

Fasting: Goals and Intentions

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First Khutbah

Praise be to Allah, the Generous, the Giver! I praise Him –May He be extolled. He gives profusely and His Generosity is timeless. I bear witness that there is no deity worth worshipping save Allah alone, with no associate. He blessed His servants with fasting the days of Ramadhan and praying its nights. I also bear witness that our Prophet and Master Muhammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah, the best of those who pray, fast and establish the worship of his Lord, the King, the Judge. O Allah! Send Your Salat and Peace upon Your Servant and Messenger Muhammad and his virtuous family! O Allah! Be pleased with all his Companions, the tabi'in and with all those who follow them in righteousness.

Now then, O servants of Allah! Fear Allah, ***and respond to Allah and His Messenger when you are called upon to what grants you (spiritual) life.*** [Surah Anfaal: 24]

O servants of Allah! While receiving the month of Ramadhan, the Muslim feels great happiness and hope in seizing the opportunity to win the ultimate gains and enjoy the highest ranks in Paradise with the Lord of the earth and heavens.

He does indeed realise that fasting, like all other kinds of worship that Allah has prescribed on His servants, is an obligatory worship that has sublime goals and lofty intentions. Believing souls and tranquil hearts wait for it anxiously; they desire and look forward to getting a great reward and good promise granted by Allah to His fasting, benevolent servants. Being only human and due to the drives and instincts that have been created in him, man might be misled off the right path; those drives and instincts might as well be a form of frustration and a hindrance that could prevent him from joining the path of the sincere servants of Allah and the righteous, or from obtaining a full share of self-perfection and spiritual loftiness.

Because of this, man finds himself in need of a good means of guidance that takes him up high to what Allah requires of him regarding righteousness and straightforwardness. Such a means is indeed fasting, for it is the strongest instrument in effecting psychological change and transformation from bad to good and from good to better.

It is a general and comprehensive transformation in peoples' lives. It drives most of them to lead a better life characterized by good and righteousness, good conduct, adherence to taqwa, abandonment of forgetfulness, and avoidance of desires, as much as possible.

When a person practices this good and comprehensive change for a whole month, a good habit will definitely develop in loving what is good and virtuous, for a habit is developed by repetition.

No doubt that a whole month during which man follows the best path and the loftiest method of purity will have the greatest and most lasting effect. Most likely, he will keep up on this path after the fasting month is over, for this righteous way (of life) becomes a permanent habit.

This, indeed, is the desired taqwa that must associate with the servant and be part of his ethics and morals. Fasting during the month of Ramadan prepares him in a particular way for this. Thus, the servant of Allah holds tight to this taqwa and never turns to the paths of vice and immorality. Therefore, preparing oneself for taqwa is a distinct goal of fasting; rather, it is the pillar and axis of fasting.

Indeed, fasting bereaved of taqwa is an empty one; it is just a mere performance of this form of worship in order to avoid being ordered (by Muslim scholars) to repeat it. However, a servant

practicing this kind of fasting is in violation of the principle of *taqwa* and does not realize the true nature of fasting; he just performs an act of worship, but in a negative way. For this reason, Allah –praise His name– said: **"O you who believe! Observing fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become pious."** [Surah al-Baqarah: 183]

Allah –May He be extolled– began this verse by calling the believers, and concluded it by saying: [... that you may become pious.] Between faith and *taqwa* exist the strongest of ties, for faith is the basis of good and the spring of virtues, while *taqwa* is the essence and pillar of faith and the secret of success.

By joining faith and *taqwa* at the beginning of the verse and its ending makes us feel that what is meant by fasting is the association of virtues and spiritual perfections as features of faith on the one hand and the motives of *taqwa* on the other which include: perfect observation of Allah Almighty, fearing Him, loving Him alone and renouncing all except Him.

Thus a fasting person joins between the negative aspect of fasting that includes abstaining from food and sexual intercourse (with wife during daytime) and its positive aspect which includes implementing virtues and following the most rightly guided paths. Thus, he will not raise his voice, lie, dispute with, swear on, or curse anybody. This is what the Messenger of Guidance ﷺ has advised in his hadith: **"Fasting is protection. So, the person observing fasting should avoid sexual relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, 'I am fasting....(until the end of the hadith)."** [Related by Bukhari and Muslim in their two Saheeh books from a hadith narrated by Abu Huraira (May Allah be pleased with him)].

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ says: **"Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"** [Related by Bukhari in his Saheeh from a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him)].

