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Ramaḍān : A month of Taqwā and Spiritual Growth

The holy month of Ramaḍān is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the most meritorious month of the year. This blessed month holds a central place in the life of a Muslim, as it is a month of fasting, reflection, and spiritual growth. It is also a time for Muslims to grow closer to Allah ﷻ not just through fasting, but also other acts of worship including prayer, charity, and reflection. It is during this month that Allah ﷻ revealed the Holy Qurʾān, as He says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

"Ramaḍān is the month in which the Qurʾān was revealed, as a guide for humanity with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong)". (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:185)

Fasting during Ramaḍān is an obligation upon every capable Muslim and is one of the five pillars of Islam. One of the primary objectives of fasting during Ramaḍān is to cultivate Taqwā (piety and consciousness of Allah) in the hearts of believers. Allah ﷻ explicitly mentions this in the Qurʾān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"O you who have believed, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous". (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:183)

The phrase *la'allakum tattaqūn* underscores that fasting is not merely an act of abstention from food and drink but it is a spiritual practice to help believers become more aware of Allah ﷻ in all parts of one's life. By refraining from permissible acts during fasting, Muslims are trained to avoid sin and disobedience at all times. Fasting also teaches self-restraint, which is a critical component of Taqwā. The Prophet ﷺ said: *"Fasting is a shield"* (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 1894). This shield protects the believer from succumbing to desires and sins, nurturing a heart that is mindful of Allah's ﷻ commands and prohibitions.

Furthermore, fasting reminds believers of their dependence on Allah ﷻ and the blessings they often take for granted. It encourages believers to feel for those in need, prompting acts of charity and kindness, which are manifestations of Taqwā.

May Allah ﷻ grant us Taqwā, forgive our sins, shower us with His mercy, and guide us to Jannah through this blessed month.

- Maulana Mohammad Yusuf

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The Renovation of the Ka'bah and Rasūlullāh's ﷺ Arbitration

The Ka'bah, the first house of worship on earth, has been reconstructed five times in history. Initially built by Ādam (AS) upon Jibrīl's (AS) guidance, Ādam (AS) completed it and performed Ṭawāf, marking it as the first house devoted to Allah ﷻ. During the flood of Nūḥ (AS), the Ka'bah was destroyed, leaving no trace. Later, Ibrāhīm (AS), with the assistance of Ismā'īl (AS), rebuilt it upon Jibrīl's (AS) indication of its original foundation.

The third reconstruction occurred before prophethood when the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Ka'bah due to its dilapidated state. Abū Wahb ibn 'Amr al-Makhzūmī advised them to use only ḥalāl wealth for this sacred task. Each clan was assigned a specific portion of the Ka'bah, and materials, including timber from a wrecked ship in Jeddah, were sourced.

Walīd ibn Mughīrah initiated the demolition, praying to Allah ﷻ: "O Allah! Our intentions are nothing but good." In other words, Allah ﷻ forbid, we harbour absolutely no evil intention in razing the K'abah. Saying this, he commenced demolishing the K'abah in the region of Ḥajr-al-Aswad and Rukn Yamani. Upon his safety, others joined. They rebuilt the Ka'bah on the foundation of Ibrāhīm (AS) but stopped digging deeper after experiencing a tremor.

When the time came to place the Ḥajar al-Aswad, disputes arose. Abū Umayyah ibn Mughīrah suggested arbitration by the first person to enter the Ḥaram the next day. The next morning, when they reached the Ḥaram, they saw none other than Muḥammad ﷺ as the first entrant of the Ḥaram that morning. The moment they caught sight of him, with one voice they spontaneously proclaimed:

هذا محمد الأمين رضينا هذا محمد الأمين

"This is Muhammad, the trustworthy. We are extremely pleased (with him as arbiter). This is after all Muhammad, the trustworthy."

To resolve the conflict, he placed the stone on a sheet and asked each tribe's leader to lift it. All of them wholeheartedly approved of this proposal and each leader grasped a side of the sheet and hoisted it to the vicinity the black stone was to be placed. Rasūlullāh ﷺ then went forward and with his blessed hands raised the stone and placed it in its proper place.

