

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We are now entering the second half of the blessed month of Ramadan and in no way should we allow ourselves to relax in our efforts to keep fasting and to show greater devotions to Allah. Usually, by this time, fatigue sets in and most people start focusing on the forthcoming Eid. But we should not allow the inconveniences to overcome us. We should be like the Holy Prophet (saw) – be even more determined to carry out fasting in the final days and devote more and more of our time to the remembrance of Allah and show devotion to Him. We should use all the time available to us to make as much *du'a* as we can. Today there is need to pray for ourselves, our family our friends, our relatives, our fellow countrymen and also the world at large. Let us all turn to Allah together with the hope that He alleviates the suffering of mankind especially the poor people throughout the world.

In the Holy Quran, Allah says “*Wa an tasoumou khayroul lakoum in kountoum ta'lamoune*” which is translated as “that you fast is better for you if you only knew” (HQ 2:184). Allah has prescribed fasting for Muslims so that they might develop within themselves a greater awareness of the Presence of Allah. By so doing, they become very careful in what they say or do or think. We may also infer from these words, that there are many other benefits for us in fasting of which Allah is aware but of which we might not be aware.

These days, conventions are held by some medical practioners especially in Germany, Spain and elsewhere where they speak about their experiences in treating diseases with medically supervised fasting. What they have discovered appears to be quite interesting – they see lots of important changes in bodily functions when the body is deprived of food under medical supervision. This only proves the veracity of Allah's words when He says that fasting is really good for us if we could only encompass all its benefits.

Allah says further in the Holy Quran:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ
مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Translation:

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present *at home* in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, *shall fast* the same number of other days. Allah desires *to give* you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.” (2:186)

The distinction of the Holy month of Ramadan is not only that in it is incumbent upon all Muslims to fast except those who have valid excuses but it is also the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed. We know from reliable hadiths that the beginning of the revelation started on the 24th Ramadan in the year 610AD. As you are well aware, the first five verses were revealed when the Holy Prophet (saw) was in the cave Hira.

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ
اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Translation:

Read in the name of thy Lord Who created,

Created man from a clot of blood.

Read! And thy Lord is Most Generous,

Who taught *man* by the pen,

Taught man what he knew not. (HQ 96:2-6)

These were the first five verses revealed on that first moment. The Holy Prophet (saw) was shocked through his entire being with this experience. This was the beginning of the coming of revelation for him. Eventually during the course of his lifetime, for about 22 years, he would receive about 6, 236 verses containing 157,935 words. The Holy Quran's revelation started in the month of Ramadan and in every following Ramadan, Hazrat Jibril would come to the Holy Prophet to make him recite that portion of the Holy Quran that had been revealed until then. In the year of the death of the Holy Prophet (saw), Hazrat Jibril made him recite the Holy Book twice. That explains why Muslims show so much eagerness, whether individually or collectively in Tarawih prayers, to read the whole of the Holy Quran during the month of Ramadan. I personally think that we should also do our best to read the Holy Quran in Arabic and with translation if you do not understand Arabic at least once every year during the month of Ramadan. We should not aim just for recitation. We should do our best to understand what the book says. We should not be content that someone will tell us what the book says. We should strive to understand its message in the best possible way. Our life in this world depends upon this understanding and our life after death also depends upon it. Hence, it is very important for us all.

The verse quoted above says it "is guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination". There is no better guide than this book. It is very imperative for us

to read, understand and put into practice its teachings. I will now read you three hadiths about the Holy Quran.

Abu Musa Ash'ari (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as saying: "The similitude of that guidance and knowledge with which Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, has sent me is that of rain falling upon the earth. There is a good piece of land which receives the rainfall (eagerly) and as a result of it there is grown in it herbage and grass abundantly. Then there is a land hard and barren which retains water and the people derive benefit from it and they drink it and make the animals drink. Then there is another land which is barren. Neither water is retained in it, nor is the grass grown in it. And that is the similitude of the first one who develops the understanding of the Religion of Allah and it becomes a source of benefit to him with which Allah sent me. (The second one is that) who acquires the knowledge of religion and imparts it to others. (Then the other type is) one does not pay attention to (the revealed knowledge) and thus does not accept guidance of Allah with which I have been sent." (Bukhari and Muslim).

We should aim to be in the first two groups and not at all in the third.

Concerning how we should recite the Holy Quran, Abu Lubaba (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He does not belong to us who does not recite the Holy Qur'an in a clear and distinct manner." (Abu Dawud)

Furthermore, Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has asked me to recite the Holy Qur'an in a clear and distinct manner". In another version, it is said: "Allah has ordered the sweet-voiced Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to recite the Holy Qur'an in a clear and distinct manner with a loud voice." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Now we will read an extract from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as). He says:

"The Holy Qur'an is not matchless merely on account of the beauty of its composition, but is matchless on account of all its excellences which it claims to comprise and that is the truth, for whatever proceeds from God Almighty is not unique only on account of one quality but on account of every one of its qualities. Those who do not accept the Holy Qur'an as comprehensive of unlimited eternal truths and insights, do not value the Qur'an as it should be valued. A necessary sign for the recognition of the holy and true Word of God is that it should be unique in all its qualities, for we observe that whatever proceeds from God Almighty is unique and matchless even if it is only a grain of barley, and human powers cannot match it. Being matchless means being unlimited, that is to say, a thing can be matchless only when its wonders and qualities are unlimited and have no end. As we have just stated, this characteristic is found in everything created by God Almighty. For instance, if the wonders of a leaf of a tree are investigated for a thousand years, that period would come to an end, but the wonders of the leaf will not come to an end. That which has come into being through unlimited

power, must comprise unlimited wonders and qualities. The verse, “Say, ‘If every ocean becomes ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof as further help” (18:110) supports this, for the whole of creation is Words of God. Thus, this verse means that the qualities of creation are without limit and endless. Now when every created thing possesses unlimited and endless qualities and comprises numberless wonders then how could the Holy Qur’an, which is the Holy Word of God Almighty, be confined to the few meanings which may be set out in a commentary of forty or fifty or a thousand volumes, or could have been expounded by our lord and master the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him] in a limited period? To say so would almost amount to disbelief, if it is deliberately persisted in. It is true that whatever the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him] has set forth as the meaning of the Holy Qur’an is true and correct, but it is not true that the Holy Qur’an contains no more than the insights that have been set forth by the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him]. Such sayings of our opponents indicate that they do not believe in the unlimited greatness and qualities of the Holy Qur’an. Whereas the Holy Quran says, “Say: if every ocean becomes ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof as further help”. (*Al-Quran 18:110*) [*Karamat-us-Sadiqin, Ruhani Khaza’in*, Vol. 7, pp. 60-62]

In the verse under discussion, after speaking about the need to fast and who are those who are exempted from fasting Allah makes it very clear that He does not in any way overburden us. He seeks ease for us that is why He grants us exemptions. We should take them. If we are sick, we should not fast and only complete the fast when we are good health. In the last part of the verse, Allah says that by fasting as He has prescribed, we should aim at exalting Allah for having guided us to Him and that we may show gratitude. Being properly guided is indeed a really great Favour that Allah has done to us. Now we show gratefulness by following the guidance that we have received. So, when we fast we should try to have the subject matter of this verse in mind and devote time to express our gratitude to Allah for His Guidance and for enabling us to put this guidance in practice.