

Ramadan: The Month of Love

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Al hamdulillaahi rabbil `aalameen was salaatu was salaamu `ala ashrifil anbiyaa'i wa al mursaleen nabeeyina Mohammad wa `ala aalihi wa sahbihee ajma'een.

Amma Ba'ad:

To many of you reading this, the title may seem absurd, and may have even caught you off-guard, as love generally is not associated with the month of worship and blessing. Yet, if we were to contemplate the actions that we partake during this blessed month we would see that the vast majority of them revolve around love, we are often people that just fail to reflect.

The first thing that is needed to actually conceptualise where I am coming from would be to understand what love really is, or at the very least how it is being defined in this treatise. We all know that love has many manifestations, degrees, and types.¹ The way a child loves his or her parents is not the same as the way a woman may love her husband, and likewise, the way a person may love chocolate, per se, is not the same way a person would love his or her Lord (or at least we hope not).

However in all of these types of love there is a common and key theme, that of sacrifice and fulfilment. The more we love something, the more we are willing to sacrifice for it, and the more we will strive to fulfil the every command and wish of our beloved. This should not be misunderstood as sacrifice and fulfilment being the only components of love, but rather they are from amongst the essential components that make up love, along with longing and cherishing. And this is why we should see that love, along with hope and fear, is a pillar of our worship.²

Our worship will not be complete or acceptable until it encompasses the right amounts of love, hope, and fear. After having comprehended this, we can see how shirk³ can be performed even in love,^{4 5} yet most of mankind knows not.

If we were to take just a moment to reflect what Islaam means linguistically (let alone conventionally), we would see that submission (the true linguistic definition of Islaam, and not peace contrary to common belief), entails a common theme with love and that being sacrifice. When we truly submit to Allaah we are willing to sacrifice anything and everything for Him. This can be seen in one of the most fundamental mottos of a Muslim:

"Say: Indeed my prayer, and my sacrifice, and my living, and my dying are for none other than Allaah, Lord of all that exists." [Al-An'aam (6):162]

So when one goes about sacrificing and fulfilling the wants of other than Allaah, just as much or, more than what he does for Allaah then such an individual has fallen into shirk. And if one fails to meet the necessary sacrifices and falls short

¹ Refer to the respective chapters in Ibn Hazm's Al-Akhlaaq was-Siyar and Tawq al-Hamaamah

² Refer to the respective chapters in Ibn al-Qayyim's Madaarij us-Saalikeen

³ Directing an action, statement, or emotion, that should be specific to Allaah to other than Allaah

⁴ Refer to the respective chapters in Suleymaan 'Abdullah's Tayseer ul-'Azeez il-Hameed

⁵ One need go no further than Browning's famous poem: "How do I love thee, let me count the ways."

in fulfilling the required obligations then such an individual has fallen into disbelief. It is in light of these words that we understand the verse:

“From mankind are those people who have taken andaadan (deities) other than Allaah, they love them as they love Allaah, and those who have Eemaan (i.e. are Muslims) are stronger in their love for Allaah.”
[Al-Baqarah (2):165]

We are now beginning to get a clearer picture of how love is associated with this blessed month. It is a woman's love for her child and husband that will make her wake up in the late hours of the night to prepare a nice meal for suhoor (the pre-dawn meal). It is a man's love for his community that will drive him to take time off of work to ensure his fellow Muslims have sufficient food for iftaar (the meal at sunset). And it is our love for Allaah, as Muslims, which drives us to sacrifice the two pinnacles of desire,⁶ food and marital relations, for no other reason than the pleasure of our very Creator.

Our love for Allaah (glorified and praised is He) does not stop here but, rather, merely just begins. One of the key pillars of loving Allaah lies in following the Prophet Muhammad (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam),⁷ and an exemplary role model he is, as can be seen by Allaah's statement:

“Say (O Mohammad to the people): ‘If you really love Allaah, then follow me. And He (Allaah) in return will love you, and will forgive you for you sins, and indeed Allaah is oft-forgiving and most merciful.’ Say: ‘Obey Allaah and the Messenger’, and if they turn away, then verily Allaah does not love the disbelievers.” [Aal-Imraan (3):31-32]

So what are some of the traditions that we have been left with to follow?

Waking up to have suhoor, even if it is something little:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: “Eat suhoor for in suhoor there is blessing.”⁸

Not delaying the iftaar:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: “The people will remain upon goodness as long as they hasten in breaking their fasts.”⁹

Supplicating throughout the day and night, especially during iftaar time:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: “Three prayers are not rejected: the prayer of a father, the prayer of a fasting person, and the prayer of a traveller.”¹⁰

⁶ Refer to the respective chapters in Abu Haamid al-Ghazzaali's Ihyaa `Uloom id-Deen

⁷ The phrase “sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam” is commonly mistranslated as: “May Allaah's peace and blessings be upon him”, where as the terms Salaah and salaam are more encompassing in meaning than can possibly be translated, thus it is preferred to leave it in its original Arabic. Refer to Ibn al-Qayyim's Jalaa ul-Afhaam for further details

⁸ Narrated by Bukhaaree & Muslim

⁹ Narrated by Bukhaaree & Muslim

¹⁰ Narrated by al-Bayhaqi (3/345) and classified as Saheeh in Silsilat ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (#1797)

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Indeed there is for the fasting person, when he breaks his fast, a supplication which is not rejected."¹¹

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) used to say upon breaking his fast: "**Dhahaba al-`dhamaa' wa abtallat al-`urooq wa thabata al-ajr in sha Allaah.**"¹² (The thirst is gone, the veins have been moistened and the reward is assured, if Allaah wills).

'Aa'ishah (May Allaah be pleased with her) reported that Allaah's messenger (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) instructed her to say:

"Allaahumma innaka `affoowun tuhibbul `afwa fa'foo `annee."¹³ (O Allaah indeed you are one that pardons, and you love to pardon, so pardon me).

Spending the nights in prayer, as well as encouraging the family to do so:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever stands in prayer with the Imaam until its conclusion, will be like the one who prayed the whole night."¹⁴

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allaah's rewards, all his past sins will be forgiven."¹⁵

'Aa'ishah (May Allaah be pleased with her) narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) used to spend the whole night in prayer, and used to awake his family to do so as well.¹⁶

Being generous and feeding the people iftaar:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Whoever gives iftaar to one who is fasting will have a reward like his, without detracting from the reward of the person fasting."¹⁷

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) has been described as: "Being the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous during Ramadan."¹⁸

Staying away from all immoral acts, especially those of the tongue:

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Fasting is not abstaining from eating and drinking alone, but it is also abstaining from vain speech and foul language. If one of you is being cursed or annoyed, he should say: 'I am fasting, I am fasting.'"¹⁹

¹¹ Narrated by Ibn Maajah & al-Haakim

¹² Narrated by Aboo Daawood, al-Bayhaqi and classified as hasan in Irwaa ul-Ghaleel (4/39)

¹³ Narrated by Ahmed, Tirmidhee & Ibn Maajah

¹⁴ Narrated by Tirmidhee (who graded it as Saheeh), Aboo Daawood, Nasaa'ee & Ibn Maajah

¹⁵ Narrated by Bukhaaree

¹⁶ Narrated by Bukhaaree & Muslim

¹⁷ Narrated by Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah & Ibn Hibbaan

¹⁸ Narrated by Bukhaaree & Muslim

¹⁹ Narrated with this wording by Ibn Khuzaymah, Ibn Hibbaan, and al-Haakim. The key portion of the hadeeth can also be found in Bukhaaree & Muslim

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Allaah does not need the fast of the one who does not abandon falsehood in speech or in action."²⁰

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast except hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his prayer except tiredness."²¹

Performing `Umrah (the minor pilgrimage):

The Messenger of Allaah (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "Perform `Umrah when Ramadan comes, for `Umrah in Ramadan is equal to Hajj (in reward)."²²

Like all things in life, this treatise has come to an end. But prior to concluding it is only befitting that we be reminded of a plague that lies in the hearts and minds of many Muslims today. And that is one of affirming words but not affirming their respective meanings.²³ How often do we hear Muslims cry and shout of their love of Allaah, yet it is a love that has no meaning as their actions show likewise. This is something that Allaah (glorified and praised is He) warns us of Himself when He says:

"O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? Most hateful to Allaah is that you should say that which you do not do."

[As-Saff (61):2-3]

As Muslims we are to be people whose actions speak louder than their words. If we truly love Allaah then we need to show it with our actions. As everyone claims love but very few go about proving it.

Lastly, it is not hidden from anyone that indeed Ramadan is a month of blessings. In it everything is blessed from, our food to our actions. It is in this very month that we should plant the seeds for goodness that we hope will last us throughout the year. It was the Prophet (Sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) who said:

"The best of deeds are the most consistent of them."²⁴

So we should always be looking for self-improvement, and enrichment, and not just in Ramadan. At the end of the day we have enough "Ramadan Muslims", now we are in need of Muslims who live in Ramadan all year long.

Wallaahu ta'aalaa 'alam.

With all the best wishes of a blessed, beneficial, benevolent, and fruitful Ramadan,

Your Brother

By Abu 'Abdir-Rahman Navaid Aziz
Al-Madeenah an-Nabaweeyah
The 1st of Ramadan, 1426

²⁰ Narrated by Bukhaaree

²¹ Narrated by Nasaa'ee, Ibn Maajah & al-Haakim

²² Narrated by Bukhaaree

²³ Refer to Ahmed al-Qaadhi's Madhabu Ahli-Tafweedh

²⁴ Narrated by Tirmidhee