

[Home](#) > [Spiritual Journey of the Mystics \(Suluk al-Arifan\)](#) > [Some Special Distinctions of the Holy Month of Ramadhan](#) > A Few Reminders

Some Special Distinctions of the Holy Month of Ramadhan

Regarding special distinctions of the Holy Month of Ramadhan and spread of Allah's blessings during this month, a lot of important points have been mentioned in narrations – the points which could be useful and constructive for those who possess an enlightened heart and sense of understanding.

Following is a brief description of those narrations:

1. Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), pardons seventy million people, who are being punished in the Hell, at the time of Fast-breaking (*iftar*) during each night of the Holy Month of Ramadhan, and at the end of the Holy Month forgives an additional number of sinners equivalent to the total sum of those pardoned during the entire month.
2. On the first night of the Holy Month of Ramadhan, Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), pardons whoever he pleases, and during each night pardons twice the number pardoned in the previous night, and on the last night, forgives twice the number of sinners pardon during entire month.
3. In this regard, the most famous tradition is the sermon of the Holy Prophet [s] which has been reported by Sayyid Ibn Tawus in his book Iqbal, quoted from Imam al-Ridha [a]¹ who heard from his father, who quoted from the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali [a] who said:

“One day the Holy Prophet [s] delivered the following sermon about the Holy Month of Ramadhan: O' people! The Month of Allah with blessing mercy and pardon has came to you, a month which is the best month among all months before Allah; its days are the best days; its nights are the best nights and its hours are the best hours. It is the month in which you have been invited by the Lord for a feast, and have been selected as the recipient of this special favour. Your breathing merits the reward of praise, while your sleeping in this month earns the reward of worship. In this month your deeds are accepted and prayers are granted.

Therefore, with true intention and pure hearts beseech the Lord to bestow upon you His special favour to

be able to observe fasting and recite the Holy Qur'an. Because the most unfortunate and wretched one is the one who remains deprived from Allah's pardon during this great month. With your thirst and hunger remind yourself about the thirst and hunger of the Day of Judgement; pay charity to poor and destitute people, pay respect to elders; be kind towards youngsters, and observe the bonds of relationship with your kith and kin.

"Watch your tongues, cover your eyes from seeing forbidden objects and prevent your ears from hearing forbidden affairs. Be kind to the orphans of the people so that the others are kind towards your orphans. Repent for your sins and at the time of prayer raise your hands upward, because these hours are the best hours in which Allah looks towards mankind with mercy and compassion. Their hymns are granted, their cries are heard. Whatever they ask is bestowed upon them and their prayers are fulfilled.

"O' people! Your selves are mortgaged against your deeds and therefore, by means of repentance make yourself free. Your back has become much too heavy due to sins; by prolongation of your prostration make yourself light-burdened. Know that Allah has taken the oath of his Majesty and Splendour that he will not punish those who offer prayers and bow down in prostration, and on the Day of Judgement will not scare them through Hell's fire.

"O' people! Whoever in this month will make arrangements for the fast-breaking (iftar) of a believer will be bestowed upon the reward equal to freeing of a slave and all of his past sins shall be pardoned. He was asked: 'O' Prophet of Allah! But all of us are not in a position to arrange the fast-breaking of a fast observer.' The Prophet replied: 'Protect yourself from Hell-Fire and offer fast-breaking even if it happens to be a piece of date with a glass of sherbet.'

"O' people! Whoever makes his conduct better in this month on the Judgement Day will be bestowed upon the permit for crossing over the Serat. Whoever will open the knots of difficulties of people's affairs in this month, the Lord on the Judgement Day will make the accounting of his deeds easier.

"Whoever makes people immune from his mischief, Allah on the Judgement Day will make him immune from his wrath. Whoever treats an orphan with respect, on the Judgement Day Allah will treat him with honour. Whoever takes care to strengthen family bonds with relatives, Allah will extend His blessings upon him on the Judgement Day, and whoever will cut off his family ties, Allah too will deprive him from His blessings on the Judgement Day.

"Whoever offers supererogatory prayers in this month, Allah will register for him immunity from the fire. Whoever performs a compulsory deed in this month, will be bestowed the reward of seventy compulsory deeds performed in other months. Whoever offers a lot of salutations upon me in this month, on the Judgement Day, Allah will make the balance of his righteous deeds heavier. Whoever recites one single verse of the Holy Qur'an during this month will be bestowed the reward of finishing the entire Holy Qur'an in other months.

