

كَيْفَ نَسْتَقْبِلُ شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ؟

Shaykh Abu Abdillah Lazhar Seniqra

HOW DO WE RECEIVE THE MONTH OF RAMADAN?¹

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Truly, all praise is for Allah. We seek His aid, forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance. We seek refuge with Him from the evils of our own selves and from the evils of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide, and whomsoever Allah misguides there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is no god in truth except for Allah, alone, free of any partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His slave and Messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ١٠٢

**O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as
Muslims [in submission to Him].**

[Al 'Imrān 102]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ
مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَاللَّارْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ

عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ۝١

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate

¹ Translated by Abu Ameenah, AbdurRahmaan Bennett.

and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.

[An Nisā 1]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۗ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ۗ

O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment.

[Al Ahzāb 71]

For truly the very best of speech is the Speech of Allah, and the very best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The worst of affairs are the newly introduced ones, for every newly introduced matter is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance and every misguidance is in the Fire.

There are only a few days until we receive a noble month. It is the noblest and greatest of all months in the sight of Allah. It was the month that the honourable Salaf of this Ummah used to aspire for. For each one of them would hope to meet this month in order to profit from its favours and tremendous blessings. Their aspirations and supplications were for Allah to allow them to reach this auspicious month because they were well acquainted with its tremendous blessings and wonderful rewards which Allah has deposited in its nights and its days.

It is the month that Allah has singled out for worship through fasting and the month wherein the Qur'an was revealed – rather it is the month of the Qur'an. The Prophet (ﷺ) made a correlation between fasting and the Qur'an when he said,

الصِّيَامُ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَشْفَعَانِ لِلْعَبْدِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَقُولُ الصِّيَامُ: أَيْ رَبِّ مَنَعْتُهُ الطَّعَامَ وَالشَّهَوَاتِ بِالنَّهَارِ فَشَفِّعْنِي فِيهِ . وَيَقُولُ الْقُرْآنُ: مَنَعْتُهُ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ فَشَفِّعْنِي فِيهِ . قَالَ: فَيُشَفِّعَانِ

Fasting and the Qur'an will intercede for a slave of the Day of Resurrection. Fasting will say, "O My Lord, I deprived him of food and [indulging in] desires during the day so let me intercede on his behalf for him." The Qur'an will say, "I deprived him of sleep during the night so let me intercede on his behalf for him."²

This is the blessed month that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to bring the good news of its arrival to his Companions. He (ﷺ) used to say,

أَتَاكُمْ رَمَضَانُ شَهْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ صِيَامَهُ تَفْتَحُ فِيهِ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَتُغْلَقُ فِيهِ أَبْوَابُ
الْجَحِيمِ وَتُغْلَى فِيهِ مَرَدَّةُ الشَّيَاطِينِ لِلَّهِ فِيهِ لَيْلَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ مَنْ حُرِمَ خَيْرَهَا فَقَدْ حُرِمَ

The blessed month of Ramadan has come to you. Allah has made it compulsory for you to fast [during its month]. During it, the gates of the heavens are opened and the gates of Jaheem are locked and the rebellious devils towards Allah are feted in chains. During it, there is a night better than a thousand years. Whoever is deprived of its goodness has truly been deprived.³

Allah states,

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

The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion.

[Al Baqarah185]

In anticipation of this blessed month, we should make the necessary preparations that are worthy of this tremendous and virtuous month. Just as those who indulge in the dunya—the people of sin and avarice, the artists and their like—prepare themselves by involving themselves in vices that divert from the path of Allah, such as licentious music, and morally deprived films and all other blameworthy acts which are from the greatest causes for Allah punishing a people.

It is incumbent upon such people—if they truly believe in Allah and the last Day, if they are truly

² Graded as *Sabeeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Sabeeh al-Jāmi* (7329).

