

Ramadan – Month of Mercy and Grace

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My dear Brothers and Sisters Ramadan Kareem to you all.

We have entered a month the like of which does not exist. A month that Rasoolullah ﷺ used to wait for with great expectation. A month that His Sahaba and the People of Knowledge used to beg Allah ﷻ for the entire year preceding it to grant it to them. A month that they would prepare for and take maximum advantage of. A month where Allah ﷻ doesn't just level the playing field but loads it in favor of His slaves and against Shaytaan and his cohorts. A month that Allah ﷻ in His Majesty and Grace has granted to all those who woke up today. I would like to remind myself and you about what Allah ﷻ told us about this month.

Allah ﷻ said:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ
مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ

Baqara 2:185. *The month of Ramadân in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadân i.e. is present at his home), he must fast (Saum) that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not fasts must be made up] from other days. Allâh intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must glorify Allâh [Takbîr (Allâhu-Akbar) on seeing the crescent of the months of Ramadân and Shawwaal] for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him.*

In this month Allah ﷻ made fasting Fardh on us and told us that this is for us to get close to Him. What can be a bigger blessing than to become close to Allah ﷻ? In Ramadan Allah ﷻ prohibited us from Halaal only to underline the importance

of staying away from Haraam throughout our lives and of obeying His orders so that we understand that it is His Will and His Pleasure that are the only things that matter. Not our culture, society, logic, understanding, popularity or friends. Only the Will of Allahﷻ. We obey Allahﷻ without question. Not without understanding. We obey Him because we understand who He is and what our relationship to Him is. That is what Ramadan comes every year to remind us about.

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

Baqara 2:183 *O you who believe! As-Saum (fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqûn.*

The purpose of fasting is to increase our Taqwa and to become conscious of the presence of Allahﷻ in our lives and the importance of gaining His Pleasure. Allahﷻ created us for His purpose and not so that we could spend our lives chasing that which He created for us. Ramadan comes to remind us about our purpose, our Maqsad so that we can fulfill it. Because on the Day of Judgment we will be questioned about that – whether we fulfilled the purpose of our creation.

My brothers and sisters we have become used to living our lives as if Allahﷻ doesn't exist. We are not atheists by word but we seem to be atheists by our actions. Seriously let us look at our lives and ask ourselves this question: Does my life, my words and actions, demonstrate that I believe in Allahﷻ and in meeting Him on the Day of Judgment or does it appear from my life that I am an atheist who doesn't believe that Allahﷻ or the Day of Judgment exist? Ask yourself this and then decide what you want to do about it. Because reality doesn't depend on belief. Reality is real, whether we like to believe it or not. Allahﷻ is real. His Nabi is real. The Day of Judgment is real. The meeting with Him is real. The Jannah is real and the Fire is real.

It is to save us from this insane way of life that Allahﷻ sends us Ramadan every

year. To remind us that He exists and that He and His Pleasure are a part of our lives, our success and our failures; our gains and our losses. My brothers and sisters, factor Allah ﷻ into the equation because He is in it anyway.

Ibn Khuzaima, the great Shafii Muhaddith and scholar reported on the authority of Salman al-Farisiؓ that Rasoolullah ﷺ delivered a Khutbah on the last day of Sh'aban saying: *"O people: You are about to enter the shadow of a great blessed month. A night therein is better than a thousand months. Allah ﷻ made fasting during this month an obligation and encouraged people to perform extra prayers during its nights. Seeking nearness to Allah ﷻ through a good deed would be considered like performing an obligatory act of worship. In turn, performance of an obligatory act of worship during this month would be rewarded seventy times more than during any other month. It is the month of patience, and the reward for patience is Jannah. It is the month of comforting others, and the month during which believers would enjoy plenty (Baraka).*

Rasoolullah ﷺ went on to say: *"Make sure you frequently do four things, two of which would please your Rabb and the other two are indispensable for your salvation in the Hereafter. As for the two things that would please your Rabb, they are: testifying to the oneness of Allah ﷻ and seeking repentance. And the other two are: asking Allah ﷻ the favor of entering Jannah and seeking refuge in Him from the Hell Fire."*

Abu Hurairaؓ narrated that Rasoolullah ﷺ said, *"Whoever does not give up false statements (telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah ﷻ is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (fasting)." [Bukhari]*

Rasoolullah ﷺ said, *"O people! A month has approached you laden with blessing, mercy and forgiveness; it is a month which Allah ﷻ regards as the best of all months. Its days, in the sight of Allah ﷻ are the best of days, its nights are the best of nights and its hours are the best of hours. It is a month in which you are invited to be the guests of Allah ﷻ and you are regarded during it as worthy of enjoying Allah ﷻ' s generosity. Your breathing in it is regarded as Dhikr of Allah ﷻ and your sleep as Ibaadah, and your voluntary acts of worship are accepted, and your duas are answered.*

Therefore, ask Allah ﷻ your Rabb, with sincere intention and pure hearts to enable you

to fast during it and to recite His Book, for only a wretch is the one who is deprived of Allah ﷻ's forgiveness during this great month. And let your hunger and thirst during it remind you of the hunger and thirst of the Day of Resurrection.

