

Brothers and sisters in Islam, the month of Ramadan is upon us. The month of fasting, reciting the Quran, praying Taraweeh, giving charity, and increasing in good deeds, while decreasing sins and bad deeds. Allah wants us to live a happy and pleasant life, in this world and the next, and provided us all the opportunities to acquire it as He tells us:

(مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ)

Whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.

From the manifestations of Allah's love for His servants, is that He provides for them seasons, months, days and opportunities for His servants to attain and acquire an increase of good deeds and an increase in rewards. Hence, the coming of this blessed month of Ramadan. The month that Allah has made changes in His creation, in the heavens, the earth and everything in between them to facilitate and make it easy for us to benefit from this blessed month of Ramadan, and make changes within ourselves as well.

The prophet Muhammad tells us:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِذَا كَانَ أَوَّلُ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ صُفِّدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ وَمَرَدَةُ الْجِنِّ وَغُلِّقَتْ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ فَلَمْ يُفْتَحْ مِنْهَا بَابٌ. وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ فَلَمْ يُغْلَقْ مِنْهَا بَابٌ وَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ يَا بَاغِيَ الْخَيْرِ أَقْبِلْ وَيَا بَاغِيَ الشَّرِّ أَقْصِرْ وَلِلَّهِ عِتْقَاءُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ كُلُّ لَيْلَةٍ "

Abu Hurairah narrated that : The Messenger of Allah said: "On the first night of the month of Ramadan, the Shayatin are shackled, the jinns are restrained, the gates of the Fires are shut such that no gate among them would be opened. The gates of Paradise are opened such that no gate among them would be closed, and a caller calls: 'O seeker of the

good; come near!' and 'O seeker of evil; stop! For there are those whom Allah frees from the Fire.' And that is every night."

Servants of Allah, what better preparations can we find, what better opportunity can we look for and be thankful for, and benefit from than what we find in this hadith. Allah has chained up the shayateen, and all the means for you to disobey him, he has closed all the door which lead us to sin and misguidance, He has opened up all the door to earn his pleasure, reward, forgiveness and paradise, he has called out to those who want to do good, to keep doing good, and he has admonished all of those engaging in sins and haram to refrain. And every night in this blessed month of Ramadan, Allah frees people from the hellfire. What more are we asking for? What a merciful and loving Lord and creator we have. Shouldn't we be thankful and grateful, shouldn't we show our love, devotion and commitment to him? We do so by increasing in good deeds and decreasing our sins and bad deeds. We do so by fasting, abstaining from food, drink and intimacy from pre-dawn until dusk, we do so by fasting and abstaining from impermissible deeds, beliefs and statements, in Ramadan and outside of Ramadan. This Ramadan let's let our eyes abstain from looking at the haram, our ears fast from listening to haram, our feet abstain from taking us to haram places, our hands abstain from earning haram earnings, this is the real fasting that Allah wants from us brothers and sisters. The fasting of the stomach, as well as the other limbs of the body. So that we can acquire piety. This is the point of our fasting as Allah says:

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

"O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you just as it has been prescribed for the previous nations, so that you may acquire/attain piety"

May Allah make us from the righteous this Ramadan, may Allah make it easy for us to repent this Ramadan, May Allah make it easy for us to take advantage of this Ramadan, and may Allah keep us away from distractions and things that can decrease our rewards during this Ramadan.

Second khutbah

Brothers and sisters in Islam, Ramadan is upon us. The opportunities of a lifetime are here within this blessed month. Let us be from amongst those who take advantage of the opportunities Allah has provided us and not let them slip away. As we only have 29-30 days to do so.

Within our lives, brothers and sisters we are always striving to do and have the best in this world and the next. Whenever we want something in this dunya, a good job, successful career, family, business, investments, we strive and work hard for it more than anything else. This is good and praiseworthy, as long as it does not distract us from worshipping Allah properly. All of us have inspirations and a desire to succeed and when climbing the ladder to success we want to maximize our benefits and minimize our losses, as is the natural desire of the majority of human beings.

