

Approaching Ramadan
with
Resolve to Fulfill the Purposes



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Quran Study Group
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Assalaamu alaikum wa rahmatullah.

Tasbeeh

Surely all praise is due to Allah Lord of all created worlds, The One Who sent down the Quran from the Protected Tablet to the lower heaven and then revealed the book in stages to His servant, Muhammad (saw). We seek forgiveness from Him, we seek help and support from Him and we turn to Him in repentance. We bear witness that there is no god but Allah and we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. May prayers and peace be on Muhammad (saw), the unlettered Prophet and on his family, his companions, his wives, his children and all his descendants.

About the Quran

“Surely We sent him down in a night of Divine Decree. And what will make you understand what a night of Divine Decree is?” (translation of Surah 97: 1 – 2)

The month of Ramadan is distinct and distinguished because of revelation in general and revelation of the Quran in particular.

“The month of Ramadan, in which the Quran was sent down; a guide for humanity and clarification of the guidance and the foundation for judgement....” (translation of Quran Surah 2: 185)

Once again we see three characteristics of the Quran given in one ayah – guide, clarification and criteria by which to judge.

Of the “night”, Syed Qutb says in his tafseer that it is one ***“which the whole universe marked with joy and prayers. It is a night of perfect communion between this world and the Highest Society.”*** In this night the universe witnessed a greatness entering this earthly realm, which if followed, brings a comprehensive moral and social change to humanity and promotes peace. You will find another reference to this night in Surah tul Dukhan (44) ayaat 1 – 5.

“Ha Mim. By the Book that makes things clear – We sent it down during a blessed night: For We (ever) wish to warn (against Evil). In that (night) is made distinct every affair of wisdom. By command, from Our Presence. For We (ever) send (revelations).

As we approach the Blessed Month, we should reflect on the origin of the Quran, universal reaction to this and how the original event of “lailatul qadr” initiated the

presence in the world of a noble guide, a source of knowledge, a fountain of wisdom, a healer of heart and body, and a source of joy and hope that remains continually available to us.

As we imagine how the angels and beings of creation must have felt, let us try to increase our love for and desire for the presence of Quran in our selves.

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“Oh you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you might develop spiritual awareness. A fixed number of days, then ...” (translation of a portion of Quran 2: 183)

In our last session we discussed this ayah to emphasize the main purpose of the obligatory fast and that is to develop and strengthen our awareness of the reality of Allah and our need to guard the self against the displeasure of Our Lord. While the development of that quality of “taqwa” is primary, it is not the only purpose or objective of the Allah in ordaining the fast for us as a recurring spiritual obligation. We find four other objectives just a little further in the Quranic text:

“The month of Ramadan in which the Quran was sent down; a guidance for humanity and clarification of the guidance and the basis of judgment. So, whoever witnesses this month then let them fast and whoever is sick or on a journey then let them complete the period from other days. Allah wants ease for you; He does not want hardship for you. And, that you will complete the prescribed period and exalt Allah as He has guided you and that you may become grateful.” (translation of Quran 2: 185)

This ayah is very instructive about the Quran, giving three of his attributes and purposes for being sent into this world. The ayah is also emphasizing what Allah said in the previous ayah (184) and expanding on the purpose of the Fast. With the purposes stated here we see there are 5 stated purposes for the required fast of Ramadan.

1. The development of taqwa
2. Ease – Allah wants to ease our way on this journey of return and we want to examine how fasting and following the guidelines does that for us.
3. Completion of the term
4. That we will exalt the greatness of Our Lord
5. The development of gratefulness

We are going to examine each of these with some detail.

#1 – Development of Taqwa

This was discussed in our last session. Anyone who was not present may request the notes from that session.

