

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As usual, time is passing by very quickly. Almost one third of the month of Ramadan is already gone. We have only 21 days of fasting left. It is our prayer and hope that *incha Allah* we fulfill the demands of fasting with all its accompanying devotional acts in the best possible ways so that it might be much appreciated by Allah. May Allah give each one amongst us and every Muslim in general such opportunities.

Ramadan is a yearly month. So, every time it comes we try to remind members about the verses of the Holy Quran where it is mentioned. In addition, we also share all the hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) of which we are aware so that everyone might more or less know what he said about this blessed month to his companions and what were his ways of practicing these fasts. So almost every year we repeat the reading of the verses and the hadiths so that we may be reminded of what it is important to remember during these blessed days. Hence, almost every year we repeat ourselves in our sermons on Ramadan. Today as well, I will share with you some more verses and commentaries by the Promised Messiah and some hadiths as well.

After saying that Fasting is prescribed for us so that we might become righteous, Allah says:

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ  
مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ  
أُخْرَىٰ ۗ وَعَلَىٰ الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ  
طَعَامٍ مِّسْكِينٍ ۗ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ  
خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۗ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

*“(The prescribed fasting is) for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey (shall fast) the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast (only) with great difficulty is an expiation — the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is*

*better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew". (2:185)*

Now I will share a comment of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) which is relevant to this verse. He says:

“On one occasion I began to reflect on the purpose of the prescribed expiation of missing a fast and I conceived that the expiation is prescribed so that one may be bestowed the capacity and the strength to observe the fast. God Almighty alone can bestow such strength and everything should be sought from God Almighty. He is the All-Powerful; if He so wills He can bestow the strength for observing the fast on one who is afflicted with tuberculosis. The purpose of the prescribed expiation is that one may be bestowed the strength for the observation of the fast, and this can be achieved only through the Grace of God Almighty. One should supplicate:

**‘Lord! This is Thy blessed month and I am being deprived of its blessings. I know not whether I shall be alive next year or would find the opportunity of observing the fasts that I am missing. Do Thou bestow upon me, by Thy Grace, the strength that should enable me to observe the fast?’**

I am sure that one with such a heart would be bestowed the needed strength by God Almighty. If God Almighty so wished, He would not have prescribed limitations for the Muslims as He had prescribed for earlier peoples; but the purpose of the limitations is the promotion of the welfare of the people concerned. According to me, the principle is that when a person supplicates to God Almighty with perfect sincerity that he should not be deprived of the blessings of the month of Ramaḍān, he is not so deprived, and if such a one should become ill during the month of Ramaḍān, his illness becomes a source of mercy for him, inasmuch as the value of every action is determined by the motive that inspires it. It behooves a believer that he should prove himself brave in the cause of God Almighty. He who is heartily determined that he will observe the fast but is held back from doing so on account of illness, while his heart yearns after the observation of the fast, would not be deprived of the bounty resulting from the observation of the fast and angels would observe the fast in his place.

This is a subtle matter. If a person finds the observation of the fast difficult on account of the slothfulness of his spirit and imagines that he is not in good health, and that if he misses a meal, he would suffer from various types of disorders, such a one, who imagines that a Divine blessing would sit heavy on him, would not deserve any spiritual merit. On the other hand, a person who feels happy at the approach of the month of Ramaḍān and is eager to observe the fast, but is held back by illness from doing so, would not be deprived of the blessings of Ramaḍān. Many people merely seek excuses and imagine that as they can deceive their fellow beings, they can also deceive God. Such people make their own interpretations and deem them correct, but they are not correct in the estimation of God

Almighty. The field of such interpretations is vast and a person given to them might become accustomed to the performance of the Ṣalāt throughout his life in a sitting posture and may abstain altogether from observing the fast. But God is well aware of the motive and design of a person whose conduct is inspired by sincerity and devotion. God Almighty knows that his heart is eager and He bestows plentifully upon him, for the eagerness of the heart is valuable in the estimation of God. Those who seek excuses rely on their interpretations, but such interpretations have no value in the estimation of God Almighty. On one occasion when I continued observation of the fast for six months, I met a company of the Prophets in a vision who admonished me against imposing so much hardship on myself and directed me to desist. Thus, when a person imposes hardship upon himself for the sake of God, He takes pity on him like the parents of a child and directs him to desist. (Malfūzāt, Vol. IV, pp. 258-260)

To put it briefly, if I may say, the Promised Messiah is telling us that if we are eager to fast but we are unable to fast due to an illness, angels will keep our fasts and we will not be deprived. But if we pretend to be sick and refrain from fasting, that is quite bad and we will be deprived of great spiritual blessings. He said further:

“Insofar as I am concerned, I do not leave a fast unless it is likely to cause my death; I do not feel inclined to leave a fast. These are blessed days and are the days of the showering of God’s blessings and Mercy. Ramaḍān is a blessed month, a month of prayers. (Al-Hakam, 24.1.1901).