The fourth reconstruction occurred during the caliphate of 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr (RA), and the fifth by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf.

Reference: Muḥammad Idrīs Kāndhlawī, Seeratul Muṣṭafā (Pages 34-36)



The Decline of Knowledge

« إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ يَقْبِضُ الْعُلَمَاءَ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ عَالِمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رِءُوسًا جُهَالًا فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا »

"Allah ﷻ does not take away the knowledge, by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but takes it away by the death of the religious learned men till when none of the (religious learned men) remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead the people astray." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 100)

Saved Through Ṣadaqah

During the reign of the 'Abbāsī ruler Al-Muqtadir Billāh, Minister Ibnul Furāt summoned a scribe and confessed that he had long harbored intentions to arrest him and seize his wealth. However, he had been seeing a recurring dream where every attempt to harm the scribe failed. Soldiers would fire arrows and strike at him, yet he always defended himself with a loaf of bread, rendering all attacks ineffective.

Perplexed, Ibnul Furāt asked about the significance of the bread. The scribe explained that since childhood, his mother had placed a loaf of bread beside his pillow at night and given it in Ṣadaqah the next morning - a practice he continued after her passing.

Astonished by this, Ibnul Furāt declared, "By Allah! I can never harm you. In fact, I now wish you well and hold love for you in my heart."

Lesson:

The profound power of Ṣadaqah should never be underestimated. It draws the mercy of Allah ﷻ and often protects from calamities and difficulties. Therefore, everyone should develop the habit of giving Ṣadaqah daily, even if it is just a small amount, a few biscuits, or a piece of fruit. No act of giving is too small - every contribution holds value.

Reference: Rays of Radiance (page: 149-150)

Tarāwīḥ: The Unanimous Consensus on 20 Rak'āt

As we enter the blessed month of Ramaḍān, our focus should be on increasing our 'Ibādāt, purifying our souls, and attaining Taqwā, yet it is often overshadowed by recurring debates. From the onset of Ramaḍān, disputes over Moonsighting arise (as discussed in our previous monthly article: Issue 7) as to when the month begins. Once that matter subsides, the issue of the number of Rak'āt for Tarāwīḥ begins to surface, particularly among the youth who often find themselves confused by the conflicting information they encounter, whether from their teachers or online videos. As Ramaḍān concludes, arguments over the exact day of 'Eid resurface. This diverts the attention from worship and cultivating Taqwā to unnecessary division. To preserve the true essence of this sacred month, we must return to the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and the practices of the early generations.

Tarāwīḥ is the special night prayer of Ramaḍān, which is performed after the obligatory 'Ishā' prayer and before Witr. Hāfiz ibn Ḥajar (R.A.) writes in his commentary of Bukhārī: "The term Tarāwīḥ comes from the Arabic word Tarwīḥah which means one occasion of rest similar to the word 'Taslīmah' from 'Salāmah.' Ṣalāh in Jamā'ah (congregation) in the nights of Ramaḍān is called Tarāwīḥ, because initially when they gathered upon it they needed to rest between every 2 sets of Salām (i.e. between every 4 Rak'āts)".

As for the number of Rak'āts for Tarāwīḥ prayer, the books of Fiqh across all four Madh-habs confirm that the standard practice of Tarāwīḥ is 20 Rak'āt. Ḥanafī scholars such as al-Sarakhsī, al-Kāsānī, and al-Marghīnānī affirm this number. In the Mālikī Madh-hab, Ibn Rushd records that the general opinion supports 20 Rak'āt, though one narration from Imām Mālik prefers 36 Rak'āt. The Shāfi'ī stance, upheld by Imām al-Shāfi'ī himself and Imām al-Nawawī, also maintains 20 Rak'āt. Similarly, leading Ḥanbalī scholars like Ibn Qudāmah and Bahā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī confirm this practice. Additionally, Imām al-Tirmidhī mentions that the majority of scholars from the era of the Ṣaḥāba upheld 20 Rak'āt.