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#2 – Ease

“The statement in the ayah encapsulates the fundamental principle on which all Islamic religious duties are founded. They are intended to be easy, not arduous...Allah’s purpose is to enable man to go through life with the minimum of hardship or discomfort.” (Syed Qutb) There is also in the body of Shariah a principle of “no hardship” (*laa haraj*)

Please see the following:

Surah 5: 6 (end of the ayah): *“...And ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith, your faces and hands. Allah doth not wish to place you in difficulty.”*

Surah 22: 77 – 78 *“O ye who believe! Bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; And do good; That ye may prosper. And Strive in His cause as ye might strive, (With sincerity and under discipline), He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion;...”*

Surahs (as messages of comfort) 93: *“By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the Night when it is still – Thy guardian Lord Hath not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present. And soon will thy Guardian Lord give thee (That wherewith) thou shalt be well pleased. Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent. Therefore treat not the orphan with harshness, nor repulse the petitioner (unheard). And the Bounty of thy Lord proclaim!”*

and 94 *“Have We not expanded thee thy breast? And removed from thee thy burden the which did gall thy back? And raised high the esteem (in which) thou (art held)? So, verily, with every difficulty there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief. Therefore, when thou are free (from thine immediate task), still labour hard, and to thy Lord turn (all) thy attention.”*

Surah 87: 8 (and commentary) *“And We will make it easy for thee (to follow) the simple (Path).”* “The path of Islam is simple and easy. It depends on no abstruse mysteries or self-mortifications, but on straight and manly conduct in accordance with the laws of man’s nature as implanted in him by Allah (30:30). On the other hand, spiritual perfection may be the most difficult, for it involves complete surrender on our part to Allah in all our affairs, thoughts, and desires; but after that surrender, Allah’s Grace will make our path easy.

Surah 52: 48 ***“Now await in patience the command of thy Lord: for verily thou art in Our eyes; and celebrate the praises of thy Lord the while thou standest forth.***

Surah 92: 4 – 7

Also we have an example from Prophet Musaa (as) to ask Allah to give us ease. See Surah 20: 25 – 29; particularly ayah 26. ***“(Moses) said: “O my Lord! Expand me my breast; ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech so they may understand what I say; and give me a Minister from my family.”***

Finally, Ramadan being the month in which more emphasis is given to Quran than any other month, it is important to note how Allah has made clear that He has intended ease for us in studying, learning and reciting the Quran. See:

Surah 54: (17) ***“And We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition?”***, (22) ***“We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition?”***, (32) ***“We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition?”***, (40) ***“We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition?”***

Surah 73:20 ***“Thy Lord doth know that thou standest forth (to prayer) nigh two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night, and so doth a party of those with thee. But Allah doth appoint Night and Day in due measure. He knoweth that ye are unable to keep count thereof. So He hath turned to you (in mercy); read ye, therefore, of the Qur’an as much as may be easy for you...”***

#3 – Completion of the Term

Perfection and precision are of great importance to Allah (iwj). We see times when Allah is flexible as in Surah 73: 2 – 4 ***“Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night – half of it or a little less,”*** or Surah 2: 203 ***Celebrate the praises of Allah during the Appointed Days. But if anyone hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if anyone stays on, there is no blame on him...”*** but we also have examples of Him being very precise, exact and perfect as in structuring our deen – Surah 5: 3 ***“Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah...”*** and in the compensation one makes for being unable to sacrifice an animal during Hajj – Surah 2: 196 ***“And complete the Hajj or Umrah in ther service of Allah, but if ye are prevended (from completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice...”***

So the fast of Ramadan is an event for which Allah requires preciseness in the number of days, in the daily time of the fasting and in specific behavior.

#4 – Exalting the greatness of Allah

Surah 4: 34 “

Surah 13: 9 ***“He knoweth the Unseen and that which is open; He is the Great, the most High.”***

Surah 17: 43 ***Glory to Him! He is high above all that they say! Exalted and Treat (beyond measure)!”***

Surah 22: 62 ***“That is because Allah – He is the Reality; and those besides Him whom they invoke – they are but vain Falsehood; Verily Allah is He, Most High, Most Great.”***

Surah 34: 23 ***“No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those for whom He has granted permission. So far (is this the case) that, when terror is removed from their hearts (at the Day of Judgment, then) will they say, ‘What is it that your Lord commanded?’ They will say: ‘That which is true and just, and He is the Most High, Most Great.’”***

Surah 67: 1 ***“Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion, and He over all things hath Power.”***

As Allah is Al-Akbar, He also gives great rewards.