³ Graded as *Hasan* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Sabeeh an-Nasā'i* (1992).

recognise the Symbols of Allah and revere them as they should be revered, as stated by Allah Himself:

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ شَعْبِيرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ۝۳۲

And whosoever honours the Symbols of Allah, then it is truly from the piety of the heart

—to renounce these blameworthy and deplorable acts on the occasion of this blessed month. For Ramadan is a reason for repentance and atonement from sin and transgression. From the virtues of this month is that it is the month of repentance and atonement—the month of finding one’s way back to Allah. And alas, it could be one’s last opportunity to do so; an opportunity perhaps that will not be repeated for many of us. How many were hoping to witness this month with us but fate had it that they would die and now they are buried under the layers of earth. We would have liked to see them fasting and praying with us during this month, but the Omnipotent King decreed their departure from this dunya and from their people. So congratulations to us for reaching this blessed month, provided that we survive it. And congratulations to those who departed from this world in a state of faith and fear of their Lord, the Munificent. As for those who died in a state other than this then we ask Allah to forgive and pardon them.

Let us return our focus to ourselves: What means will we adopt in preparation for this blessed month? We will adopt the example of the indecent, the sinners and the disobedient? Or will we adopt the example of our Salaf (predecessors) who gave tremendous importance to these days? Even the days of Rajab and Sha’bān prior to the month of Ramadan were extremely important to them. Their priorities and chief concerns during this month are highlighted in the following points:

POINT ONE

Showing gratitude to Allah for His blessings and favours. This is because reaching this month is from the blessings bestowed upon the people of Taqwa and faith, and so they accept all of Allah’s blessings with gratitude and thanks. May Allah have mercy upon the Salaf (the predecessors) of this Ummah, since they said, **“Take note of Allah’s blessings by thanking Him.”** In other words, be mindful of these blessings by thanking Him. So how will you show your appreciation to Allah, O slave of Allah? Will you show it by partying the night away or by sitting in front of the television screen? Or by spending your God-given hours in idle talk, playing and wasting your time? Or will you show your appreciation in the same way the Prophet (ﷺ) and his honoured

Companions showed theirs? Showing gratitude to Allah can only be achieved through obeying Him. This in fact is a part of the complete realisation of what He wants for His slaves, namely to repent to Him and to seek His forgiveness and to faithfully observe His injunctions.

SECOND POINT

The Salaf used to spend these days and nights in obedience to Allah. They never used to grow weary of remembering Allah, and a copy of the Qur'an would always be found in their hands. They remained completely and utterly devoted to the Book of Allah, so much so that our scholars used to suspend their lessons and circles despite the fact that teaching the people is from the greatest of good deeds with Allah. They did this to free themselves during the month of the Qur'an to devote themselves to reciting the Qur'an.

THIRD POINT

Given that the sins of a person do not let him be until he becomes troubled, his heart hardens, his anxiety grows and his grief worsens. And so he wishes that he would die, hoping to escape from the restraints and the torment of this dunya, but just imagine the torment in the hereafter! Sins put an end to blessings and bring about indignation. They blacken the faces and darken the hearts. They deprive the body of strength and reduce a person's sustenance. Allah states,

قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ٥٣

Say: O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the

Forgiving the Merciful.

[Az Zumar53]

And He states,

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ٢٧

And Allah desires that He should turn to you (mercifully), and those who follow (their) lusts desire that you should deviate (with) a great deviation.

[An Nisa"27]

Allah wants us to repent to Him. He states,

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غُفُورًا رَحِيمًا ۝

And whoever does evil or acts unjustly to his soul, then asks forgiveness of Allah, he shall find Allah Forgiving, Merciful.

[An Nisa"110]

Listen to Allah's statement that has been reported in a hadith Qudsi:

إِنَّكَ مَا دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي

O Son of Adam, as long as you invoke Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind.⁴

So turn to Allah and draw close to Him and be truthful in your devotion to Him, for Allah will fulfil His promise to forgive you for your sins and pardon you for your evil deeds and raise you in rank. This is our window of opportunity to correct our ways during these blessed days, days which Allah described as

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ

For a certain number of days...