In a third hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad, and by Ibn Majah and Al-Darāmi in their two Sunan books via an authentic chain of narrators, the Prophet ﷺ says: **"Many a man fasting (in Ramadhan) would gain nothing but hunger and thirst out of his fasting, and many a man standing in night prayer (in Ramadhan) would gain nothing but keeping himself awake at night."**

The secret behind this, as Al-hāfiz Ibn Rajab (Rahimahullah) said is the following: **"Getting closer to (i.e. worshiping) Allah by abstaining from the mubāḥāt (permissible acts) cannot be completed nor perfected except after getting closer to Him by abstaining completely from the muḥarramāt (prohibited acts) such as lying, oppression, and aggression against people's properties and honour. Thus, whoever commits muḥarramāt and then worships Allah by abstaining from the mubāḥāt will be like someone who leaves the obligatory forms of worship in order to do the nawāfil, though his fasting is accepted according to the vast majority of Muslim scholars and he will not be ordered to repeat it."**

That is why if the fasting person performs his fasting according to what Allah has ordered and what His Messenger has brought, it will be the deed by which he gets the great reward Allah has promised the Muhsinun (those who do good deeds). This is what we find in the Two Saheehs as narrated by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"All the deeds of Adam's children (people) are for their own benefit. One good deed is multiplied by ten up to seven hundred times. Allah –May He be extolled– said: "except fasting which is for Me, and I will give them reward for it. He has left his (sexual) desire, food, and drink for My sake. There are two pleasing occasions for the fasting person: one when he breaks his fast, and the other when he meets his Lord. The unpleasant odour coming from the mouth of the fasting person is indeed more fragrant in Allah's judgement than the smell of Musk."**

O servants of Allah! Allah Almighty has reserved for Himself the reward of fasting because as the hadith scholars have said: **"Mere abstention from the natural instinctive desires of the self,**

towards which it is inclined, for the sake of Allah –Sublime be He– is indeed an indication of sound faith. This is so because the self looks strongly toward, and still can get, what it desires, but leaves it for the sake of Allah, Almighty, while nobody knows this except Him. The fasting person knows that he has a Lord who sees him in his seclusion, that He has prohibited him from satisfying his natural desires in seclusion. Therefore, he has obeyed the order of his Lord and abstained from His prohibition fearing His punishment and looking forward to His reward. Allah Almighty thanked him for that and kept to Himself the reward (size) of this person's deed from amongst all his other deeds."

Among the goals of fasting as well, O servants of Allah, is training the self on ease and leniency and distancing it from hardships. This is indeed the nature of Islam that distinguishes it from everything else.

The aspects of ease in fasting are reflected in the following:

- The order to break the fast right at sunset and the delay of Sahur (i.e. Ramadhan night meal) until before true dawn.
- Forgiving those who accidentally eat or drink, forgetting that they are fasting; such people do not have to repeat their fast or pay a *Kaffārah* (i.e. a specific sum of money or food given to a poor person to expiate or atone for this mistake).
- Permitting patients and travellers not to fast in order to avoid hardship.
- Allowing menstruating women and women in childbed not to fast and postpone it until they are capable.
- Permitting pregnant women and breast feeders not to fast and fast later when they are capable.
- Permitting the elderly and patients suffering from incurable diseases to drop fasting because they are incapable to do so; suffice it for such people to feed a poor person for each day of the fasting month.

There are other aspects of ease that are clear in fasting and other forms of worship which enable the interests of religion to coalesce and the requirements of this worldly life to agree, away from monasticism and materialistic tendencies.

"Allāh intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allāh for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him." [Surah al-Baqarah: 185]

May Allah benefit you and me from His Book's guidance, the *Sunnah* of His Prophet (May Allah's *Salat* and Peace be upon him)! This being said, I ask Allah, the Almighty, the Exalted to forgive my sins, yours and those of all Muslims; He is truly Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Second Khutbah

Praise be to Allah! We praise Him, ask for His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of ourselves and the sins of our deeds; whoever is guided by Allah no one can misguide and whoever is misguided by Him no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah alone, with no associate and I also bear witness that Muhammad, is His servant and Messenger. O Allah! Send Your *Salat* and Peace profusely upon him, his immaculate family and kind Companions.

Now then, O servants of Allah! Fasting awakes in the fasting person hidden feelings of good and the gifts of perfection. It leads him to a way of conduct where he sees his evil-instigating self as ugly. It reins his evil tendencies, aspects of sin, and the drives of vice; thus, he does not shout, curse, or argue when he is hurt or attacked.

