

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

By Allah's Grace, we have once more been given the opportunity to witness another month of Ramadan in our lifetime. As you may be aware, the weather is like that of the spring season these days in Mauritius. In addition to that, Allah has favored us with the blessed month of Ramadan which some devoted Muslims of the past have named the spring month for believers. Let us hope and pray that incha Allah, this month will be a source of blessings for Muslims around the world. It is our duty as good Muslims to avail ourselves fully of all the blessings that we can derive from this month. Muslims should learn to seize an opportunity to do good deeds once such an opportunity is given to them. They should try to do their best so that when the month of Ramadan ends, they do not have any regrets that they could have done better because unfortunately, they allowed a golden opportunity to slip through their hands. What the *mo'min* (believer) should aim for is to pass this month with total devotion to Allah with a view to have all their sins forgiven. Each one amongst us can have their sins forgiven if they are determined for this to happen. If we turn to Allah, He would incline more towards us and will lift us out of a life of sins to a life where we do our best to practice virtue.

In the Holy Quran Allah tells us:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ  
كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾

*“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.” (2:183)*

So, we may understand from this verse that Allah has prescribed fasting for Muslims so that they might develop within themselves a sense of Godfearingness or God consciousness or even God realization. It has not been prescribed for us so that we might slim down and remove excess of fats or other toxins from our body. Although this might be one of its consequences because Allah also says “*wa an tasoumou khayroul lakoum in kountoum ta'lamoune*” which means “that you fast is good for you if only you knew.” (2:184). In other words, there are plenty of benefits for Muslims in fasting but we are not fully aware of all its blessings. For some time now, many Doctors in various places in

the world have been using some types of fasting to cure many diseases. On the internet, they have published papers or uploaded their presentations where they are discussing the immense benefits of fasting for humans. Although the health benefits are many, Allah has not prescribed fasting for us for our physical health. He has prescribed it for us so that we might develop more of His Fear, His Love, His Obedience in our heart. Hence the success of our fasting should be measured against only this criterion, namely, the extent to which we become more aware of Allah after we have fasted. This is the challenge that we all have to take during this month of Ramadan. Let us hope and pray that as Allah has been beneficent to us by helping us to see this blessed month, similarly He helps us to derive the maximum spiritual and other benefits from it incha Allah.

Now I will share with you some hadiths of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) and also some extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as) where we have been told about the importance of this blessed month and what happens in it and what we should aim for.

In a famous hadith, we read that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) is reported to have said “When the month of Ramadan arrives, the doors of heaven or paradise are opened and the doors of hell are closed and the devils are chained.” From these words, we can understand that during this month Allah creates the opportunity for His Servants to advance in virtue, hence the closing of the doors of Hell and the opening of the doors of Paradise and the chaining of the devils. When we read another saying of the Holy Prophet (saw), we have a better idea of what this hadith might mean. The Holy Prophet (saw) said **“If a faster does not abandon lying, God does care about his abandoning eating and drinking”**. Therefore, anyone who fasts during the month of Ramadan is expected to abandon all sorts of vices if they want to achieve the main objective of the fast, which is to be counted among the righteous people as we have explained above. In the same vein, in another hadith, the Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said: **“there are many fasters who gain nothing by fasting but thirst, and there are many risers up at night and performers of prayers who gain nothing by their rising but wakefulness.”** From such words, we should understand that without the implicit practice of virtuous words and deeds fasting means nothing. It is not just keeping away from food, drink and sex. We should seek to rid ourselves of everything that prevents us from leading a virtuous life and strive to do everything that will endear us to our Lord.

The Promised Messiah has this to comment to add on this hadith:

“Fasting is not merely staying hungry and thirsty; rather its reality and its impact can only be gained through experience. It is human nature that the less one eats, the more one’s spirit is purified and thus his capacity for [spiritual] visions increase. The will of God is to decrease one kind of sustenance and to increase the other. A person who is fasting should always be mindful that he is not just required to stay hungry. On the contrary, he should remain engaged in the remembrance of God so that he can cut asunder ties of worldly desires and amusements and is wholly devoted to God. Hence,

the significance of fasting is this alone that man gives up one kind of sustenance which only nourishes the body and attains the other kind of sustenance which is a source of comfort and gratification for the soul.” (Malfuzaaat Vol 5)

Explaining why we should develop taqwa in us, the Promised Messiah said: “There are a lot of people in the world who live a vulgar and luxurious life: they crave for worldly honor and wealth and properties. The whole of their life, they remain occupied in vain struggles and ambitions and they continue planning for it. They do it till their last breath. These people had also been given talents and had they used them properly; they would have attained to the truth: God has not acted niggardly towards anyone whosoever. Blessed is he who puts the talents, granted by God to their proper use. There are many people who, when they are told to fear God and obey His commandments, retort by saying: Are we going to be a *Wali* (friend of God). This kind of utterance is no less than heresy: it is thinking evil of God. It is only the worldly Governments that are short of jobs; that is not the case with God. Whoever has a true relationship with God can have His blessings that were vouchsafed to the Truthful in the past. God has called His beloved people “*Wali*” and is it any difficult for Him to make *Walis*? Not at all. It is easy for Him to make *Walis*. What is required in this respect is that man should advance towards Him with sincerity and steadfastness. No difficulty should make him waver. When a man has true relation with God and he becomes pure and pious and gets himself away from all that displeases God then God also introduces a relationship with him and comes closer to him. But if on the other hand somebody goes farther away from God and adopts dirty ways of life, God does not care for him. He says: *Falamma Zagho Azaghallaho qolobahum* When they became crooked, God proclaimed their hearts to have become crooked. (Malfoozat Vol. I, p. 335).

In another hadith we read that the Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said “The sleep of the fasting person is worship and his silence is *tasbeeh* and his actions will be accepted and his prayers will be accepted.”

There is a version of the long hadith about the merits of the month of Ramadan as reported by Hazrat Ali (ra). It is as follows:

“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."

May Allah enable each one amongst us to better our understanding of our religion so that we improve the way we practice it in our daily life. Ameen.