

**shahru ramaḍāna-lladhī unzila fīhi l-qur`ānu hudal-linnāsi wabayyinātin mina l-hudā wal-fur`qān - faman shahida minkumu l-shahra falyaṣum
Surah al-Baqarah 2:185**

Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear Signs for guidance and judgment between right and wrong. So every one of you who is present at his home during that month should spend it fasting.

The verse ends with the promise: Allah does not want to put you in difficulties. He wants you to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.

Imagine our lives as a great voyage across the vast ocean, and that we are the captain steering a boat. Our aim is to reach the land of the righteous. In His infinite wisdom, Allah-u Ta'ala has not left us to drift like a rudderless ship, abandoned to the mercy of the waves. Instead, He has equipped us perfectly for the journey. He gave us intellect as our rudder to navigate the waves. He sent Prophets and Books as a map. And, He placed within us a conscience, an inner compass always pointing towards good, like a seaman's compass always points to the north. Finally, He supported us with His Divine Grace as the wind to fill our sails and to move us forward.

We have the map, the compass, and the rudder, yet we are stuck. Why aren't we moving? What is it that keeps us stranded? It is the anchor of the ego. Heavy with material desire twisted together with anxiety and selfishness, our ego exerts gravity on our hearts, dragging us into the depths of the dark ocean. To sail toward the Divine, we must do the hard work of pulling up that heavy anchor, lightening the heart from the distractions of this world, and breaking free from the heavy weight of the self.

In order to assist us to sail upon the path of righteousness, Allah-u Ta'ala sent us a beautiful guest that will stay with us for a month, and support us in this journey. That is the month of Ramadan, which arrives like a healer, offering fasting as a medicine from the Divine Pharmacy. Fasting is about resisting the temptations of the lower self for the sake of Allah, so that it recognizes the Divine. It refines and lightens our hearts from impurities and increases God-consciousness. It is the ascension of the heart. It is the power to pull the heavy anchor up from the depth of the ocean.

Ramadan, the month when the revelations began, is just a few days away. We are approaching a very special time, during which the light of the heavens and the earth will shine upon the regions of our hearts, allowing us to return to a glorious state that we have lost by acting heedlessly for a whole year. Just as the light of the Qur'an

started shining in Arabia, and transformed humanity 1400 years ago, the lights of Ramadan will also transform our coarse beings into refined ones.

We must understand that every prescription of Islam has an outward meaning and a deeper inner meaning. The outer meaning of fasting is to give up eating, drinking and sexual intimacy between dawn and sunset. In reality, fasting is not only practiced by abstention from food and drink and sexual intimacy, but it is practiced by all of our faculties. One should fast with the tongue, with the ears, with eyes, with the hands, in short, with the whole physical being. The tongue should be kept from lying, gossiping, slander, and the ears should stop listening to heedless conversations. The eyes should be kept from what is forbidden, viewing the world in the usual unconscious manner. The ego should be kept from its usual ambition, lust, anger and arrogance. Fasting with the whole of the physical being is a sign of faith.

Allah has rendered fasting obligatory for human beings, not for animals. How can we claim that the ones who do not eat and drink the whole day but cannot control their tongues, breaking the hearts of people with what they say, are really fasting? Breaking hearts, causing pain, destroying, tyrannizing, are not the qualities of human beings, but the qualities of the animal-self.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said "Ramadan has come to you," emphasizing that it is a noble guest sent by Allah-u Ta'ala. So, we are not merely observing a month, but hosting an honorable visitor that graces us only once a year. Just as we would refine our conduct in the presence of someone we deeply admire, the faithful are expected to maintain that same excellence of character in their private moments with Allah. This is a season to intentionally strip away distractions, to trade idle speech and "worthless pursuits or activities" for a deeper connection. By clearing the clutter of physical and digital distractions, we create a sacred space to be filled with the recitation of the Qur'an and a renewed love for Allah and His Messenger (saws).

Rasulallah (saws) said : "The one who fasts becomes beautified by the attributes of Allah." Inshallah fasting will purify our hearts from the concerns of this world: ambition, envy, miserliness, and so many other evil qualities. Fasting will open the door of heedfulness and contemplation. It will cure the ills of impatience and unthankfulness. While fasting keeps our body hungry, it feeds our hearts with His divine light when we show patience for the sake of Allah. Fasting wipes the dirt from the mirror of our souls, where the secrets of Allah reflect and are shared with us

Inshallah, Ramadan will unite us not only around iftar tables for fast breaking, and at nights performing tarawih prayers, but throughout the month and the year. The blessings of Ramadan are endless. Every good action is rewarded abundantly. Rasulallah (saws) said "Whoever provides food for a fasting person to break his fast with, then for him is the same reward as the fasting person's, without anything being diminished from the reward of the fasting person."

Inshallah every night during Ramadan we will hear the call of our Lord: "Ask for something from Me so that I may give it to you. Repent, so that I may readily forgive you. Wish for My Mercy so that I will cover you with My Mercy!"

May we have the opportunity to reshape our lives, to break our habits. May Ramadan bring peace and salvation to our brothers and sisters who are suffering all around the world.

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi