

Ramadan: An Introduction

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, and it is a time for Muslims to submit themselves further to Almighty Allah by way of fasting & worship. It is the most holiest month in Islam, and its Arabic name 'Ramadan' literally means heat & dryness.

Fasting in this month was first prescribed in the 2nd year of Hijri:

“O Believers! Fasting have been made obligatory upon you as it was made obligatory upon those before you, so that you may become pious.”

[Holy Qur'an: Surah Baqara, verse 183]

“...That whoso of you find this month, necessarily, he should fast in it...”

[Holy Qur'an: Surah Baqara, verse 185]

Ramadan is also referred to as the month of the Holy Qur'an, as it was the month in which the Holy Book was first revealed to Sayyidina Rasulallah :

“...The month of Ramadan in which Qur'an was sent down...”

[Holy Qur'an: Surah Baqara, verse 185]

“Undoubtedly, We sent it down on the Blessed and Valuable Night.”

[Holy Qur'an: Surah Al-Qadr, verse 1]

The above verse refers to the night of Laylatul-Qadr, which falls on one of the odd dates of the last ten days of Ramadan. Many scholars agree that this night was possibly on the 27th Ramadan but all other odd dates in the last ten days are also accepted as Laylatul-Qadr.

Narrated Sayyida Aisha that Sayyidina Rasulallah used to practice Itikaf in the last ten nights of Ramadan and used to say, "Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan."

[Sahih Muslim: Book 32, Hadith no. 237]

Ramadan is ultimately a time for reflection, strengthening community ties & bringing together families. At this time of the year, the Masjids are full and people from all walks of life gather together to share the blessing this month brings.

Hazrat Abu Hurairah reports that Sayyidina Rasulallah said:

"Fasting is a shield (or a screen/shelter). So the person observing fasting should avoid sexual relation with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, 'I am fasting.' The Prophet added, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person), 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times."

[Sahih Muslim: Book 31, Hadith no. 118]

The above Hadith highlights not only the requirements of fasting but also the reward which Almighty Allah gives to the one who fasts in His Way.

It mentions that “the smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk”. This is usually interpreted as Allah loves his fasting servant so much that the smell of his breath is sweeter to Almighty Allah than the scent of musk.

It is also interpreted in two other ways. The 2nd interpretation is that Allah will reward the fasting servant with breath smelling of musk and the 3rd interpretation is that Allah will cause the fasting servant to rise on the Day of Judgement with breath smelling of musk.

Hazrat Abu Hurairah reports that Sayyidina Rasulallah said:

“When there comes the month of Ramadan, the gates of Mercy are opened, and the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained.”

[Sahih Muslim: Book 31, Hadith no. 118]

The Hadith above points out the other favours bestowed upon us by our Lord in the month of Ramadan.

“The gates of Mercy are opened...” implies that those seeking mercy & forgiveness in this month are blessed with the opportunity of praying for it when the gates are open & forgiveness is given to those in search of it.

“...the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained” implies that the devil (Shaitan) is locked up along with his evil ways in this blessed month. Some scholars believe the major devils are chained, others believe that all the devils are chained.

However, a point which is often raised is that if the devils are chained up, why is evil still committed in this holy month?

This is easily explained; those who have acquired the characteristics & ways of the devil, by living a life of wrongdoing, will not be chained themselves and so they will be able to act as they please, without remorse or conscience. The devils may be locked up but there is still evil on earth during this month, due to certain peoples' personalities & character.

In this month we should all take the sincere effort to better ourselves & improve our characters, not just for Ramadan but for the entire year and for all the years after that. It is the perfect opportunity to turn a new leaf, change our ways and strive towards a better life & future.

May Almighty Allah grant us all the ability to improve ourselves according to the teachings of our Beloved Prophet & may He guide us all. Ameen.