These are the counted days and how quickly they go! We will usher in this month and then before we know it we will be bidding it farewell! By Allah, these are but a few days. He who prospers during them will succeed and he who suffers during them will fail. On the authority of Abu Hurairah who said that the Prophet (ﷺ) ascended the pulpit and said,

أَمِينَ . أَمِينَ . أَمِينَ . فَلَمَّا نَزَلَ قِيلَ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ حِينَ صَعِدْتَ الْمِنْبَرَ قُلْتَ : أَمِينَ . أَمِينَ . أَمِينَ . قَالَ

⁴ Graded as *Sabeeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *as-Sabeehab* (127).

إِنَّ جِبْرِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ أَتَانِي فَقَالَ : مَنْ أَدْرَكَ شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ فَلَمْ يُغْفَرْ لَهُ فَمَاتَ فَدَخَلَ النَّارَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ قُلُ :
: آمِينَ . فَقُلْتُ : آمِينَ . قَالَ : وَمَنْ أَدْرَكَ أَبَوَيْهِ أَوْ أَحَدَهُمَا فَلَمْ يَبْرَهُمَا فَمَاتَ فَدَخَلَ النَّارَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ قُلُ :
: آمِينَ . فَقُلْتُ : آمِينَ . قَالَ : وَمَنْ ذُكِرَتْ عِنْدَهُ فَلَمْ يُصَلِّ عَلَيْكَ فَمَاتَ فَدَخَلَ النَّارَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ . قُلُ : آمِينَ .
فَقُلْتُ : آمِينَ

“Ameen, ameen, ameen.” When he descended, it was said, ‘O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), you ascended the *minbar* and said, ‘Ameen, ameen, ameen.’ He said: “Jibreel came to me and said: ‘If Ramadan comes and a person is not forgiven, he will enter the Fire and Allah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.’ So I said Ameen. He said, ‘O Muhammad (ﷺ), if both or one of a person’s parents are alive and he does not honour them and he dies, he will enter the Fire and Allah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.’ So I said Ameen. He said, ‘If you are mentioned in a person’s presence and he does not send salutations upon you and he dies, he will enter the Fire and Allah will cast him far away. Say Ameen.’ So I said Ameen.”⁵

Ibn Mas’ood used to say on the last night of Ramadan, “Which of us have been accepted? Should we not congratulate him? Which us of have been deprived and excluded [from the blessings of Ramadan]? Should we not offer our condolences to him? O you who has been accepted, congratulations! O you who has been deprived, may Allah help you to recover from your affliction!”⁶

This outcast and miserable person entered this blessed month and then left it without being absolved for his sins. I ask Allah to forgive us our sins, wash away our transgressions and to accept our repentance.

FOURTH POINT

In our preparations for worship during this noble month, which Allah has sanctioned as a pillar from the pillars of our religion, we should take time out to learn and understand its obligations, duties, etiquettes, sunnahs based upon the Prophet’s (ﷺ) guidance. This type of preparation and enquiry proves the veracity of a person’s intention and that he truly wants Allah to accept his righteous deeds. It also proves that he is being true to Allah by only seeking His pleasure—eager

⁵ Graded as *Saheeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Saheeh al-Jāmi’i* (75).

⁶ From al-Marwazi’s *Mukhtasir Qiyaam al-Layl* (214).

to be elevated in the sight of Allah. For he knows well that Allah is worshipped [correctly] only by what He has legislated. This is *fiqh* [comprehension] of the religion which is incumbent upon all Muslims to learn, as per the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim⁷

FIFTH POINT

There are also things that we must keep in mind during these days in our preparations for this noble month, namely strong resolve and high ambition. These things will benefit us immensely even if the month of Ramadan were never reached us! For if we take the time to prepare ourselves with such good intentions, strong resolve and high ambition then Allah will never deprive the good doers of their rewards:

فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ

Then if they remain true to Allah it would certainly be better for them.

