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Lesson 2: Fasting

Effects and Blessings of Fasting

{يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ}

***O believers, prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you - haply you will be god-fearing* (*Al Baqarah 2:183*).**

"Taqwa" is with the meaning of holding yourself back from sin. Most sin originate from two sources; anger and desire, and fasting controls those two instincts and so reduces corruption and adds to "Taqwa".

God consciousness and the fear of God, or Taqwa, is the most important externally apparent and internally hidden result of fasting.

Fasting is the sole worship which can go unnoticed and hidden from others. Prayer, pilgrimage, Jihad (religious struggle), Islamic Tax (Zakat)1 and khums2 can all be seen by others, but fasting is not something that can be seen. Fasting strengthens the will of human beings.

Someone who for one month can refrain from bread and water and their spouse, can control themselves with respect to the property and chastity of others. Fasting is the cause of strengthening the feeling of kindness. Someone who for one month has tasted hunger and thirst, can feel the pain and understand the difficulty and struggle of hunger.

The Prophet (pbuh) stated that fasting is half of patience.

The fasting of the general population is that of the abstaining of bread, drink and spouse, however amongst the more noble, along with the abstinence of the items which break a fast, necessary is also the abstinence from sin, and the fast of those who are the noblest of the noble is not only abstinence of the

items which break a fast, abstinence from sin, but also emptying the heart from everything but Allah (swt). Fasting makes people like angels, angels that are far off from eating, drinking, and desires.

The Prophet' stated that anyone who fasts for the sake of Allah (swt), their entire sins will be forgiven. In the Holy Narration it is also stated that Allah (swt) stated

الصوم لي وأنا أجزي به

Fasting is for Me and I will reward for it.3

The importance of fasting is so much so that many of the rewards of worship in narrations are equated to the reward of observing fast. Although fasting was also prescribed for many nations before, the fasting of the Month of Ramadhan was specific to Prophets, and only became obligatory upon all with the Nation of Islam.

It has been narrated from the Prophet that he stated that for everything there is an Islamic Tax (Zakat), and the Islamic Tax (Zakat) of the body is fasting.4

Etiquette And Conditions Of Observing Fast

{أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىَ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَ عَلَىَ الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ}
{فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْراً فَهُوَ خَيرٌ لَّهُ وَ أَن تَصُومُواْ خَيرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ}

for days numbered; and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days; and for those who are able to fast, a redemption by feeding a poor man. Yet better it is for him who volunteers good, and that you should fast is better for you, if you but know. (***Al Baqarah 2:184***)

Islam has a suitable law for every person and under every condition. In this Ayah, the law for those who are travelling, or are ill, and are able bodied have been clarified. If under certain conditions one is unable to fast, they must compensate for that fast on another occasion so that they may enjoy the benefits of fasting.

Surrendering to the Divine Laws has its merit. If the rule of observing fast is given, a fast must be observed and if the command is to break the fast, the fast must be broken. In Tafsir Majma' Al Bayan ((مجمع البيان في تفسير القرآن it has been narrated that a group of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) maintained their fast while travelling and did not desire to break it. The Prophet identified them as sinners. Imam Sadiq(pbuh) stated that if someone observes a fast during travel, I will not be praying upon his body the prayer of the deceased5.

In any case, if the traveler or the sick observes a fast it is considered void and it must be compensated for later.6

Imam Sadi(pbuh) stated even if the mother is concerned about her breastmilk for her child, she must break her fast and this is a symbol of the kindness of Allah7.

Breaking The Fast

The Prophet' stated that anyone who provides for others food or water to breakfast (after fasting) purchased with halal income, will have praise sent for them every hour by angels and on the Night of Power by Archangel Jibrael.8

Breaking the fast is one form of worship provided it is with purity and intention is solely for nearness to Allah.

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ

We feed you only for the Face (***sake***) ***of God.*** (***Al Insan 76:9***)

Providing breakfast to believers according to Imam Sadiq(pbuh) is like the Night Prayer which is a cause of salvation and prosperity.

المنجيات إطعام الطعام

Providing breakfast is a kind of honour and instilling happiness to believers.

Providing breakfast is a cause for softening of the heart, maintaining familial relations, cause for the removal of grudges and hypocrisy.

Providing breakfast is a source of forgiveness for oneself and family, and source of benefit and goodness to parents.

Providing breakfast is a vehicle for invitation and showing the right path and guidance.

The aim of providing breakfast must not be showing off.

The invitation to breakfast must not be only for the rich and those with status and position.

The dining table must not be one of crime or sin or despise and backbiting or provocation.

It must not be disrespectful and without manners and the guests not be greeted with contempt.

It must not be so decorated and beautified, vying with each other and competing with each other, and be conducted with jealousy.

It must not be accompanied with illogical remarks and harassment of the spouse and family and others.

It is narrated that the reward of one who provides breakfast to those who have observed the fast is like the reward of the have observed the fast.

1. Islamic Tax
2. Religiously compulsory charity on earnings in excess of one's necessary expenditure.
3. (Tafsir Maraghi – تفسير المراغي)
4. (Bihar Al Anwar بحار الأنوار) V60 P380
5. Similar to requiem prayer.
6. (Tafs r N r al-Thaqalayn – تفسير نور الثقلين)
7. (Al Burhan – البرهان فى تفسير القرآن)
8. (Kanz Ul Amal – كنز العمال) V8 P459

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