

The Challenge after Ramadhān

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With the ending of the blessed month of Ramadhān, we will be in the month of Shawwāl. Allāh ta'ālā has granted certain times and places special barakah (blessing); and every Muslim, when in these times or places, will feel this barakah manifesting itself. This in turn will lead to him finding fulfilling all the necessary actions and refraining from sins very easy. Ramadhān, the day of Jumu'ah (Friday), Makkah and Al-Madīnah are all examples of this.

Take the example of Ramadhān in which we eagerly read twenty raka'āt of Tarāwīh, whereas out of Ramadhān we find even reading the sunan of 'Ishā salāh and Witr thereafter a burden. Reading only two raka'āt nafl with the intention of tahajjud seems a long way away and very difficult despite the great reward promised for this.

Similar is the effect when in blessed places. Whilst visiting the Haramayn, we are invigorated, resulting in us going for salāh in the Haram well before its time. Also, we find the elderly gain strength to do those acts of devotions which they would find difficult otherwise owing to their old age. I remember how once I was fortunate to accompany my mother for 'umrah. Owing to her old age, I encouraged her by saying to her that she only needs to perform tawāf walking; after that, we will push her for the seven circuits of sa'ī in a wheelchair. When we reached the place of sa'ī, she refused the wheelchair and walked the entire way, staying up with the group. I am sure that back home she would not have been able to walk so much! This was due to the blessings of Ramadhān and of being in the Haram.

So, in Ramadhān, it was due to the great blessings that Allāh ta'ālā showered upon us that we were able to devote ourselves in His worship. Allāh ta'ālā facilitated this for us, as the Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam says,

“*When Ramadhān comes, the gates of Jannah are open, the doors of Jahannam are closed, and the Shayātīn are imprisoned.*” (Al-Bukhārī)

Also, angels are appointed by Allāh ta'ālā who call out,

"O seeker of khayr (goodness)! Move forward. O seeker of evil! Stop." (At-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)

All of this results in good deeds becoming easier for us.

However, with the passing of these blessed days and with an absence of blessed places, we should not expect this same energy and vigour to be there now; however, this does not mean that we should wait for eleven months before devoting ourselves once again to Allāh ta'ālā. Rather, Allāh ta'ālā grants us the blessings of Ramadhān to encourage us towards His obedience so that we can continue with it during the year. This can be understood from the analogy of young children who are going to nursery for the first time. Their parents will encourage them with all sorts of incentives: sweets, chocolates, etc. Then once they get into a routine there is no need for such incentives. Similarly, Allāh ta'ālā encourages us during Ramadhān to come into the routine of His obedience offering us mercy, barakah, forgiveness, etc. in abundance. We, alhamdulillah, get into the habit of salāh, dhikr, recitation of the Qur'ān, abstinence from sins, etc. during the blessed month which then should continue throughout the year and the remainder of our lives.

This is the challenge after Ramadhān that, with Shaytān and nafs on our backs, we continue in a similar pattern till the following Ramadhān. The month of Ramadhān is granted to us by Allāh ta'ālā to become God-conscious and remain throughout the year, and for the rest of our lives until we breathe our last.

"O you who believe! The fasts have been enjoined upon you as they were enjoined upon those before you, so that you may become God-conscious. (2:183)

Remember my dear brothers and sisters! We valued Ramadhān knowing that it was very blessed, but so is every second of our lives; hence, they too need to be spent in fruitful actions. Ramadhān was only blessed for us because we spent it in good ways. If we had not spent it correctly, then it would not have been blessed for us. Similar is the case with spending time in the Haramayn. If spent with negligence, there will be no blessings for us. Any moment of the year spent getting closer to Allāh ta'ālā is blessed, no matter what month it may be and where it may be.

Therefore, with the passing of Ramadhān we should not relax and become lax, for this effort needs to continue till our last breath. Shaytān has vowed to continue his efforts to mislead us till the last breath. The great Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal rahimahullāh was in the throes of death when he could be heard saying, "Not yet, not yet!" His son was alarmed that his father did not want to die; having spent his entire life giving the message that death is a gift for a believer, as it is the bridge that joins him to his beloved – Allāh ta'ālā. When his father regained consciousness and was asked why he was saying what he was, he said that Shaytān

appeared before him telling him that he has escaped his clutches to which he replied, "Not yet, not yet!" (Siyaru-A'lām-An-Nubalā)

This struggle against our unlawful desires and Shaytān needs to continue. We need to always stay alert and aware of the Commands of Allāh ta'ālā as well the deceits of Shaytān and our base desires. If we make an earnest effort, then Allāh ta'ālā will definitely assist us:

“ *As for those who strive in Our way, We will certainly guide them onto Our paths, and indeed Allāh is with those who are good in deeds. (29:69)*

Keeping this in mind and acting accordingly will inshā'allāh ensure that just as we strove to make our Ramadhān memorable, our lives will become memorable too.

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