Some of the tributaries of fasting include: patience, will power, sacrifice in order to undertake one's obligations, compassion, affection, commiseration and sympathy with the needy, and other qualities of good and thankfulness. These are the tributaries of fasting; rather, they are its pillar

and focal point. However, exaggeration in adhering to such qualities could lead a fasting person to deviate much from the ultimate goal of purification and cleansing (of the self), and his fasting becomes merely mechanical forms of rituals and formalisms that do not lead to the intended goal or have an effect in rectifying and polishing one's conduct.

Then we realize the way to achieve the two occasions of joy that were given in the generous glad tidings of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ in his hadith: "**A fasting person has two pleasing occasions: one when he breaks his fast, and the other when he meets his Lord.**" These two occasions of joy are the result of effort, hard work, perseverance, overcoming the self's desires in order to perform this ritual. They are the result of dedicating the self to fulfil the commitments required by fasting and avoid any shortcomings or flights of fancy.

Fear Allah, O servants of Allah, for Ramadhan has come to you as a month of bounties, forgiveness, and salvation from Hellfire. During Ramadhan, Allah –May He be glorified– watches over you, sends down His Mercy (on His servants), forgives sins, answers supplications, looks at your competition in it and shows His pride of you to His angels.

O you who want to do good, come forward.

O you who want to do evil, abstain.

Let Allah see you do good, for the miserable person indeed is the one who is deprived in Ramadhan of the Mercy of Allah, be He extolled. Let fasting Ramadhan, performing its night prayers, and working hard in its fields of good be the best means to reach the loftiest goal and the most honourable intent from Allah's contentedness and pleasure.

Ask Allah to send His Salat and Peace on the Seal of the Messengers, for you were commanded to do so in Allah's Book (the Qur'ān) thus: "**Allāh sends His Salāt on the Prophet, and also His angels (ask Allāh to bless him). O you who believe! Send your Salāt on him, and greet him with the Islāmic way of greeting.**" [Surah al-Aḥzāb: 56]

O Allah! Send Your Salat and Peace on Your Servant and Messenger, Muhammad. O Allah! Be pleased with his four Caliphs: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali, with all his family, his Companions, the tabi'in and those who follow them righteously until the Day of Resurrection! O Allah! We implore You to be pleased with us all, along with them, by Your Pardon, Generosity and Bounty, O You, the Most Generous and Bounteous of all!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! And protect the unity of Your Religion! Destroy the enemies of Your religion and all despots and corrupters! Unite the hearts of Muslims and unify them, guide their leaders and unite their word on the Truth, O You, Lord of al-'ālamîn (the Worlds)!

O Allah! Grant victory to Your religion, Your Book, the Sunnah of Your Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and Your believing, mujahideen and truthful servants!

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands, make good our leaders and those responsible for our affairs, support with truth our Imam and leader, provide him with a righteous retinue and guide him to do whatever you love and accept! O You, the All-Hearing of our prayers! O Allah! Guide him, his Crown Prince, his deputy Crown Prince and his brothers to do what is good for Islam, for the country and for the people! O You to Whom people shall return on the Day of Resurrection!

O Allah! Make good all our last deeds (just before we die)! Save us from the disgrace of this Worldly life and the punishment of the Hereafter!

O Allah! Make better our religion which is our bond, and make better our Dunya (life in this world) which is the source of our living, and make better our Hereafter to which we are returning, and make life an increase of everything that is good, and death a relief from every evil!

O Allah! Help us do good deeds, leave evil ones, love the poor, and we ask You to forgive us and have mercy on us, and if you will a trial for some people, O Allah, take us to Your side before trial!

O Allah! Deal with Your enemies and ours in any way You will, O Lord of the Worlds! O Allah! Deal with Your enemies and ours in any way You will, O Lord of the Worlds! O Allah! Deal with Your enemies and ours in any way You will, O Lord of the Worlds! O Allah! We leave Your enemies and ours to You and seek refuge in You from their evils! O Allah! We leave Your enemies and ours to You and seek refuge in You from their evils!

O Allah! Help us fast this blessed month and perform its night prayers! Guide us during this month to do what pleases You, O You, the Most Generous, the Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Cure those of us who are sick, have mercy on our dead, and help us fulfil our hopes in accordance with what pleases You!

"Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers." [Surah al-A'rāf: 23]

"... Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!" [Surah al-Baqarah: 201]

May Allah send His Salat and Peace upon His Servant and Messenger, our Prophet, Muhammad, on his family and all of his Companions, and all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

Translated by Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
