

The wisdom behind Fasting

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(Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 692.)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹ said: “I start by opening with something appropriate to the time and place we’re in, in that we all know the Statement of Allaah تبارك و تعالیٰ, “... **decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you, that you may become righteous,**” [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:183] you’ve heard commentary and beneficial comments concerning this verse and things connected to it many times, but I believe that you will have seldom heard commentary on its last part, “... **that you may become righteous.**”

Why was this fasting decreed? “That you may become righteous.” This is one of the rare verses, in fact one of the rare legislated provisions that links the legislated order with an explanation of the intended goal and the reason it was legislated.

There is a declaration here of the obligation of fasting Ramadhan, and Muslims should apply themselves to adopting and implementing this order without asking why or how and so on, something which is common now in terms of questioning the legislated orders, [such that] you will often hear some people [saying], “Why this? Why that? Why this?”—we don’t approve of exhaustively searching for the wisdom behind legislation, except what has been expounded on [itself] in it, like what we’re discussing now [i.e., fasting].

“Decreed upon you is fasting,” why? He تَعَالَى said, “... **that you may become righteous,**” i.e., the point of fasting is for it to be a means for the fasting person to increase his Taqwaa of Allaah عز وجل and for him to get closer to Him.

If he fasts but does not improve compared to how he was before, i.e., before Ramadhan, then it means that this person has not accomplished the desired goal wanted from the implementation of fasting.

There are some authentic Hadeeths, from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) of course, which explain and confirm this objective which the verse has stated, for example, the hadeeth qudsi which the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) relates from his Lord عز وجل, in which He said, “**Whoever does not leave false speech, and acting according to it, then Allaah is not in any**

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him

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need of him leaving his food and his drink,” this is a very great hadeeth, and goes completely with the end of the verse, “... **that you may become righteous.”**

So, when we look at both the verse and the Hadeeth, the aim is not—the only aim is not, and I [purposefully say] ‘the only aim’ so that some people don’t misunderstand me—the only aim for the fasting person is not to refrain from eating, drinking and intercourse based upon the fact that they are listed as things which break the fast in the Qur’aan and the Sunnah, (leaving aside [for now, mention of] the other things which also break it concerning which there is a big difference of opinion amongst the scholars of fiqh), the aim is not to only refrain from these things which break the fast, but rather [to be aware] that there are other obligatory things which a Muslim must stop himself from too just like he did with these things.

In light of the explanation mentioned in the verse and the clear, authentic Hadeeth just now, I can say something to you which might be new in terms of how it’s expressed but is not new in the ahkaam because it is mentioned in the Qur’aan and the Sunnah, this new phrasing is [concerning the fact] that the books of fiqh, without exception mention the things which break the fast, and this is something that must be done, but, to explain and clarify what was previously mentioned in the verse and the Hadeeth, I say: those things which break the fast are of two types, and this correct division [which I am about to mention] must be rooted in everyone’s mind, because of how important it is.

The first type: the material things which break the fast, and they are the things listed in the books of fiqh as was mentioned just now.

The second type: let’s call them the abstract things which break the fast, these are the things that the verse referred to, “... **that you may become righteous,”** and his (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) statement from His Lord تبارك و تعالی clarified that, “**Whoever does not leave false speech, and acting according to it, then Allaah is not in any need of him leaving his food and his drink.**”

Thus, along with leaving his food, drink and intercourse, to that he must also add refraining from what Allaah عز وجل has forbidden and what He has ordered every Muslim to be far from.

From the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that he said, “**Fasting is not leaving food and drink but rather fasting is refraining from what Allaah عز وجل has prohibited,**” or as he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said in words of a similar meaning, and whoever wants to read these Hadeeths and those like it where the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) warned the fasting person from committing sins and [where it shows] that this forbiddance comes under the generality of His Statement تبارك و تعالی , “... **that you may become righteous,**” whoever wants to read these types of

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Hadeeths should refer to At-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb of al-Haafidh al-Mundhiree, may Allaah have mercy on him.

To conclude I say, fasting, in terms of how it was legislated in order for a Muslim to get closer to Allaah and increase his Taqwaa of Him, is just like the prayer, prayer whose only purpose is also not that a Muslim just performs its conditions, pillars and requirements, but that he should also pay heed to the purpose and wisdom due to which Allaah عز وجل legislated five of them, day and night, on His believing servants, that is what Our Lord عز وجل alluded to in His Statement, **“Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing ...”** [Soorah al-Ankabut 29:45], so a Muslim’s prayer is accepted by Allaah عز وجل in accordance with how much it prevents him from immorality and wrongdoing.

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) pointed to this fact connected to prayer in an authentic Hadeeth, where he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“Verily the slave prays a prayer of which nothing is written down for him ...”** i.e., completely, but rather it is written as deficient according to how discrepant it is, he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) explained that in the rest of the Hadeeth where he said, **“Verily the slave prays a prayer of which nothing is written down for him except a tenth, a ninth, an eighth, a seventh, a sixth, a fifth, a quarter, a third or half of it,”**—and he stopped here, indicating that a complete prayer is very, very rare, a Muslim is not able to perform it, the best of them is the one for whom half is written and so on until a tenth, and [even then] a tenth is only if the prayer is [actually] accepted by Allaah عز وجل, otherwise many of a person’s prayers are those which he will have his face struck with on the Day of Judgement, and refuge is sought with Allaah, and that is because the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) pointed to two realities.

The first is what we have spoken about connected to fasting, and the other is connected to prayer, for he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“How many a fasting person there is who has nothing but hunger and thirst from his fasting,”** why? Because he never stopped doing what Allaah عز وجل forbade him from, he [i.e., this fasting person] only restricted himself to what we [earlier] called the material things which break the fast—yet he thinks he is fasting—about such a person we say, “He fasted but didn’t fast,” he fasted in terms of refraining himself from the material things which break the fast but he didn’t [really] fast because he didn’t withhold from the abstract things which break the fast, that is why he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **“How many a fasting person there is who gets nothing but hunger and thirst from his fast, and how many a praying person there is who gets nothing but a sleepless night and fatigue from his standing in prayer.”**

So, we hope that Allaah تعالى و تبارك inspires us to refrain from both types of thing which break the fast, the material and the abstract, and that He inspires us [to perform] prayers that are accepted by Him تعالى و تبارك, prayers which prevent one from immorality and wrongdoing.”