or Islamic knowledge such fiqh, Hadith, tafsir...etc. The Qur'an also says, '*Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.*' [39:9]

We have learned from Ramadan to make Du'a and ask for forgiveness. The Qur'an says, '*Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs, accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before that doers of good. They used to sleep but little of the night, And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness, And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.*' [51:15:19]

Dear brothers and sisters: The other important lesson of Ramadan is to be compassionate and caring, to have a fresh sense of care and sympathy. Fasting in the month of Ramadan helps us to understand the suffering and the pains of the poor and needy. In this blessed month we can sense an increased feeling of unity and of being a single Ummah due to our fasting and breaking our fast collectively.

Another important lesson of Ramadan is the collective responsibility for building a more ethical and moral society. We have learned to work together as volunteers, to help each other as brothers, since this is a form of a charity or *sadaqah*. This can only be done if we stand together and become united on the ideals and values which we cherish.

To serve others even a little is a very important deed in Islam. The Prophet said, 'Every Muslim has to give in charity.' The people asked, 'O Allah's Prophet! If someone has nothing to give, what will he do?' He said, 'He should work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity [from what he earns].' The people further asked, 'If he cannot find even that?' He replied, 'He should help the needy who appeal for help.' Then the people asked, 'If he cannot do that?' He replied, 'Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds and this will be regarded as charitable deeds.' [Bukhari]

The final lesson we learned is to increase the social relationship and strengthen the ties with relatives, neighbour and friends during this month.

Dear brothers and sisters: I remind you of *Zakat al-Fitr* which is obligatory upon every Muslim to pay *Zakat al-Fitr*. It is obligatory upon every Muslim, young or old, male or female. The Prophet [pbuh] said, '*Zakat al-Fitr* is obligatory upon every person free or slave, male or female, young or old. It is *Saa*' from wheat or from barley.'

Its aim: the first aim of *Zakat al-Fitr* is to meet the needs of the poor and needy in the day of 'Id and the second aim is to earn forgiveness for the mistakes you committed during fasting in Ramadan such as lies, wrong behaviour...etc. whoever pays it before 'Id, it will be acceptable Zakah.; while whoever pays it after 'Id, will be as *Sadaqah*

Upon Whom it is Obligatory: *Zakat al-Fitr* is obligatory upon every guardian of a family who have the expenses for family for the day of 'Id. He should pay for every person in the family even for the servant.

Its time: the best time for paying Zakah is the last ten days of Ramadan. It must be paid before 'Id prayer. If one pays it after 'Id prayer, it will be *Sadaqah* not Zakah. *Zakat al-Fitr* remains obligatory upon you until the last day of your life, so you must pay it because it is a right upon you.

Its Value: it is Sunnah to pay Zakat al-Fitr one Saa' from crops used in the place you live in such as wheat, barley, rice, corn, or similar items. It is also recommended to pay an equivalent value. The equivalent value is five pounds for every person. The equivalent is more beneficial for the needy and poor. It is also permissible give Zakah to people in another country if there are no poor people where you live.

To Whom We Should Pay it: It is given to the eight categories of people mentioned in Surat At-Tawbah 9 of the Qur'an.

Dear brothers and sisters: Finally, I ask Allah to help us and to guide us all. Ameen