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by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Today by the Grace of Allah is the first Jummah of the Holy month of Ramadhan. Once again Allah has been gracious to all of us by helping us to see once again in our lifetime the month that is so full of blessings that they cannot be counted. This is the month that Allah has imposed upon **us not to take food and drink for a some periods of time and in return he has promised** us His forgiveness for all our sins provided we repent of all of them. This repentance is verbal because we have to confess that we regret all the sins that we have committed and we should also try to make amends wherever possible. So in this great month it is possible for each one amongst us to be as sinless as on the day we were born. What could be a greater opportunity than to be **able to write off all the** wrongs that we might have done and get all our sins forgiven. Today I will share with you another version of the hadith about the great benefits of the month of Ramadan of which we have spoken about several times in the past. But the extract that I am going to read to you is one from Shia Literature. Here it is presented as a sermon of Hazrat Ali in which he quotes the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). Of course we do not hear much about Hazrat Ali (ra) because through time in view of the importance that Muslims, partisans of Hazrat Ali gave him, he was not well spoken about. But in the Shia tradition he is well revered and his sermons are published under the title “*nahjul baligha*”, a quite interesting book. So Hazrat Ali said that the Holy Prophet (saw) delivered a sermon in which he said:

“O people! A month has approached you laden with blessings, mercy and forgiveness; it is a month which Allah regards as the best of all months. Its days, in the sight of Allah, are the best of days; its nights are the best of nights; its hours are the best of hours. It is a month in which you are invited to be the guests of Allah, and you are regarded during it as worthy of enjoying Allah’s Grace. Your breathing in it praises the Almighty, and your sleeping adores Him. Your voluntary acts of worship are accepted, and your pleas are answered. Ask Allah your Lord, therefore, in sincere intentions 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’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 alms to the poor and indigent 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 has prohibited you from seeing, and do not listen to anything your ears are forbidden to hear. Be kind to the orphans of others so that your own orphans will equally receive kindness. Repent your sins to Allah and raise your hands to Him in supplication during the times of your prayers, for they are the best times during which the Almighty looks with mercy to His servants and answers their pleas when they plead to Him. O people! Your souls are pawned by your deeds; therefore, release them by seeking Allah's forgiveness. Your backs are over-burdened by the weight of your sins; therefore, lighten their burden by prolonging your prostration. Be informed that the Exalted and Almighty has sworn by His Dignity not to torture those who perform their prayers and prostrate to Him, and not to terrify them by the sight of the fire when people are resurrected for judgment. O people! Whoever among you provides Iftar to a believer during this month will receive a reward equal to one who sets a slave free, and all his past sins will be forgiven. Having said so, people said to him: "O Messenger of Allah! Not all of us can do that!" He (pbuh), thereupon, responded by saying, Shun the fire of hell even by half a date! Shun the fire of hell even by a drink of water! O People! Whoever among you improves his conduct during this month will **on *al-Sirat alMustaqeem*** have a safe passage, (the straight path) when many feet will slip away, and whoever among you decreases the burdens of his slave (or anyone who works for him) will be rewarded by Allah decreasing his reckoning. Whoever among you abstains from harming others will be spared the Wrath of the Almighty when he meets Him. Whoever among you affords generosity to an orphan will be rewarded by Allah being generous to him on the Day of Judgment. Whoever among you improves the ties with his kin will be rewarded by Allah including him in His mercy, and whoever among you severs his ties with his kin, Allah will withhold His mercy from him upon meeting Him. Whoever among you offers voluntary prayers, Allah will decree a clearance for him from the torment of the fire. Whoever among you performs an obligation will receive the reward of one who has performed (70) seventy obligations in other months. Whoever among you increases the sending of blessings unto me, Allah will make the balance of his good deeds weigh heavily when scales will be light. Whoever among you recites one verse of the Holy Qur'an will receive the blessing of one who recites the entire Holy Qur'an in another month. O people! The gates of heaven in this month are kept open; so, pray Allah your Lord not to close them against you, and the gates of the fire are kept closed; so, pray Allah your Lord not to open them for you; and

the devils are kept chained; therefore, pray Allah your Lord not to unleash them against you.