[Muhammad 21]

Indeed Allah will grant us this month's fasting and praying for the simple fact of having the resolve to do so. For truly Allah knows everything about us and so He will reward us for our aims and good intentions as a grace and favour from Him. For this reason, the Salaf of this Ummah used to prepare for this month just as they used to prepare for Jihād, perhaps even more so. They did so because they knew full well of its merits and virtues and were certain of its abundant blessings.

SIXTH POINT

Among the stations we must stop at in our preparations to dedicate ourselves to this month is at the station of devoting ourselves to the Book of Allah by reciting it throughout the day and at the end parts of the night and by gathering with the believers in the masjids to perform the *at-Tarāweeh* behind our Imams. For indeed,

⁷ Graded as *Sabeeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Sabeeh at-Targheeb* (72).

مَنْ قَامَ مَعَ الْإِمَامِ حَتَّى يَنْصَرِفَ كُتِبَ لَهُ قِيَامُ لَيْلَةٍ

Whoever stands (praying) with the Imam until he finished, then it is recorded for him that he prayed the whole night.⁸

Thus, whoever carries out the Sunnah of the beloved Chosen One (ﷺ) by praying eleven units of prayer behind the Imam then he is in harmony with the Sunnah and his reward will be enormous, unlike the reward of those who fail to complete the whole prayer behind their Imams.

SEVENTH POINT

Among the recommendations that we should recommend to each other in anticipation of this month is the remembrance of Allah. Reciting the Qur'an is from the greatest forms of remembrance but reciting the Qur'an is just one way of remembering Allah. There is also great benefit in occupying our time in the remembrance of our Lord by saying the prophetic remembrances that our Prophet (ﷺ) taught to his Companions. The Prophet (ﷺ) began this month with the remembrance of Allah and ended the month with remembrance. When he (ﷺ) saw the new moon, he (ﷺ) would say,

اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلِلْهُ عَلَيْنَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَالسَّلَامَةِ وَالْإِسْلَامِ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكَ اللَّهُ

O Allah, bring it over us with blessing and faith, and security and Islam. My Lord and your Lord is Allah.⁹

He (ﷺ) also commanded our mother, Aa'isha by saying to her,

يَا عَائِشَةُ اسْتَعِيذِي بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّ هَذَا فَإِنَّ هَذَا الْعَاسِقُ إِذَا وَقَبَ

O Aa'isha, seek refuge with Allah from the evil of this. For indeed this is from the evil of the darkening (night) as it comes with its darkness.¹⁰

He (ﷺ) also used to say when he wanted to break his fast,

⁸ Jāmi` at-Tirmidhi (806)

⁹ Graded as *Saheeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *as-Saheehah* (1816).

¹⁰ Graded as *Saheeh* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *as-Saheehah* (376).

ذَهَبَ الظَّمْأُ وَأَبْتَلَّتِ العُرُوقُ وَثَبَّتِ الأَجْرُ إِن شَاءَ اللهُ

Thirst has gone, the arteries are moist and the reward is sure if Allah wills.¹¹

Ibn ‘Umar used to say when opening his fast,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ الَّتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَنْ تَغْفِرَ لِي

O Allah, I ask You by virtue of Your mercy which encompasses all things to forgive me.¹²

So the Salaf use to combine between the remembrance of Allah, repenting to Him for their sins and seeking forgiveness.

Therefore, prepare yourselves for this enormous good [that is coming your way]. Prepare yourselves for this blessed season. Make it [like] the last Ramadan you will ever live, and dedicate yourselves to Allah with honest hearts and sincere intentions. And approach Allah as does the weak one approaches the Strong, Rich and Most High One. Approach Allah as if you are a sinner, as one who has been neglectful of the Oft-Forgiving, the Merciful, Who pardons sins and is Most Generous.

O Allah, we ask you to make us reach this blessed month; to facilitate for us every good during it and to accept from us the good we do throughout it.

¹¹ Graded as *Hasan* by Shaykh al-Albāni in *al-Irwāh* (921).

¹² Ibn Mājah (1753).