

We should thank Allah SWT for another month of Ramadan. The Prophet (PBUH) used to make the following supplication two months ahead of the month of Ramadan.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ عَنْ زَائِدَةَ بْنِ أَبِي الرَّقَادِ عَنْ زِيَادِ التَّمِيمِيِّ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ رَجَبٌ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِي رَجَبٍ وَشَعْبَانَ وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِي رَمَضَانَ¹

“At the start of the month of Rajab the Prophet (PBUH) used to supplicate: “O Allah bless us in Rajab and Sha’aba’n and bless us in Ramadan”.

The significant decisions of life and death are made during the Night of Power which falls in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. There were individuals who were among us last Ramadan but, on the last year’s Night of Power, decisions were made to call them back to Allah SWT. They are no more with us this year. Some of them passed away just hours before the start of the month of Ramadan. We must thank Allah SWT for another month of Ramadan and another opportunity of seeking His forgiveness. Being grateful increases the chances of receiving more bounties as the Qur’an states in Surah Ibrahi’m verse 7:

“وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ“

The month of Ramadan is the month of hope. It gives hope to the sinful Muslims that their sins could be pardoned through acts of fasting, Qur’anic recitation, Qiyam al-layl, acts of public charity and sincere repentance. The authentic Hadith explains that, with the start of the month of Ramadan, the doors of Jannah (Paradise) are wide opened, the doors of Jahannam (Hell Fire) are shut down and the rebellious devils are chained. The divine caller invites the people of goodness to increase their credits with Allah SWT and advises the evil seekers to limit their sins.

“حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عُقَيْلٌ عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي ابْنُ أَبِي أَنَسٍ مَوْلَى التَّمِيمِيِّ أَنَّ أَبَاهُ حَدَّثَهُ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ رَمَضَانُ فَتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ وَغُلِقَتْ أَبْوَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَسُلْسِلَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ²”

Imam al-Tabarani reports that the divine caller repeatedly makes this announcement throughout the month of Ramadan.

¹ Musnad Ahmad, 5, 260

² Bukhari, 11, 55

عن عتبة بن فرقد قال : سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول : « إذا جاء شهر رمضان فتحت أبواب الجنة ، وغلقت أبواب النار ، وصدفت الشياطين ، ونادى مناد : يا طالب الخير هلم ، ويا باغي الشر أقصر ، حتى ينسلخ الشهر »³

The month of Ramadan comes with a complete package of *maghfirah* (forgiveness) as long as the believer fasts this blessed month with sincere faith and hope. It cleans the slate and provides a fresh start for a Muslim as the Prophet (PBUH) has beautifully stated:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ سَلَامٍ قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ فُضَيْلٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ⁴

The Prophetic glad tidings of total forgiveness extend also to the one who performs regular Tarawi'h (Qiyam al-Layl) prayers:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ عَنْ ابْنِ شَهَابٍ عَنْ حُمَيْدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ⁵

The act of perseverance is half of faith (Ima'n) and the act of fasting is half of *sabr*. Allah SWT rewards the *sabir*'n (those who show perseverance) infinitely as the Qur'an explains in Surah al-Zumar verse 10:

إِنَّمَا يُوفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

The act of fasting is also perhaps the most honored and the most rewarded act of devotion. Allah SWT in a Hadith Qudsi states that each act of son of man is for him/her except the act of fasting. The act of fasting is sincerely for me and I (Allah SWT) reward it on a very personal bases. Fasting is a shield. Let the fasting person avoid mutual fights, argumentation and disputes. If some one were to engage him/her in a discard let him/her say "I am fasting" and hence will not engage in an unhealthy discourse. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) swore to Allah SWT that the bad breath caused by the act of fasting is beloved to Allah SWT more than the fragrance of Musk. The fasting person enjoys double bliss. He/she is delighted at the time of *Ifa'r* and he/she will be pleased at the time of encounter with one's Lord SWT. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be Pleased with him) reports that:

³ Al-Mu'ajam, 4, 83

⁴ Bukhari, 1, 67

⁵ Bukhari, 7, 134

و حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ رَافِعٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ أَخْبَرَنِي عَطَاءٌ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحِ الزِّيَّاتِ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ يَقُولًا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كُلُّ عَمَلٍ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَهُ إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ وَالصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ فَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمٌ صَوْمٍ أَحَدِكُمْ فَلَا يَرُفُثُ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَسْحَبُ فَإِنْ سَابَهُ أَحَدٌ أَوْ قَاتَلَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ إِنِّي أَمْرُؤٌ صَائِمٌ وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ لَخُلُوفٌ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ رِيحِ الْمَسْكَِ وَلِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ يَفْرَهُهُمَا إِذَا أَفْطَرَ فَرِحَ بِفِطْرِهِ وَإِذَا لَقِيَ رَبَّهُ فَرِحَ بِصَوْمِهِ»⁶.

Allah SWT states that the act of fasting is based upon absolute sincerity and true intention. The act of fasting could not be for mere show off as the fasting person can very well go inside one's room or any hidden place and eat or drink. Each act of goodness is rewarded from ten to seven hundreds times except the act of fasting. It is solely for the sake of Allah SWT and only He SWT will reward it in accordance with the standards of His Majesty and Magnificence. The Prophet (PBUH) has stated this fact beautifully in the following authentic Hadith.

“و حَدَّثَنِي عَنْ مَالِكٍ عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَخُلُوفٌ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ الْمَسْكَِ إِثْمًا يَذُرُ شَهْوَتَهُ وَطَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي فَالصِّيَامُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ كُلُّ حَسَنَةٍ بَعَثَرِ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِ مِائَةِ ضِعْفٍ إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ فَهُوَ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ»⁷

The temporary abandonment of one's genuine desires and lawful needs constitute a sincere act of devotion. Allah SWT loves it and rewards it accordingly.

“حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مَسْلَمَةَ عَنْ مَالِكٍ عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ عَنِ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ فَلَا يَرُفُثُ وَلَا يَجْهَلُ وَإِنْ أَمْرُؤٌ قَاتَلَهُ أَوْ شَاتَمَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ إِنِّي صَائِمٌ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَخُلُوفٌ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ رِيحِ الْمَسْكَِ يَتْرُكُ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ وَشَهْوَتَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي الصِّيَامُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ وَالْحَسَنَةُ بَعَثَرِ أَمْثَالِهَا»⁸.

The Holy Qur'an categorizes the Muslims into three categories. The majority of believers fall under the category of “wrong doers” who commit transgression against their own selves. The second category consists of the “moderates” who do not commit excessive transgressions but mix the good deeds with their evil deeds. The third category is always hastening to do the good and always prefer divine pleasure over their ulterior motives. The Qur'an states in Surah al-Fa'tir verse 32:

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ يُادِنُ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ

⁶ Muslim, 6, 17

⁷ Muwatta Imam Malik, 2, 414

⁸ Bukhari, 6, 457

The month of Ramadan is a source of blessing for all the aforementioned three categories. The righteous one's who are already forgiven start receiving additional blessings and elevation of status (*daraja't*) from the first ten days of the month of Ramadan. The moderate category receives forgiveness for their previous sins by the second ten days. The excessive transgressors receive emancipation from the Fire and achieve salvation by the last ten days of Ramadan. At the end all the three categories of believers are forgiven and also promised Jannah. That is perhaps what the Hadith explains:

وهو شهر أوله رحمة ، وأوسطه مغفرة ، وآخره عتق من النار

(To be continued)