

# FRIDAY SERMON OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2007

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أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ  
خَيْرٌ لِلَّهِ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْقُرْآنُ قَدْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ  
عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِيُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِيُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَشْكُرُونَ

The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation — the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.

The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful. (Al Quran 2:185-186)

In the last sermon, it was mentioned that Allah the Exalted has made fasting obligatory which is a rigorous endeavor and it is only through such endeavor that one develops in *Taqwa* (fear of God's displeasure) and attains nearness to Allah the Exalted. Allah the Exalted has described its detail in the next verse that I also recited. These few days have been reserved for your training and to make you a striver to obtain the real objective of life, i.e. to become a true servant of Allah the Exalted. Though fasting which is a rigorous endeavor has been prescribed for every Muslim, but Allah the Exalted does not impose unjust hardship upon His servants. Sometimes hardship is needed, but fasting is not an unjust hardship as it is the best means to attain *Taqwa*. However, fasting is prescribed only for those who possess the strength to observe it. For those who are unable to keep fast due to some unforeseen circumstances, an urgent travel, or a sickness that makes fasting harder, Allah the Exalted said,

## فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

Make up the missing fasts at some other time.

Therefore no one should think that if he got sick, or had to travel and cannot fast in the prescribed days, he is excused from fasting. This should not be so if you want to progress in faith and have Allah the Exalted's *Taqwa* in your heart. If you desire to win the pleasure of Allah the Exalted, then it is a must for you to make up for the missed fasts when you regain health, or afterwards if you missed because of an urgent travel. This is how a *muttaqi* (the one who has *Taqwa*) is recognized. The exemption given by Allah the Exalted is only applicable until the condition exists for which the exemption was granted. It should also be remembered that the sickness has to be a real painful sickness, and should not just be an excuse to skip fasts. The daily commute to work is not considered travel. Similarly if someone is a driver, then daily driving is not considered travel. I am clarifying it as a particular section of people look for excuses to skip fasts especially in those countries that have tough seasons.

Allah the Exalted has provided us an opportunity in these days to safeguard us from spiritual and other weaknesses related to our conduct with others, which we should fully avail of. Allah the Exalted cares about His true servants, the servants who look for ways to please Him. Therefore He granted exemption to the sick and the travelers. Then He says that the ones who do not have the strength to keep fasts should pay *fidya*, and their *fidya* is to feed a poor person. It is also good for those people to participate in *fidya* who can fast at a later time as it is supplementary act and is better for you. However, if one's health is restored, or the particular condition they faced disappears, then it is necessary to keep fasts after Ramadan in spite of having given the *fidya*. This will bring real reward to you.

Hadhrat Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> said at one place, "Here those people are meant who would never be able to fast." There are two types of people; one who were sick and their temporary sickness is gone, and second, the one who have a permanent ailment and may not ever be able to fast. He said, "It is permissible to miss fasts for the ones who do not expect ever to fast, e. g. an elderly and weak person, a weak pregnant woman, who is unable to fast for an entire year because of nursing her baby. They should give *fidya*. Other than these people, it is not permissible for others to be considered exempted from fasting by merely paying *fidya*."

(Badr, Volume 6, Number 43, October 24, 1907, p.3)

So, when the Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> said "merely paying *fidya*," it means that ordinarily *fidya* could even be given for minor or temporary ailments, and this is exactly what Allah says that it is better for you as a supplementary act. So, Allah the Exalted made fasting mandatory for the sake of *Taqwa*, but as Islam is a religion attuned to human nature, therefore it didn't strictly stipulate the attainment of *Taqwa* and winning Allah's pleasure to

fasting. One is advised to take advantage of the exemptions from fasting, which is a rigorous practice under natural inevitable conditions while observing *Taqwa*, and not to look for excuses to miss fasting. The expiation for fasting is to feed the poor. But the consideration should not be that one has enough money, and is well to do, therefore it is easier to feed the poor and thus they could gain reward without fasting. This is neither *Taqwa*, nor does it please Allah the Exalted. If Allah the Exalted says about the *salat* offered out of ill-intentions that it would be thrown back at the faces of the people, similarly the *fidya* given out of ill-intentions will also be thrown back at the faces of the people.

Hadhrat Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> says, "*Fidya* is for those who may never have the strength to fast, otherwise thoughts of resorting to mere *fidya* by those who could fast after restoration of health opens the door of innovation in religion.

This implies opening doors for self-concocted justifications and explanations. Hadhrat Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> said, "The religion that does not have rigorous practices in it has no value before us. Thus, it is a major sin to take off the load from our shoulders entrusted to us by Allah the Exalted. Allah the Exalted says that those who endeavor in Our path are guided." (Badr, Volume 6, Number 43, October 24, 1907, p.3)

Thus when one looks for excuses to find easy course and comfort, one digresses away from religion. We should always keep in mind the instructions of Allah the Exalted:

فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

It is better if one performs a good deed with heart-felt pleasure and in obedience. If you possess knowledge, you would appreciate that fasting is better for you.