"O' people! The gates of Paradise are opened in this month, beseech Allah that it should not be closed

upon you. The doors of Hell are closed, and ask Allah that they are not opened upon you. The devils are chained in this month, ask Allah not to allow them to take over your control.

Imam 'Ali [a] said: 'O' Prophet of Allah which one is the best deed during this month?' The Holy Prophet [s] replied: 'O' Abul Hasan! The most supreme deed in this month is piety and renunciation of divine forbidden acts', then the Holy Prophet [s] cried. 'O' Prophet of Allah! What has caused you to cry?' Asked Imam 'Ali [a]. 'O' 'Ali! What would happen to you during this month. As I can see you standing in prayer whispering with your Lord, the most wretched person comes and with a heavy blow of his sword makes your beard coloured with your blood.'

'O' Prophet of Allah! Would I be steadfast upon my religion on that day?' Asked Imam 'Ali [a] 'Yes! You would be steadfast on your faith.' Said the Holy Prophet [s]. Then he said: 'O' 'Ali! Whoever would kill you, would kill me; whoever would engage in ill-speaking against you would vilify me, because, you are from me; your soul is my soul; your nature is my nature; Allah has created, me and you;

He has bestowed exaltedness upon me and you – prophethood (nabuwwat) for me, and vicegerency (imamat) for you; whoever has not accepted your vicegerency has not believed in my prophethood either; O' 'Ali you are my executor and successor, you are the father of my children, you are the husband of my daughter; you are the caliph of my community (ummah)² during my lifetime as well as after my demise; your orders are my orders; your prohibition is my prohibition; I swear to Allah who has bestowed upon me prophethood and made me His most distinguished servant that you are Allah's proof upon His creatures; you are the trustee of His secrets; Allah's vicegerent (caliph) upon His bondsman."

4. The most important and explicit tradition about this month is prophet's cursing for someone who did nothing for his own forgiveness while the entire Holy Month passed away. The Holy Prophet has said:

"May Allah never forgive someone who spent the entire Holy Month without being able to receive forgiveness."

Comments

As far as the Holy Prophet [s] himself is a source of mercy and favour for the people, and is blessing for the humanity, he will never curse a Muslim even if he happens to be a sinner. Therefore, it must be said that with this curse the Prophet desired to give the good tidings of Allah's blessing and abundance of His favours during this Holy Month.

5. The most important and hopeful traditions which have been narrated about this month – are plenty of narrations about chaining of devils, closing of Hell's doors, opening of Paradise gates and Allah's proclaimer announcing the open invitation for the people from the beginning till the end of month. Such special distinctions from the beginning till the end of month have not been mentioned for any other month. In other months only the last one third nights possess such special merits except Friday nights –

all of them possess merits, as well as the Holy Month of Rajab all of whose nights possess such merits.

6. Some other samples of hopeful narrations about this month are the narrations which indicate the special merit of this month is the acceptance of prayers by Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), as the Holy Qur'an says:

“Beseech Me so that I may grant your wishes.”

– Holy Qur'an (15:60).

After referring to some of the above-mentioned traditions, here it must be added that the points emphasized therein possess higher exalted distinctions, and those who are worthy and knowledgeable recognise these distinctions as well as know that Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), in this manner, has bestowed upon us what sort of great favours. From this aspect happy, pleased, and with joyful heart accept them, thank and praise Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), for His love and compassion, and thus in this manner get benefited from these things. But the negligent and the deniers in proportion to the degree of their negligence, denial, and thanklessness might be benefited a little or not at all.

Comment

It has been said that some people do not consider chaining of devils during this month as very effective. Maybe the acceptance of fastening of devils was difficult for them, or they did not appreciate its meanings correctly, even though the effect of fastening of devils during this month is quite explicit; the worshipping and obedience during this month become significantly effective, the good deeds become more, the number of sinful and evil deeds diminish, which all together indicates the result of fastening of devils.

And the one who knows the reality of Satan and his tactics and tricks upon human beings, should appreciate that this very abstinence from eating and drinking, especially if accompanied with abstinence from over-talking, prevents a fast observer's heart from Satanic influences, the point which has been emphasized in the following narration:

“Stop the path of Satanic influence upon your self through hunger.”