This extract gives us an idea about the state of mind of the Promised Messiah and how he loved to put into practice Allah’s commandments. Explaining a hadith, the Promised Messiah further said:

“It is reported in Ḥadīth that two types of people are the most unfortunate: one who lived through Ramaḍān and failed to have his sins forgiven; the other who had his parents and they passed and he was unable to have his sins remitted. While a child is in the care of his parents, they bear all his worries and troubles. A man comes to know the value of his parents when he himself becomes responsible for his own affairs. In the Holy Qur’ān, God has given a degree of preference to a mother, for a mother bears the hardship for her child. However infectious a disease a child may catch, maybe smallpox, cholera or plague, a mother never leaves her child. Once my daughter had cholera, and her mother used to handle her vomit and other secretions with her own hands. A mother partakes of all her child’s afflictions. This is out of natural love of which there is no parallel.” (Majmū‘a Fatawa Aḥmadīyya, Vol. 1, p.182)

Once, the Promised Messiah (as) was asked about fasting while travelling. He replied: “As far as the Holy Qur’ān is concerned, it says: ‘Whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days’. This means that a sick person or a traveler must not fast. This is an order and there is no option from God Almighty. In my view, a traveler should not fast. However, some people do keep fasts as a matter of course and if they do so while travelling in pursuit of this practice, there is no prohibition

although one must still have regard for the injunction: shall fast the same number of other days. A person who goes to considerable trouble in keeping a fast while travelling tries to please God by force rather than earning His pleasure by following His Commandment. This is a mistake. True belief consists of following the injunctions and prohibitions of Allāh.” ( Majmua Fatawa )

Now I will tell you some more hadiths about the subject of Fasting.

Hazrat Abū Hurairah (ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “Fasting is a shield. So, the person observing fasting should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, ‘I am fasting.’” The Holy Prophet (saw) added, “By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. [Allah Almighty says], ‘He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fasts are for Me and I am its Reward. And the reward of the good deeds is ten times as much.’” (Saḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitābus Saum, Bāb Faslus Saum)

Hazrat ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amrā says that the Holy Prophet (saw) said that fasting and the Qur’ān intercede with Allah on behalf of a servant. The fast shall say: “O my Lord, I kept this man from food and other physical comforts throughout the day, so please God, condescend to my intercession on his behalf.” And the Qur’ān will plead: “I kept him away from sleep at night, so please accept my recommendation for him.” Both these intercessions would be carried.

In another version of a hadith that I have just spoken about Hazrat Abū Hurairah (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “A man’s good works carry multiple rewards, from ten times to seven hundred times. Allah says, “a fast is an exception, for it is observed for My sake and I shall bestow the reward for it. He who observes a fast gives up his passion and his food for My sake.” For such a one there are two joys: a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord. His breath is purer in the estimation of Allah than the fragrance of musk. The fast is a shield. When any of you is fasting, he should eschew loose talk and noisy exchanges. Should anyone revile him or seek to pick a quarrel with him, he should respond: I am observing a fast.”

Hazrat Sa’d bin Sahl (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “There is a gate of paradise called Rayyan through which only those will enter on the Day of Judgment who are regular in observing the fast and no one else. A call will go forth: “Where are those who observed the fast regularly?” And they will step forth, and no one beside them will enter through that gate. After they have entered, the gate will be closed, and no one else will enter from it.”

Hazrat Abū Hurairah (ra) related that the Holy Prophet (saw) said that anyone who did not fast on any of the days of Ramaḍān without lawful excuse or illness will never be able to ransom the loss even if they fasted for the rest of their life.

This last Hadith gives us an idea of the enormity of the sin of not fasting if we do not have any excuse. May Allah help all of us and Muslims in general to reap the full benefits and blessings of the month of Ramadan. May we all, in this month at least, be among the servants of Allah who fast, who read the Holy Quran, who pray five times daily, who pray some *nafl* at night, who weep a lot in their prayers, who seek Allah's forgiveness for their sins, who forgive others the sins they have committed against them, who remember Allah much, who send Darood on the Holy Prophet (saw) and who do not engage in any type of sins. May Allah accept all our efforts and put us among His Closest Servants, incha Allah. *Ameen*.