As we know, no matter what ^{we} ~~you~~ do in life or what status ^{we} ~~you~~ attain, there will always be haters, always be those who don't like ^{us} ~~you~~, and those who want to distract ^{us} ~~you~~ and maybe even steal from ^{us} ~~you~~ or take advantage of ^{us} ~~you~~. They will try to rob ^{us} ~~you~~, take advantage of ^{us} ~~you~~, steal ^{us} ~~your~~ products, steal ^{us} ~~your~~ ideas, steal ^{us} ~~your~~ building supplies, ^{us} ~~your~~ merchandise. And many of us who own property or businesses always think about security and taking the proper means to protect our goods from being stolen to taken. We put up cameras, hire security guards, put sensors up on the doorways and windows and even our cars. Many of us are so protective of our worldly goods and strive hard to protect

them from thieves, but how many of us are so protective of our worship, our prayer, our fasting, our good deeds from being stolen from thieves and robbers, those who can decrease our good deeds and earnings in the hereafter, our real bank accounts. The thieves of the dunya may be easily identifiable, but thieves of the hereafter may not be as easy to recognize or identify. They could even be closer to you than you think....

Brothers and sisters, even though the shayateen and jinn are going to be tied up, and their influence is going to be decreased greatly, there are still thieves who will try to steal from us in this Ramadan. And naturally, whenever robberies or stealing becomes rampant, the authorities put out their warnings and post their most wanted signs so that people will be on the lookout and protect themselves even better.

There are some thieves amongst us brothers and sisters...did you all know that there are thieves who will steal from our prayers, while we are praying, thieves will be stealing from us, except those whom Allah has given success:

وَعَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «أَسْوَأُ النَّاسِ سَرِقَةً الَّذِي يَسْرِقُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ». قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ؟ قَالَ: لَا يَتِمُّ رُكُوعَهَا وَلَا سُجُودَهَا".
رَوَاهُ أَحْمَدُ بِإِسْنَادٍ جَيِّدٍ

Abu Qatada reported Allah's Messenger as saying, "The one who commits the worst type of theft is he who steals from his own prayer."

Upon hearing this the companions asked, O Messenger of Allah: how one could steal from his prayer, and he replied, "By not performing his bowing 'rukoo' and his prostration 'sujood' perfectly."

We steal and rob ourselves by rushing in our prayers and hastily performing them. We alone decrease the rewards of our prayers by losing focus and concentration, and rushing through them hastily.

In another hadith:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الْإِنْتِفَاتِ فِي الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ " هُوَ اخْتِلَاسٌ يَخْتَلِسُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنْ صَلَاةِ الْعَبْدِ ."

Narrated `Aisha: I asked Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) about looking left and right and turning my head while in prayer. He replied, "It is a way of stealing by which Satan takes away the reward from the prayer of a person."

In another hadith:

عَنْ أَبِي الْيُسْرِ صَاحِبِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : " إِنْ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُصَلِّي الصَّلَاةَ كَامِلَةً , وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُصَلِّي النِّصْفَ وَالثُّلُثَ وَالرُّبْعَ وَالْخُمْسَ حَتَّى بَلَغَ الْعُشْرَ "

Abee Al Yusr reported that Allah's Messenger said: "There are some of you who pray completely (receiving all of the reward), and some of you who only receive half, and some who only receive one-third, one-fourth, one-fifth, up until only receiving one-tenth" Nisaa'ee narrated it with an acceptable chain of narration.

In another hadith:

عَنْ عَمَّارِ بْنِ يَاسِرٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَنْصَرِفُ وَمَا كُتِبَ لَهُ إِلَّا عُشْرُ صَلَاتِهِ تُسَعُّهَا ثُمْنُهَا سُبْعُهَا سُدُسُهَا خُمْسُهَا رُبْعُهَا ثُلُثُهَا نِصْفُهَا " . (رواه أبو داود والنسائي وابن حبان وهو حديث صحيح كما قال الألباني في صحيح الترغيب والترهيب حديث رقم 538)

"Ammar ibn Yasir reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: "Someone may leave out after praying and the only thing that may have been written for him as reward is one-tenth of his prayer, or a one-ninth, or one-eighth, or one-seventh, or one-sixth, or one fifth, or one-third, or half, is recorded for him."

oamit

So these are the thieves and robbers we need to be cautious of. Unfortunately some of us are our own worst enemies and we are stealing from our own selves while not even realizing it.