Yes! This tremendous increase in worship and good deeds of people during the Holy Month of Ramadhan in itself is an explicit and undeniable indication of fastening of devils. Of course, those who are knowledgeable know that this fastening of devils does not applies to fastening of all the devils. This point has also been explained in the traditions whereby the fastening of devils has been referred especially for the most rebellious devils.

A Few Reminders

We know that in this month Allah (the Glorious, the Exalted), has bestowed His blessing upon us, has invited us to His table of benevolence and compassion. Here I would like to add that in accordance of the decree of Sharia,³ wisdom, and common practice when the breeze of Allah's love and mercy blows, all are obliged that for the sake of achieving His nearness and consent, must accept it with thanks and pleasure and must present themselves as obedient servants, or at least in a decent manner with pleasing words, must respond to the Proclaimer of the Holy Month – the angel who invites people to divine feast and gives them glad tidings of Allah's blessing and forgiveness. And in this reply must indicate their thanks, appreciation, and indebtedness and should ask Allah's pardon for their negligence and omissions.

And it would be much better if they consider the Proclaimer Angel of the Month as the messenger from the Emperor, who has come before them to extend an invitation to the Emperor's feast, as well as to give them the glad-tidings that how much the Emperor likes and desires them, what sort of gifts, rewards, and precious robes he has stored for them, and even has called them for a private union with him so that they could become His friends, confidants and companions. Then they should think that if really such a royal herald would have brought royal invitation for them, wouldn't they had accepted it with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement? And in order to accomplish it, wouldn't they have sacrificed everything belonging to them?

Therefore, think about the Majesty, Splendour and Glory of the Lord, who is the King of all the kings, and must remember about all that love and favours towards us, in order to appreciate how to respond to His invitation. I have earlier explained⁴ in the etiquette of the Holy Month of Rajab as how to respond to the call of Lord's messenger. The same reply should be recited for the Holy Month of Ramadhan with some minor variation . And it would be better if this reply should be recited on the first night at the beginning of the Holy Month as well as should be recited at some other special timings.

Granting of servant's prayers and acceptance of their wishes is another breeze which breezes during this month, and it is up to us to be benefited and positioning our self across the blowing direction, by engaging in prayers and supplications as much as possible whether be prayers of our own or the prayer recited through the tongue of Sinless Imams of the Prophet's Holy Progeny – Ahlul-Bait [a], i.e., recital of prayers which have been reported as compiled by those noble ones.

Also it would be appropriate if we must ponder and take a penetrating, benevolent look regarding the Qur'anic verses which have been revealed in this context such as:

“My Lord wouldn't concern Himself with you but for your prayer.”

– Holy Qur'an (25:77).

“Pray unto Me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! Those who scorn My service, they, will enter Hell, disgraced.”

– Holy Qur'an (40:60).

“And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he crieth unto me. So let them hear my call and let them trust in me in order that they may be led aright.”

– Holy Qur'an (2: 186).

“Is not He (best) who answereth the wronged one when he crieth unto Him and removeth the evil.”

– Holy Qur'an (27:62).

“If only, when our disaster came on them, they had been humble!”

– Holy Qur'an (6:43).

“Ask Allah of His bounty. Lo! Allah is Ever Knower of all things.”

– Holy Qur'an (4:32).

1. Imam al-Ridha [a]: (148–765–203/817), the son of the seventh Imam, he lived in a period when the Abbasids were faced with increasing difficulties because of Shi'ite revolts. Finally the Caliph al-Ma'mun thought he would solve the problem by naming the Imam as his own successor, hoping thus to ensnare him in worldly affairs and turn the devotion of his followers away from him. After finally being able to persuade al-Ridha [a] to accept, al-Ma'mun realized his mistake, for Shi'ism began to spread even more rapidly. Finally he is said to have had the Imam poisoned. He is buried in Mashhad in Iran [Tr].

2. Ummah: The entire Islamic community without territorial or ethnic distinction [Tr].

3. Sharia: The all embracing law of Islam derived from the Qur'an, the normative practice and authoritative pronouncements of the Prophet [s], and a number of secondary sources [Tr].

4. The author is referring to etiquette of the Holy Month of Rajab in his original text, which has not been translated into English as yet [Tr]

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