Give charity to the poor ones among you; surround your elderly with respect and be kind to your youngsters. Visit your kin and safeguard your tongues and do not look at what Allah ﷻ has prohibited you from looking at. And do not listen to anything your ears are forbidden from hearing. Be kind to the orphans of others, so that your own orphans will equally receive kindness. Repent to Allah ﷻ for your sins and raise your hands to Him in dua during the times of your prayers, for they are the best times during which Allah ﷻ looks with mercy to His slaves and answers their pleas when they plead with Him.

O people! Your souls are hostages to your actions; therefore, release them by seeking Allah ﷻ's forgiveness. Your backs are over-burdened by the weight of your sins; therefore, lighten their burden by prolonging your Sujood. Be informed that the Exalted and Almighty Allah ﷻ has sworn by His Dignity not to punish those who establish their prayers and make Sajda to Him, and not to terrify them by the sight of the Fire when people are resurrected for judgment.

O people! Whoever among you enables a believer to break his fast during this month will receive a reward equal to one who set a slave free, and he will receive forgiveness for all his past sins." The people then said, "O Messenger of Allah ﷻ! Not all of us can do that!" He said, "Avoid the fire of Jahannam even by a date! Avoid the fire of Jahannam even by a drink of water!"

"O People! Whoever among you improves his conduct during this month will have a safe passage on the right path when many feet will slip away, and whoever among you decreases the burden on his servant, will be rewarded by Allah ﷻ decreasing his reckoning. Whoever among you abstains from harming others will be spared the Wrath (anger) of Allah ﷻ when he meets Him. Whoever among you is generous to an orphan will be rewarded by Allah ﷻ being generous to him on the Day of Judgment. Whoever among you improves his ties with his relatives will be rewarded by Allah ﷻ including him in His Mercy, and whoever among you severs his ties with his kin, Allah ﷻ will withhold His Mercy from him when he meets Him.

Whoever among you offers voluntary prayers (Nawafil), Allah ﷻ will decree a clearance for him from the punishment of the Fire. Whoever among you performs an obligation will receive the reward of one who has performed seventy obligations in other months. Whoever among you increases the sending of blessings unto me, Allah ﷻ will make the balance of his good deeds heavy when balances will be light.

Whoever among you recites one Ayah of the Qur'an will receive the blessing of one who recited the entire Qur'an in another month.

O people! The gates of heaven in this month are kept open; so, pray that your Rabb does not close them against you, and the gates of the Fire are kept closed; so, pray that your Rabb does not to open them for you; and the Shayateen are kept chained; therefore, pray that Allah ﷻ your Rabb does not unleash them against you."

When the slave approaches Ramadan with this knowledge of the Mercy and Grace of Allah ﷻ and deep gratitude for all the blessings that He has bestowed upon Him then he becomes conscious of Allah ﷻ's love for His slaves. In that state the slave seeks to know his Rabb more, to come closer to Him, to become obedient to Him and to seek His Pleasure in all things. It is about this state that Allah ﷻ said:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا
بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

Baqara 2: 186 *And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to dua of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided.*

See the Mercy of our Rabb – when the slave asks about Him – He comes close to him and He reminds the slave to ask Him and assures him that He will respond to his dua. Build a connection with your Rabb O People! For that is the only connection which will not break. That is the only connection that is eternal from

the time we began and will continue onwards after we have left this life. Nothing that you chase will come with you when you are placed in your graves. And the One who will be with us, we have forgotten. How terrible is that? I remind myself and you to return to Allahﷻ and to seek His Forgiveness for all the years of neglect and forgetfulness that we spent our lives in. I remind myself and you to make friends with Allahﷻ and to love Allahﷻ with all our hearts and all our minds and all our beings.

Allahﷻ said about this handhold of help:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ
اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Baqara 2: 256. There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower.

