

Welcoming Ramadan

قال الله تعالى

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

Allah swt says in Surah al-Baqarah (2:183): "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may attain piety."

Brothers in Islam: We are on the threshold of Ramadan, the month of immense mercy and forgiveness. In this month the believer strives to be among the successful through spending its days in fasting and its nights in prayers, giving more charity and drawing closer to Allah swt with righteous deeds.

The Prophet (sas) used to prepare himself to welcome this blessed month, instruct the people about its great virtues and merits, and remind them of its blessings, mercy and goodness. Therefore, their determination and preparedness for the month are promoted and their hearts and souls yearn for the coming of this blessed month. In this month, Paradise gets prepared, from the door known as Ar-Rayan, to receive those who fast. Sahal Ibn S'ad (ra) reported that the Prophet (sas) said: "In Paradise, there is a door called ar-Rayan, through which those who fast will enter, whoever enters through it will never be thirsty." [Muslim]

أيها المؤمنون: The main objective behind fasting is to attain piety. Piety is to obey Allah's commands and to avoid whatever He (swt) has prohibited. Muslims can attain piety and enter Paradise through being conscious of Allah in his fasting, avoidance of whatever that breaks it, drawing closer to Allah by praying at night, reciting the Qur'an, doing good deeds, giving obligatory and voluntarily charities, fulfilling duties to ones parents, observing good ties with kith and kin, sharing food with others, providing support to the orphans, being kind to the poor and the needy, fulfilling the obligations perfectly with strong determination, and adherence to patience.

We can start preparing ourselves to welcome the month of goodness. Try to observe sincerity in prayer and fasting and hasten towards true repentance, so that Allah swt may forgive our past sins. The Prophet (sas) said: "Whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan with belief and anticipation of a reward, his past sins are forgiven." [Bukhari and Muslim]

In preparation for this blessed month of Ramadan, we should learn the rulings of fasting. We should ask the people of knowledge if there are any questions. We should organise our time, during the days and nights, and dedicate a time for reciting the Qur'an. We should dedicate time for Dhikr of Allah and for inviting our relatives and friends for Iftaar. We should also dedicate a time for learning the Qur'anic knowledge as well as elevating the level of our understanding.

At all times, Muslims should be conscious of Allah in all actions and behaviour and fend off evil deeds with good ones, sins with pardon and forgiveness. Abu Huraira (ra) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sas) said, "Allah the Exalted and Majestic said: `Every act of the son of Adam is for him, except As-Siyam (the fasting) which is (exclusively) for Me, and I will reward him for it.' Fasting is a shield. When anyone of you is observing fast, he should neither indulge in obscene language nor should he raise his voice; and if anyone reviles him or tries to quarrel with him, he should say: `I am fasting.' The one who fasts, experiences two joys: he feels pleasure when he breaks the fast. He is joyful by virtue of his fast when he meets his Rabb." [Bukhari and Muslim]

Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri (ra) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sas) said, "Every slave of Allah who observes Saum (fasting) for one day for the sake of Allah, Allah will draw his face farther from Hell-fire to the extent of a distance to be covered in seventy years." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

أيها المؤمنون: I am going to read the following short Khutba which was delivered by the Messenger of Allah (sas) to welcome the blessed month of Ramadan:

“O People! Indeed, the month of Ramadan has approached you with His mercy and blessings. This is a month in which Allah has invited you. You have been, in this month, selected as the recipients of the honours of Allah, the Merciful. In this holy month, when you breathe, it has the reward of ‘Tasbih’ (the praise of Allah), and your sleep has the heavenly reward of worship.

Your good deeds are accepted in this month, so are your invocations. Therefore, you must invoke your Lord, in right earnest, with hearts that are free from sins and evils, that Allah may bless you. Observe fast in this month, and recite the Holy Quran. Verily! The person who may not receive the mercy and benevolence of Allah in this month must be very unfortunate having an end as bad (in the Hereafter).

While fasting, remember the hunger and thirst of tomorrow in the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and the needy. Pay respects to your elders. Have pity on those younger than you and be kind towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongues against unworthy words, and your eyes from seeing forbidden and your ears from such sounds that should not be heard by you.

Be kind to orphans so that when your children become orphans they also may be treated with kindness. Do invoke that Allah may forgive your sins. Do raise your hands at the time of Salat (Prayers), as it is the best time for asking Allah’s mercy. When we invoke at such times, we are answered by Allah, when we call Him, He responds, and when we ask for anything, it is accepted by Him.

O People! You have made your conscience the slave of your desires; make it free by invoking Him for forgiveness. Your back is breaking under the heavy load of your sins. Therefore, prostrate before Him for long intervals and make it lighter.

O People! If anybody amongst you arranges for the Iftaar (food for the breaking of the fast) of any believer, then Allah will give him a reward as if he has set free a slave. He will forgive his minor sins.”

Then the companions of Prophet Muhammad (sas) said: "But everybody amongst us does not have the means to do so." Prophet Muhammad (sas) told them, "Keep yourself away from the Fire of Hell by inviting people for Iftaar, though it may consist of only half a date or simply with water if you have nothing else."

"Anybody who does not abuse others in this month, Allah will keep him safe from His wrath in Qiyama (the Judgement day). Anybody, who respects and treats an orphan with kindness in this month, Allah shall look at him with dignity in Qiyama. Anybody who treats well his kinsmen, in this month, Allah will bestow His mercy on him in Qiyama, while anybody who ill-treats his kinsmen in this month, Allah will keep him away from His mercy, in Qiyama (the Last Day).

Whoever offers Sunnah prayers in this month, Allah will give him freedom from Hell. Whosoever offers one obligatory prayer in this month, for him the Angels will write the rewards of 70 such prayers, which were offered by him during other months.

Whosoever repeatedly sends peace and blessings upon me, Allah will keep the scales of his deeds heavy. He who recites one ayah of the holy Quran will be given the rewards of reciting the whole Qur'an during other months.

O People! Indeed, during this month, the doors of heaven are open, therefore ask Allah not to close them for you; The doors of hell are closed, so ask Allah to keep them closed for you. During this month Shaitan is imprisoned so ask Allah not to let him have power over you"

Brothers in Islam: to conclude this Khutba, let us prepare ourselves and seize this great chance to gain Allah's mercy, His Paradise, His Pardoning, His Forgiveness and be saved from the hell fire.

May Allah swt bless for us the remaining days of Sha'ban, prolong our life to witness Ramadan, help us observe prayers, fasting, lower our gaze, protect our tongues, recite the Qur'an, and help us to obey Him, ameen.