

# The holy month of Ramadhan

- ❖ The holy month of Ramadan is the month of Almighty Allah; it is the month that is specifically attributed to Him from amongst the rest of the months. It is the month during which the individual is meant to organize one's life, to change for the better, to cleanse oneself from every blemish or fault, and to devote oneself to Almighty Allah.
- ❖ On the occasion of the virtuous month of Ramadan which Almighty Allah has favored by revealing in this month the greatest revelation in the heavens' history to make humanity prosper forever. The holy Messenger has endowed it by stating, "in it you have been graced by the Almighty". Therefore, all faithful; male and female, in every part of the world, should prepare themselves for comprehensive utilization of this great and extensive divine hospitality.
- ❖ It is imperative that in the blessed month of Ramadan we study the honorable Prophet's Ramadan sermon, narrated by *amir al-mo'mineen* Imam Ali, peace be upon him. We should study it with comprehension and reflection, and we should endeavor to implement it in practice during the month of Ramadan, each one according to their ability.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ There is a category of people who not only abstain from sins and prohibitions, but they refrain from thinking about them too. So when they fast, they abstain from the general conducts that break the fast, and their limbs avoid committing sins, as well as desisting from thinking about sins, and this is the fasting of the elite, which is the highest rank and category of fasting.

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<sup>1</sup> The sermon was delivered by the Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family, shortly before the start of the month of Ramadhan.

- ❖ No matter how far an individual may be from goodness, piety and righteousness, it is still possible for one to use the atmosphere of the blessed month of Ramadan to bring about change in oneself. This is because Almighty Allah has bestowed this aptitude and ability in mankind, and the blessed month of Ramadan is a very suitable opportunity for change.
- ❖ From amongst the other months, Almighty Allah has exclusively favored the blessed month of Ramadan with great features and qualities, and therefore this is a good opportunity for seeking guidance.
- ❖ It is possible that one can change oneself step by step, and the blessed month of Ramadan is a very suitable occasion for change and reform.
- ❖ It is essential that in the blessed month of Ramadan one holds oneself to account every day, even if it is for a few minutes at a time. One should assess what one has said and done. This should be done during the day or night.
- ❖ It is important for us to recite the holy Qur'an and reflect upon it, for it is the criterion for prosperity for this world and the hereafter. So whoever follows it prospers in both worlds, and whoever abandons it will stray from the religion.
- ❖ It is important that in the blessed month of Ramadan the faithful read and reflect on the *du'a* Imam Zayn al-'Abideen, peace be upon him, used to read at the nights of the month of Ramadan, which is narrated by the trustful Abu Hamzah al-Thumali. If one is not able to read the entire *du'a* in one session, then one can read part of it every night – with reflection and humility – for indeed it is one of the means of reforming the self, which is one's staunchest enemies.<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ The blessed month of Ramadan is the month of self-building and self-reformation, and this is an obligation of all; whether religious scholars or others. And whatever achievement one attains in this process, there is still room for further rise and advancement.
- ❖ Self-building and self-discipline is an individual obligation in itself (*wajib 'aini*) for the purpose of fulfilling the religious obligation and avoiding the prohibitions. Therefore it is imperative for one to endeavor in the blessed month of Ramadan to attain such an achievement that one can believe he or she has actually changed, and has improved to the better and has achieved a better state than before.
- ❖ The daily obligatory prayers, as well as the supplications, *ziyarah*, and all conducts encouraged for the blessed month of Ramadan are all meant for the discipline of the self. It may be that one cannot find the time to do all of those, and thus, there is no easier way [to attain self-discipline] other than holding oneself to account [on a daily basis]. This is because [self-assessment] is highly indispensable and it has a great impact on the individual.
- ❖ On every day of the month of Ramadan, one should take some time off and in seclusion from others, assess one's performance over the past hours: one should look into what one did and what one said, what one heard and what one saw, what one gave and what one took, and how one conducted oneself with one's spouse, with one's friends, and with one's colleagues. In short, to scrutinize oneself on how one spent one's time. [Through such self-assessment] one can increase one's good deeds and reduce one's bad.

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<sup>1</sup>This is in reference to the prophetic hadith which states, "The staunchest of your enemies is your self which is between your sides." Bihar al-Anwar, vol.67 p64.

- ❖ We are all in need of discipline and self-awareness such that when one enters the month of Ramadan and leaves it one notices that one had changed even if it is to a small degree. The criterion of change is the practice of the *mostahab* and avoiding the *makrooh*, and these are the second hurdles which we must surmount, if we were to call the obligatory duties and the prohibitions as the first.
- ❖ In the blessed month of Ramadan the devils are chained, though the deed of an individual may unchain the devils, and he will overcome the individual once again. Thus we must be cautious, aware and attentive to the utmost.
- ❖ The blessed month of Ramadan brings out passion, and tenders the emotions of the individual, because of its programs, and especially fasting makes the individual feel the pains of poverty, and also live, to a certain extent, the sufferings of the poor. Thus the honourable faithful should give extra concern and care about the poor and dispossessed throughout the world, especially in their countries, for poverty and dispossession has become widespread in many countries because of the execution of deficient and inappropriate policies, and moving away from the perfect and comprehensive teachings of Almighty Allah. Those measures will be a step in reducing those painful sufferings.
- ❖ It is imperative for the believing men and women to embark on a serious and determined plan of action to increase the religious *majalis* and programs; such as promoting the Husayni rites, programs of reciting the holy supplications of the blessed month of Ramadan dedicated for its days and nights, congregational prayers, and circles of recitation and *tajwid* of the holy Qur'an and reflecting on its meaning and exegesis. These should be held in every mosque, husayniah, college, school, and all public places, and the maximum number of the faithful should be engaged in these programs. Also, the faithful should endeavor to implement the tradition of the holy prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family, of giving food in this holy month, and in this initiative even the poor and those who are not well off should partake.