Advising the great Sahabi Abu Tharr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, regarding the fast being a protection against the fire, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is quoted saying, “Shall I inform you of a deed which, if you do it, will keep Satan away from you as much as the distance between the east of the earth and the west?” People answered, “O yes, indeed, O Messenger of Allah!” He (pbuh) said, “Fast darkens his (Satan’s) face; alms break his back; the desire to please Allah and the giving of assistance to do good deeds cut his tail off, and seeking Allah’s forgiveness cuts off his aorta.” Then he added, “For everything there is purification (zakat), and the purification of bodies is the fast.” He (pbuh) is also quoted saying, “One who fasts is considered to adore his Creator even while sleeping on his bed as long as he does not backbite any Muslim.” He (pbuh) has also said, “There are two merry occasions for anyone who performs the fast: one when he breaks his fast: and one when he meets his Lord, the Exalted, the Almighty. I swear by the One Who controls Muhammad’s life, the excess on the mouth of one who fasts is better in the sight of Allah than the sweet smell of musk.” He (pbuh) has also said that the Exalted and Almighty has said (in a *Hadith-e-Qudsi*) that all good deeds of a descendant **of Adam are his (to reward)** “except the fast, for it is mine, and I shall reward for it. All good deeds of the son of Adam are rewarded with ten to seven hundred times except perseverance, for it is mine and I reward for it.” So, the knowledge of the rewards of perseverance is with Allah, and “perseverance” means fast. Regarding the interpretation of His saying (in the Holy Qur’an) “and seek aid with perseverance,” meaning the fast, it is reported that the person who fasts enjoys the gardens of Paradise and the angels keep praying for him till he breaks his fast. If a believer stands during a portion of the night to perform additional optional prayers, then he wakes up fasting, no sin will be recorded against him. Whenever he takes one step, it will be recorded as a good deed for him, and if he dies during daytime, his soul will ascend the heights of heaven. If he lives to break his fast, the Almighty will consider him among those who often return to Him for forgiveness.”

In another hadith the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) has said, “The sleep of someone fasting is like adoration, and his breath praises the Almighty.”

Here are some more hadiths:

As long as the person fasting does not backbite anyone he is considered to be worshipping Allah.

He who fasts voluntarily with a view to be rewarded, Allah's forgiveness is obligatory for him.

The Holy Prophet advised Hazrat Ali and he said: "for the believer there are three pleasures in this world :(1) when he meets his fellow Muslims (2) when he performs *iftaar* (3) When he performs *tahajjud* prayer in the latter part of the night.

In Islam much emphasis has been placed upon Muslim social life. Muslims are expected to mix with other Muslims and enquire about their health and get to know one another and this should be a source of pleasure for each one. I think that as far as the second source of pleasure is concerned there is not much to say about it because there is a great pleasure in the heart at the time of breaking the fast. As far as *Tahajjud* prayer is concerned we should remember that Hazrat Masih Maood (as) expects that each one amongst us should do our best to perform this prayer because it is of great help to the Muslim. We understand from another hadith that the Holy Prophet(saw) said "Our Lord, blessed and exalted is He, descends every night to the nearest heaven when the latter one-third of the night remains, (and) says: "Is there anyone who calls upon Me so that I may accept of him, who asks of Me so that I may grant him, who seeks forgiveness of Me so that I may forgive him? There are many other hadiths and verses of the Holy Quran as well which speak about the benefits of these prayers. If one has the capacity one can pray the eleven *Rakaats* or else even two or four or six may suffice.

In another hadith the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) said: "Avoid laziness. Your Lord is very Merciful. A small deed is worthy in His Sight. He who prays two *rakaat nafil* to please Allah will be rewarded with entering paradise for these two *nafil*. He who spend a dirham to please Allah will be admitted to Paradise. He who fasts voluntarily to please Allah will be admitted to Paradise."

"The sleep of the fasting person is worship and his silence is *tasbih* and his actions will be accepted and his prayers will be accepted."

We have today reminded ourselves of some of the benefits of fasting. However, we should also remember that our real reward for fasting will be given to us in the afterlife. May Allah favour each one amongst us with His

nearness. May we all lead a life that is pleasing to Him and may He admit us among His best servants. Ameen!