You are close to your Rabb. You have made your choice. You have grasped the handhold that will never break – now ask. Ask Him for whatever you want. What are you waiting for? Ask Him because He is the only one who can give. All the rest is a sham, a charade, make believe, deception and destined to fail. Only Allahﷻ is forever and Only Allahﷻ will remain. So ask Allahﷻ. Don't go away from here, don't leave this month of Ramadan without taking from the treasure of Allahﷻ whatever you want. His treasures are open for anyone who obeys Him and follows the Sunnah of His Messengerﷺ and who knows how to take from Him. I have taught you as best as I could, how to take from the treasures of Allahﷻ. Now it is up to you. If you go away empty handed, then you are responsible. Ask Him. Beg Him. Invoke Him. Run to obey Him and then see what He does with you and your life. He will give you until you are tired. He will give you until you are pleased. He will give you until you say, 'Bas.'

He is the One who taught His Nabiﷺ what he should do with the one who asks:

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ

Duha 93: 10. And repulse not the one who asks

Now reflect on this: If He advised His Messenger ﷺ never to repulse, send away empty handed, the questioner who asks for a favor – what do you think He will do Himself when you ask Him. What do you think He will do when He is the One who has no need or want? He is the One whose treasures are unimaginable. He is the One who loves to give and He is the only One who loves the one who asks. What do you think He will do when you obey His command when He said:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ
دَاخِرِينَ

Ghafir 40: 60. And your Rabb said: "Ask me, (and ask Me for anything) I will respond to your (dua). Verily! Those who scorn My worship [don't worship Me and don't make dua] they will surely enter Jahannam in humiliation!"

Allah ﷻ commanded us to ask Him and promised to punish those who don't. So ask Him. Again and again and again knowing that the asking itself is Ibaadah and that you are getting rewards, simply for asking. Knowing that He has it and can give it. It is up to you to persuade Him. Knowing that He likes those who ask.

Ask only Allah ﷻ because He's the only one who likes those who ask. I ask Allah ﷻ to give you all that you ask and then give you more from His treasures as His gift to you. It is in this context that you need to see the great Ibaadah of Itikaaf. See Itikaaf in the context of being the guest of Allah ﷻ in His house and His promise to give the one who asks. How much more powerful is the dua of the one who was invited to be the guest and then given the permission to ask. If you truly want something and you are not making Itikaaf and making dua for that, then you are fooling yourself. You don't really want that thing – be it success in this Dunya or the Aakhirah. This is the reason that Rasoolullah ﷺ was

so particular about Itikaaf that he even made Qadha of it when he didn't do it one year. Qadha of an Ibaadah which is Nafl as he didn't want to miss its power and goodness. He did it because he understood the power of the dua in Itikaaf. So if you are planning to skip Itikaaf, ask yourself where you are going and what you think you are going to achieve there, leaving the place where the treasures of Allah ﷻ are being distributed. It is my job to inform and you are my witnesses.

Finally, I would like to close with the Hadith that must wake up anyone with an atom's weight of Imaan in his heart where it was reported by Abu Hurairah ؓ who said: Rasoolullah ﷺ ascended the Minbar and said: "Ameen, Ameen, Ameen." It was asked: 'Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ, you ascended the Minbar and said, 'Ameen, Ameen, Ameen.'" He said: "Jibreel ؑ came to me and said: 'If Ramadan comes and a person is not forgiven, he will enter Jahannam and Allah ﷻ will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen. He said: 'If both or one of a person's parents are alive and he does not honor them and he dies, he will enter Jahannam and Allah ﷻ will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen. He said: 'If you are mentioned in a person's presence and he does not send blessings upon you and he dies, he will enter Jahannam and Allah ﷻ will cast him far away. Say Ameen.' So I said Ameen." Ibn Hibbaan, 3/188; classed as saheeh by al-Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb, 1679.

And finally my gift to you for this Ramadan. In return I ask for your dua.

اللهم إنك عفو تحب العفو فاعفُ عني " (رواه الترمذي حسن صحيح)

Aisha Siddiqua (R) reported, "I asked, 'Ya Rasoolullah (SAS) if I should get Lailatul Qadr, what dua should I make?' Rasoolullah (SAS) replied, 'You should say, 'Allahumma innaka 'afuwun, tuhibbul-'afwa, fa'fu 'anni (O Allah, You are Most Forgiving, and You love forgiveness; so forgive me'). [Tirmidhi].

I ask Allahﷻ to make this Ramadan the best of your lives. Remember those who were with us last Ramadan and are not with us today. Pray for their forgiveness and reflect on the fact that last Ramadan was the last Ramadan of their lives. But did they know that last year when they were with us here? In the same way do we know if this is going to be our last Ramadan in our lives? If we knew this, how would we like to spend Ramadan? Spend this Ramadan in that way, as if it is our last. For a day will come when we will meet the Ramadan which will be our last. I ask Allahﷻ for His Mercy, His Jannah and freedom from the Fire for you all.