The consensus among the four Madh-habs - Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī - is that the standard practice of Tarāwīḥ is 20 Rak'āt. This has been the established practice of the Ummah since the time of 'Umar (RA), whose efforts in organising congregational Tarāwīḥ were widely recognised and appreciated. Reflecting on this, 'Alī (RA) said:

عن أبي إسحاق الهمداني قال: «خرج علي بن أبي طالب - في أول ليلة من شهر رمضان فسمع القراءة في المساجد، ورأى القناديل تزهو في المساجد، فقال: نور الله لعمر بن الخطاب - في قبره كما نور مساجد الله بالقرآن»

Abū Ishāq al-Hamadānī narrated: "'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA) went out on the first night of Ramaḍān and heard the recitation of the Qur'ān in the mosques. He saw the lamps glowing in the mosques and said: 'May Allah illuminate 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's grave as he illuminated the mosques of Allah with the Qur'ān'. (al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb, al-Aṣḥabānī: 2/368)

While this is clear, it is important to remember that Ramaḍān is a month of piety and devotion, and such matters should not lead to disputes. The difference in practice is within the scope of a Sunnah, and it should not be exaggerated to the point of causing division. Engaging in arguments over this issue detracts from the true spirit of Ramaḍān and risks depriving us of its full rewards. Instead, we should maintain respect for all and focus on maximising our worship and sincerity during this blessed month.

References: 1) al-'Uddah fī Sharḥ al-'Umdah - Bahā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī 2) Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn - Imām al-Nawawī 3) Kitāb al-Umm - Imām al-Shāfi'ī 4) al-Mabsūṭ - Imām al-Sarakhsī 5) Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' - al-Kāsānī 6) Faṭḥ al-Bārī - Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī

Qadā' (Making Up Missed Fasts), Kaffārah (Expiation), and Fidyat al-Şawm (Compensation)

Fidyat al-Şawm (Compensation for Missed Fasts)

Fidyat al-Şawm is compensation paid by those who cannot fast due to old age or a permanent illness, serving as a substitute for missed fasts during Ramaḍān.

Who Must Pay Fidyat al-Şawm?

A person who is extremely elderly (Shaykh Fānī) and unable to fast due to old age, or someone who has a permanent illness certified by doctors and prevents them from fasting, does not need to fast but must pay Fidyat al-Şawm instead. However, someone who is temporarily ill and unable to fast for a few days or even the entire month, but later regains their health, should not pay Fidyah. Instead, they are obligated to make up the missed fasts once healthy.

Note: If a temporarily ill person pays Fidyah, they must still make up their missed fasts later. The Fidyah already paid would be considered a voluntary Şadaqah (charity).

How Much is Fidyat al-Şawm?

The amount of Fidyah is equivalent to Şadaqat al-Fiṭr, which, according to the Ḥanafī Madhhab, is half a Şā' (approximately 1.633 kg of wheat flour). Alternatively, one may provide two meals per day to a poor person for each missed fast. For instance, if someone is unable to fast for 30 days and cannot make up for it later, they may either feed one person two meals daily for 30 days or feed 30 people two meals each in a single day.

Qadā' and Kaffārah

Qadā' (makeup) refers to fasting on another day to compensate for an invalidated fast, while Kaffārah (expiation) involves performing an act to atone for the sin of deliberately breaking a fast.

Situations Requiring Only Qadā' (Makeup Fast)

A fast requires Qadā' if water is unintentionally swallowed while rinsing the mouth, if one vomits unintentionally, assumes the fast is broken, and then eats or drinks, or if blood from the gums is swallowed in a quantity greater than saliva. Similarly, if someone mistakenly eats after thinking the fast was already broken due to forgetfulness, or if they eat before dawn assuming Fajr has not yet begun but later realise it had, the fast must be made up. Breaking the fast under the assumption that sunset has occurred, only to later find out that it had not, also necessitates Qadā'.

Situations Requiring Both Qadā' and Kaffārah (Expiation)

Both Qadā' and Kaffārah are required if a person deliberately breaks a fast in Ramadan by eating, drinking, or intimacy. Smoking intentionally during fasting also falls under this category. Kaffārah can be fulfilled by fasting for 60 consecutive days. If this is not possible, one must feed 60 needy people, either by providing them with the amount equivalent to Şadaqat al-Fiṭr per person or by offering two full meals, morning and evening, to each of them.

- Dr. Shabbir Ahmed