According to one Hadith, the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> said that in addition to one's spiritual development, fasting is necessary for our physical health as well which is confirmed by today's science and the physicians.

Therefore every Muslim should first keep this in mind that fasting has been prescribed for the sake of *Taqwa* and rigor is necessary to attain *Taqwa*. Sacrifice in the path of God is necessary for attaining His pleasure. We should take advantage of the exemptions that Allah the Exalted has granted us as a favor looking at our condition and inabilities but should not exceed the limits.

Hadhrat Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> said,

"The one, whose heart looks forward to Ramadan so he could fast, will not be deprived of the (blessings of) fast in the heaven if an ailment prevents him from fasting in Ramadan. There are many people in this world who are used to making excuses and think that they would be able to deceive God the way they deceive other people in the world. The ones who are accustomed to making excuses look for issues and add other tangential details to justify themselves, but they are not justified before God the Exalted. As far as the

ancillary discussions are considered, they could go on forever. If one desires, one could offer *salat* in sitting position for his entire life and never keep fast, but God is aware of everyone's intentions. God the Exalted knows the one who has a pure heart, and He rewards him more as He appreciates the heartfelt pain. The people who make excuses depend on self-concocted justifications but these explanations have no value before God the Exalted." The Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> further said, "When I fasted for six months, once a group of prophets met me (in a vision). They asked me why I had put myself through such hardship, and advised me to abandon it." Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> said, "So when man puts himself through hardship for the sake of God, He, very compassionately says like parents that why he has put himself through hardship." (Malfoozat, Volume 2, p.564, New Edition)

This is the true spirit that should be observed for fasting. Every believer and Ahmadi should try to produce this spirit and sentiments in him. We should always refrain from making excuses. All of us may understand this teaching and spirit! All of us may benefit from the grand guidance that Allah the Exalted sent to us in the form of the Holy Qur'an. The matters described in the Holy Qur'an are not without purpose. Every injunction of Allah the Exalted has a purpose and it is for our benefit. It encompasses all those things that increase us in spirituality and improve our conduct with others. The Glorious Qur'an also contains descriptions that are related to worldly disciplines and it is also full of supporting arguments.

The Glorious Qur'an not only proves its superiority over previous religions, its treasures of knowledge and enlightenment also encompass future fields of knowledge. There is no such discipline which is not mentioned in the Holy Quran. It provides information about disciplines that are being authenticated today, which an ordinary Muslim reader of the Holy Qur'an of fourteen centuries ago had no knowledge or awareness of. Description of these treasures that are gathered in the Holy Qur'an and the injunctions of God the Exalted is another topic which will not be discussed here as I am only discussing the matters related to Ramadan.

Allah the Exalted says in the next verse that I also recited,

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

that it is the month of Ramadan in which and about which the Holy Quran was sent. This is the month in which the revelation of the Holy Qur'an started. The narrators of *Ahadith* date the start of revelation of the Holy Qur'an to the month of Ramadan in spite of differences on exact dates. The first revelation was,

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

in which Allah the Exalted instructed the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> to say in the name of Lord Who

created him. Thus the first revelation calls our attention towards the creation of the entire universe and everything by God the Exalted and therefore He deserves to be worshiped. At the end of this Surah (Surah Alaq), it is mentioned that prostration and prayers are the means to attain nearness of Allah.

The revelation of the Holy Qur'an in Ramadan, which is a source for attaining nearness to Allah, reminds us to focus on worship and beautifying our prayers in gratitude to Allah the Exalted. One of the worships described by God is fasting in the month of Ramadan. This is such an endeavor and an effort about which God the Exalted said that He Himself is the reward for it. Therefore these few verses repeatedly describe its details and injunctions so a believer does not underestimate its importance. It was also mentioned in the earlier verse that if one does not have the strength to keep fast (in Ramadan) then one should complete fasting in other days as fasting is mandatory. Before mentioning that fasting is mandatory, the revealing of Qur'an was mentioned and it was mentioned that Qur'an is a source of guidance. After this, it was mentioned that fasting is mandatory, and if one is unable to fast in Ramadan, the missed fasts should be completed afterwards. Fasting is repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an because of its importance. Fasting is a form of worship which is a means of our reformation. Fasting reforms ones actions; one is saved from many vices for the sake of God; one gives up many legitimate things temporarily for God, therefore Allah the Exalted declared Himself as its reward. All these things including the details of worship and the pros and cons of the good and bad deeds are described in the Holy Qur'an by Allah the Exalted. It is said in the Holy Qur'an,

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

That the Qur'an that has been revealed in Ramadan, or about Ramadan is a grand book. It is:

هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ

It contains guidance for the entire mankind. It has guidance for man of all ages. No new *shariah* (law) is needed now. The *shariah* has been completed now, but only for the one who is ready to receive guidance and draw benefit from it. Otherwise the ones who are determined to be unjust, and are treating their own self unjustly are not causing any damage to the religion, they are being unjust only to themselves. They are still at loss after listening to the Qur'an. This guidance is for the one who wants to receive this guidance with good intention. It is said about this guidance,