Surah 11: 11 ***“Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work righteousness; for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward.”***

Surah 17: 86 – 87 ***“If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have send thee by inspiration; then wouldst thou find none to plead thy affair in that matter as against Us – except for Mercy from thy Lord; for His Bounty is to thee (indeed) great.”***

Surah 33: 47 ***“Then give the glad tidings to the Believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great Bounty.”***

Surah 57: 7 ***“Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs. For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity) – for them is a great Reward.”***

Surah 67: 12 ***“One Day shalt thou see the believing men and believing women – how their Light runs forward before them and by their right hands; (their greeting will be); ‘Good News for you this Day! Gardens beneath which flow rivers! To dwell therein for aye! This is indeed the highest Achievement!’”***

The greatest of deeds / actions: Surah 29: 45 ***“Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer; for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do.”***

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5 – The Development of Gratefulness

This quality of the servant is of great importance to Allah (iwj).

Surah 2: 56 ***“Then We raised you up after your death; ye had the chance to be grateful.”***

Surah 2: 152 ***“Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me and reject not Faith.”***

Surah 2: 172 ***“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah, if it is to Him ye worship.”***

Surah 5: 6 (end of the ayah) ***“O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer... And to complete His favour to you, that ye may be grateful.”***

Also note that Allah is ash Shakoor and is grateful to us for our efforts to good and our righteous deeds and obedience.

Surah 4: 147 ***“What can Allah gain by your punishment. If ye are grateful and ye believe? Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth (all good), and knoweth all things.”***

Surah 43: 23 “

Also, Allah requires thing of us and puts things into motion that will (insha Allah) create gratitude.

Surah 5: 89 (end of the ayah) ***“...But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His Signs, that ye may be grateful.”***

Surah 8: 26 ***“Call to mind when ye were a small (band), despised through the land, and afraid that men might despoil and kidnap you; but He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with His aid, and gave you good things for sustenance; that ye might be grateful.”***

Surah 16: 14 ***“It is He Who had made the sea subject, that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, and that ye may extract therefrom ornaments to wear, and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that ye may be grateful.”***

Surah 16: 114 ***“So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; and be grateful for the favours of Allah, if it is He Whom ye serve.”***

Surah 22: 36 ***“The sacrificial camels...Eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment, and such as beg with due humility; thus have we made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful.”***

Surah 28: 73 ***“It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you Night and Day – that ye may rest therein, and that ye may seek of His Grace – and in order that ye may be grateful.”***

Surah 30: 46 ***“Among His Signs is this, that He sends the Winds, as heralds of Glad Tidings, giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy – that the ships may sail (majestically) by His Command and that ye may seek of His Bounty; in order that ye may be grateful.”***

And Allah gives us examples in the Prophets.

Prophet Nuh: Surah 17: 3 ***“O ye that are sprung from those whom We carried (In the Ark) with Noah! Verily he was a devotee most grateful.”***

Prophet Sulaiman: Surah 27: 19 ***“So he smiled, amused at its speech; and he said: ‘O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for thy favours, which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee; and admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy Righteous Servants.’”***

The Benefits of Gratefulness

Surah 7: 58 *“From the land that is clean and good, by the Will of his Cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind; but from that land that is bad, springs up nothing but that which is niggardly; thus do we explain the Signs by various (symbols) to those who are grateful.”*

Surah 14: 7 *“And remember! Your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): ‘If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly my punishment is terrible indeed.’”*

Surah 31: 12 *“We bestowed (in the past) wisdom on Luqman: ‘Show (thy) gratitude to Allah.’ Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, verify Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.”*

Surah 39: 7 *“If ye reject (Allah), truly Allah hath no need of you; but He liketh not ingratitude from His servants; if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. In the End, to your Lord is your Return, when He will tell you the truth of all that ye did (in this life). For He knoweth well all that is in (men’s) hearts.”*

May Allah enable us to complete the fast and achieve all of what He desires for us.