Brothers and sisters as we all know, our five daily prayers are the foundations of our deen. The pillars of the house, the fundamentals holding us up. The act of worship that distinguishes us from the disbelievers. If our prayers can be deficient, the so can the rest of our acts of worship. *deficiencies in our prayers manifest in other acts of worship such as fasting and our behaviors while fasting ...*

So we need to take heed and pay attention especially in this month of Ramadan. If the amount of reward and benefit we receive from our 5 daily prayers is dependent upon how much khusoo and Ikhlaas (focus, concentration, humility and sincerity) we have, how much we limit our distractions, how much we pray as if Allah is standing directly in front of us. What about our fasting? What about our recitation of Quran? What about our Taraweeh? What about our charity. Similarly, all of our deeds in Ramadan could be deficient and/or devoid of rewards if we do not avoid the thieves, *the distractions, the impermissible acts, behaviors and statements ...*

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Dearly beloved believers, we come to understand from these previous ahadith, that the more we focus and concentrate during the prayer, the more rewards and benefits we will attain from our prayers. Similarly, the less we focus and concentrate during the prayer, the less rewards and benefits we will attain, and this is how the thieves steal from us and rob us of our rewards in our prayers.

So the higher level our sincerity, humility and khusoo we have during Ramadan the higher level of rewards we will attain. The more we engage in good speech (recitation of Quran and the likes), the more rewards we will earn. The more we engage in vain speech, falsehood, ignorance and acting upon it, the less rewards of fasting we will earn, until some will completely rob themselves of the rewards they worked

so hard for in this month of Ramadan, because they were inattentive to the thieves.

The more we stay focused in Ramadan the more rewards and benefits we will receive from our fasting and good deeds. The more we avoid distractions in Ramadan, during our fasting, the more benefits we will attain from our fasting and good deeds.

The Prophet Muhammad told us that fasting is a protection for us:

الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ كَجُنَّةِ أَحَدِكُمْ مِنَ الْقِتَالِ

“Fasting is a shield, like a shield used in a battle”

((الصيام جُنَّةٌ وحصن حصين من النار))

“Fasting is a shield and a strong protection from the Hellfire”

Brothers and sisters, our fasting in this Ramadan can be a shield and protection for us from the Shayateen of jinn and humans, and hellfire if we utilize the shield properly and don't allow it to be pierced with holes.

As the Prophet Muhamad told us:

((الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ مَا لَمْ يَخْرُقْهَا))، زاد الدارمي: ((يخرقها بالغيبة))

“Fasting is a shield as long as it is not pierced with holes”, the Scholars explained saying: what pierces holes in the shield and removes and decreases the rewards of fasting is backbiting.

This is why the prophet Muhammad told us:

مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ وَالْجَهْلَ فَلَيْسَ بِرَبِّهِ حَاجَةً أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ "

"Whoever does not give up false statements (i.e. telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink."

These ahadith clarify for us who the thieves are, and what they will try to do to remove or decrease your rewards of fasting. Don't let your shields be pierced with holes by backbiting, slandering and speaking ill of another individual.

Brothers and sisters, don't fall victim to robbery, don't let the thieves steal from your good deeds this Ramadan. Use your protection, fasting, and don't let it be pierced with holes. Just how we are vigilant in protecting our wealth in this dunya, we need to be over-protective in protecting our wealth in the hereafter, especially in this month of Ramadan.

And as a warning for us, the Prophet Muhammad told us that there will be some individuals who will fall victim to robbery and have all of their hard work and efforts this Ramadan be rendered in vain:

رُبَّ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الْجُوعُ. وَرُبَّ قَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ إِلَّا السَّهَرُ " . "

"There are people who will fast and will experience nothing from their fast except hunger, and there are those who pray at night and will receive nothing from their prayer except a sleeplessness."

This all is dependent upon our sincerity, our focus, our concentration, our commitment to Allah and following the Prophet Muhammad and avoiding backbiting, slandering, and all evil deeds while observing this month of Ramadan.

Lastly but certainly not leastly, we want to read to you a list of the Most Wanted in Ramadan, those thieves who are going to try and rob us this Ramadan, those whom we need to be warned of and be cautious about:

1. The TV and spending too much time watching distracting programs
2. Spending too much time in the stores, malls and markets, ~~and markets~~
3. Staying up late at night without engaging in worship
4. Spending too much time in the kitchen cooking and cleaning
5. Using cell phones and smart phones, laptops and computers excessively without limits
6. Being stingy ^{with our wealth, time and efforts} and not wanting to contribute and donate to good causes to aid Islam and the Muslims
7. Attending gatherings in which the remembrance of Allah is void
8. Sleeping during the Day of Ramadan and missing the obligatory prayers

May Allah make this Ramadan one of the best Ramadans and make it easy for us to seize His endless bounties and rewards and avoid being victim to the thieves who want to steal from our rewards and wealth in the Hereafter.