

FRIDAY SERMON

24 March 2023

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Alhamdulillah we have entered the blessed month of Ramadan for this year. Since the moon was not visible here in Mauritius on Wednesday night, we are starting the fast today instead of yesterday. But most countries have already started fasting since yesterday. One day before or one day after does not matter at all. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) told us to start fasting when we see the new moon after the month of *Shabaan* and to stop fasting when we see the new moon again. However, if the weather is such that the moon is invisible, we should just count 30 days for the previous month i.e. *Shabaan* and then start fasting.

Here, in Mauritius, we will be fasting for 13 hours and a few minutes. At other places, they will be fasting for about 15 hours and in Chile they will be fasting for about 11-12 hours. Wherever be the place, Muslims will do their best to fast. Patiently, despite the heat or the cold, they will do their best to fast in obedience to the commandments of Allah. So, what are the commandments of Allah concerning fasting? We find them in Ruku 23 of Sura Al Baqara. Allah says:

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

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous (2:184)

All Muslims are addressed directly in this verse and Allah makes it clear to us that as Muslims, we are expected to fast. The Arabic word for fasting is *Siyaam*. Basically, it means to refrain from eating, drinking and having legitimate sexual relations between married couples during the hours of fasting on any particular day. *Incha* Allah we will read more about how the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) taught us to behave during fasting. From this verse, we understand that if we declare ourselves to be Muslims, it is incumbent upon each one among us to fast. Failing to do so without the legitimate excuses is tantamount to sinning. So, all able-bodied Muslims who do not have the necessary excuses should make it their duty to fast when they are present in their particular homes during the month of Ramadan.

In addition, Allah tells us that this fasting is not a novelty. All those people who preceded Muslims in world history were prescribed fasting. Here, reference is made mainly to Christians and Jews but there were other people as well.

The purpose of this fasting is that Muslims become more aware of Allah in their daily lives and that they do their best to implement all His commandments and that they refrain from all His Prohibitions.

During the month of Ramadan, we have a training in what is the essential purpose of our life which is to understand the importance of Allah in our life and to give Him that importance. We should aim for this through prayers, *sadqah* (giving charity, paying Zakaat) and doing good deeds and refraining from anything that is bad. So, we should keep in mind that we should all aim for an increase in the level of our *taqwa* (God-fearingness and God-consciousness). *Incha* Allah we will speak more about *Taqwa* in the coming sermons.

In the next verse, we read as follows:

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ
فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۚ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

The translation is as follows:

“The prescribed fasting is for ^[a]a fixed number of days”. Allah has made this fasting as an obligation upon us. It is not forever. We are not expected to fast the whole year round. The obligatory fast is in the month of Ramadan for either 29 or 30 days. However, the verse continues **“but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days”**. Meaning that fasting is prescribed for those who can do it. If you are sick or on a journey, you will replace the fast when you regain your health or when you are back to your place of residence when you have finished your journey. This is an ease, an allowance that Allah has granted all Muslims. Allah is our Creator. He knows how much we can bear and how much we can't bear. He tells us not to fast when we are on a journey or when we are sick. That is His Concern for us.

The verse continues **“and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation—the feeding of a poor man.”** This means that besides the two categories just mentioned, the travelers and sick people, this one is a third category of people who may not fast at all because it is too difficult for them to do so. All those who find themselves in this category should expiate for not fasting by feeding a poor person with the food that they usually partake. In this category we can put those who are too old or who are permanently sick or even suckling mothers who may find it difficult to replace their fasts.

The verse continues “**And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him.**” This portion of the verse is very clear. Allah appreciates that people obey what He asks them to do and says they will be rewarded.

The last part of the verse is “**And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.**”

Allah says it quite emphatically that fasting is good for the people. It is a practice that brings not only spiritual benefits but physical ones as well. Modern science is doing plenty of research on the subject of fasting and they have demonstrated its physical benefits especially for people who these days suffer from many diseases. In addition, conferences are held where researchers come to present their findings about the benefits of fasting. Many young people are quite familiar with what is the buzz these days, namely intermittent fasting and how good it is to maintain good health. But 1400 years ago, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) said “Fast and be in good health”. This, in part, shows the truthfulness of the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Incha Allah next time, we will talk about the rest of the *ruku*. For now, allow me to give you some hadiths which might motivate each one among us to get ready to enjoy this month with all its spiritual delights *incha* Allah.

Narrated Abu Huraira:

A Bedouin came to the Prophet and said, "Tell me of such a deed as will make me enter Paradise, if I do it." The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, "Worship Allah, and worship none along with Him, offer the (five) prescribed compulsory prayers perfectly, pay the compulsory Zakat, and fast the month of Ramadan." The Bedouin said, "By Him, in Whose Hands my life is, I will not do more than this." When he (the Bedouin) left, the Prophet said, "Whoever likes to see a man of Paradise, then he may look at this man."

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "Fasting is a shield (or a screen or a shelter). So, the person observing fasting should avoid sexual relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, 'I am fasting'." The Prophet 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 says about the fasting person), 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.'"

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Allah said, 'All the deeds of Adam's sons (people) are for them, except fasting which is for Me, and I will give the reward for it.' Fasting is a shield or protection from the fire and from committing sins. If one of you is fasting, he

should avoid sexual relation with his wife and quarreling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, 'I am fasting.' By Him in Whose Hands my soul is' The unpleasant smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. There are two pleasures for the fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord; then he will be pleased because of his fasting."

Narrated Abu Bakra:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The two months of `Id i.e. Ramadan and Dhul-Hijja, do not decrease (in superiority).

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained."

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever established prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven; and whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."

Narrated Ibn `Abbas:

The Prophet (ﷺ) was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Gabriel visited him, and Gabriel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite the Holy Qur'an to Gabriel, and when Gabriel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which causes rain and welfare).

We will stop here today. May Allah grant each one amongst us a month of Ramadan full of blessings and may he grant us all an increase in our knowledge of Him. Ameen – Summa Ameen.