وَبَيَّنَّتْ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ

That this guidance has arguments to distinguish truth from falsehood and it has clear signs. The one who does not believe even after looking at these arguments and clear signs is unfortunate. Those who believe in this book are fortunate ones. This book is a

source of guidance for the entire mankind. It not only claims to contain guidance, but it also enjoins to act upon it. Where it has the injunctions, it also describes the benefits for acting upon them. It also discusses the consequences of not acting upon it. It describes the consequences of doing bad things. We are fortunate that we accepted this Qur'an that also provides proof for its truth. It proves that Islam is the last and the perfect religion. It provides proof for being the book of *shariah*. It does not reject the falsehood by merely calling it falsehood. It also provides arguments for the falsehood of all false religions. So Allah the Exalted said that when you got such a book, then you should strive hard to become His servant. You should act upon the guidance given to you by Allah the Exalted in order to become His servant of higher order. One of the guidance is to fast in Ramadan to increase one's spirituality. When your spirituality increases because of these fasts, then you attain nearness of Allah the Exalted. Extol Allah the Exalted. He has done a great favor upon us by including us in this group that strives to attain His pleasure. He included us among those people who did not look at Qur'an despairingly and who did not turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to His instructions, instead they try to act upon His teachings. If we act upon the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an, benefit from the teachings sent by Allah the Exalted in the Holy Qur'an, then Allah the Exalted will enable us to do good deeds according to His promise. He will give us unlimited reward for fasting.

Another consideration for Ramadan is that Allah the Exalted not only sent the Holy Qur'an with perfect and complete guidance to enable us to act upon Allah the Exalted's instructions, but also reminded us every year that this guidance came in this month, or its revelation started in this month. So, where it draws our attention to raise the standard of our worship in gratitude by fasting which is a vigorous endeavor, we should also increase the standard of our conduct to other people. We should also act upon all the injunctions to escape from the bad effects of the self and attain nearness of God the Exalted.

Hadhrat Promised Messiah <sup>as</sup> says at a place, "that

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

indicates the grandeur of the month of Ramadan. The Sufis have written that this month is great for the enlightenment of the heart. Blessed visions are frequently experienced in this month. Safar purifies the self and fasting enlightens the heart. The purification of self means that one gets away from the lust of the Nafs-e-Ammarah (the self that incites)." It distances us from it. "The enlightenment of the heart means that door of blessed visions opens up for us to see God."

So we should fully benefit from the ambience that Allah the Exalted has provided for us in this month. We should try to offer such *salat* in this month that purifies our self. If every *salat* provides catharsis of self, only then could we step towards the purification of self. If every *salat* is offered in complete obedience to the instructions of Allah the Exalted and by completely freeing oneself from any non-godly thoughts, only then would it help in the purification of self. If every *salat* is offered with the thought that one is present before Allah the Exalted, and He is seeing us, then we would step promptly towards the

purification of self. It would purify the self of only those who fear their God in private, and who appear before Allah with the thought and prayers, "O Allah! You have provided us the opportunity to witness this Ramadan, now enable us to benefit from its blessings, and enable us to offer salat to obtain Your pleasure and free us from the impurities of our self."

The beautiful offering of *salat* in the ambience of Ramadan will purify our self. Man can distance himself the farthest and the fastest from the Nafs-e-Ammarah that draws every man to evil under the influence of Satan as the Satan is restrained in this month. So the *salat* that is offered purely to distance oneself from Satan for the sake of attaining nearness of Allah the Exalted becomes a source of moving one through the stages of Nafs-e-Lawwama (reproving self) to the final destination of Nafs-e-Mutma'innah (soul at rest). When we offer *salat* with these thoughts and it is accompanied by the vigor of fasting, and is strengthened by supplementary prayers, as a result, Allah the Exalted exposes Himself to one according to one's capacity.

From

أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ

we should also remember that though the Qur'anic revelation (as mentioned before) started in this month, and the revelation continued in other months of the year after that, but Hadhrat Gabriel <sup>as</sup> revised the entire Holy Qur'an revealed up to that point in the month of Ramadan every year. This was either a special blessing because the Holy Qur'an was revealed during this month, or it was a great blessing of the month of Ramadan that the part of the Holy Qur'an that was revealed that year or that was revealed up to that time was revised during this month.

Hadhrat Aishah <sup>ra</sup> narrates that the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> said to Hadhrat Fatimah <sup>ra</sup> that Hadhrat Gabriel <sup>as</sup> revised the Holy Qur'an twice during the last Ramadan of his life. Therefore we should consider from this aspect as well that where we are fasting in the month of Ramadan, and trying to offer our mandatory and supplementary *salat* in a more attractive manner, we should also focus on the recitation of the Holy Qur'an and try to understand its translation and meanings. Arrangements for *dars* (lecture) of the Holy Qur'an are made here and other places as well. We should focus on listening to the *dars*. As I have mentioned before, we should try our best to read the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and enforce them upon us. Only then would we truly benefit from the blessings of Ramadan and win His pleasure and after extolling Him we would be considered among His grateful servants. May Allah the Exalted enable us to benefit from all blessings of Ramadan!