

## Spiritual Benefits of Holy Ramadan and Fasting

### What do we mean by Spiritual benefits?

Any act that we perform which would train, discipline and strengthen the human soul is considered spiritual. When these acts are commanded or recommended by Islam, then they would surely benefit human spirit and soul such that it would bring closeness (*qurb*) to Allah's blessings (*barakah*), mercy (*rahmah*) and forgiveness (*maghfirah*).

1. **Patience.** Allah (swt) says in the Quran: *And take recourse in patience and prayer* (Q 2:45). The Ma'sūmīn (a) have said that 'patience' in this verse refers to fasting. When we fast, we apply patience to stay away from drinking, eating, and doing bad acts. When someone swears at you in Ramadan, instead answering him back, you simply say, 'I am fasting.' So, fasting for the entire month helps us build and practice patience to our maximum. Often some friends or the Satan tempts us to get back at others and show that we can also swear and shout at them, but the state of fasting helps us in controlling our anger and rage. This builds our patience to such an extent that we maintain the good habit long after the month of Ramadan. Sometimes we feel difficulty in continuing a fast, especially in summer, but we try to gather strength to continue the fast till iftar time. In reality we are following the teaching of the Holy Prophet (s) who said: *Worship Allah willingly, and if you cannot, there is great good in being patient with what you do not like.* Question: Get a Quranic verse on patience.
2. **Discipline in prayers.** Muslims are required to pray five times daily. When we are fasting, we would like to make sure that the reward of fast is not lost or decreased by delaying the prayer. We know that Almighty Allah is displeased with a person who takes his prayer lightly. Imam Ali Zaynul 'Ābidīn (a) says in the Du'ā for welcoming Ramadan: *O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household, in it make us attend to the appointed moments of the five prayers within the bounds You have set, the obligations You have decreed, the duties You have assigned, and the times You have specified* (*Sahifa Sajjadiyya*, Du'ā 44, passage 8). Question: state three things which make the prayer more spiritual.
3. **Staying away from sins.** The faith of a Muslim does not allow him/her to disobey Allah (swt). However, because of weaknesses, influence of bad company, ignorance or temptation we often commit sins. Fasting reminds us not to commit any sin. We realize that if on account of God's command we stay from eating and drinking which are natural requirements of the life we can easily stay away from acts which are evil. We have been advised that besides fasting in Ramadan we should control our limbs from doing evil things; our hands should fast from not harming anyone, our tongues should fast from not lying, backbiting, saying foul words, etc. Question: what is the fast of the eyes, ears and legs?
4. **Closeness to the Quran.** The Quran is a holy book that was revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet on the night of Qadr in Holy Ramadan. We recite and study the Quran throughout the year, but more so in Ramadan. Many Muslims try to complete reciting one sipāra (juz') of the Quran every night in Ramadan. Additionally, they listen to lectures on understanding the message of the Quran. The Holy Prophet has said that the reward of reciting one verse of the Quran in Ramadan is equal to completing the entire Quran in other months. Question: Get one Āyat and two Hadiths on the benefits of reciting the Quran.
5. **Reciting Du'ās.** Allah (swt) says to the Holy Prophet (s) in Quran: *When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearest. I answer the supplicant's call when he calls Me. So, let them respond to Me, and let them have faith in Me, so that they may fare rightly* (Q 2:186). This beautiful verse appears in the Quran in the section where Allah talks about fasting rules in

Ramadan. The Holy Prophet (s) and the Ahlul Bayt (a) have taught us many Du'ās to be recited in Ramadan. Reciting Du'ās make us humble and helps us realize the greatness and kindness of Allah. Question: Memorize the Du'ā with English translation of the Holy Prophet (s) in which he prays for different groups of people such as the poor, the needy, the sick, the indebted, etc.

6. **Being concerned about others especially the needy.** A believer is always required to be concerned about relatives, neighbors and fellow Muslims who are in needy. The Prophet (s) advised believers to be kind to others in this month and be more sensitive to their needs. The hearts become softer in this month. There is more unity and compassion for others. The spirit of the month makes us want to do more for others. Question: What kind deed can you do in the month of Ramadan that would help others?
7. **The Night of Qadr.** The Almighty says that the Holy Quran was revealed on this sacred night. The Quran also says that the night is better than one thousand months. This means that any good deed such as charity and act of worship will get a reward multiplied thirty thousand times. The spirituality of the believers should reach a maximum on the night of Qadr. Question: How can you make the nights of Qadr very spiritual for yourself?
8. **Forgiveness.** Often when we hear about the great benefits of fasting, praying, reciting Quran, doing charity, etc. in the month of Ramadan, we get worried about our past as we may have committed sins or wronged someone. The Holy Prophet (s), when welcoming the holy month, said: *O people, the month of Allah has come toward you bringing divine blessing, mercy and forgiveness.* In another Hadith, the Prophet said: *it is the month whose beginning is mercy, its middle, forgiveness and its end, emancipation from the fire (of hell).* It is recommended to say three times when opening your fast: *yā wāsi' al maghfīrah, iḡhfīr lī* – O the One Who is vast in forgiveness, forgive me. Question: What are some conditions for the forgiveness of sins?
9. **Charity.** One thing that helps human spirit grow is being charitable to others. This quality was found in all Prophets, Imams and friends (awliyā) of Allah. In the holy month the Prophet advised us to feed others at the time of iftar. Someone asked the Prophet what to do if he could not afford to feed others for iftar. The Prophet said told him even offering someone water or one date would be enough. The spirit of charity amongst Muslims last throughout the month till the Day of Eid, when they first offer fitra before beginning the celebration of the festival. Question: Find out about one organization that feeds the poor in the month of Ramadan. How can you help them?
10. **Sincerity.** The month of Ramadan helps us achieve one of the best qualities to be found inside our souls and spirits – that is sincerity. A person can easily pretend to fast in the presence of his friends and later eat or drink in privacy as the food is available in plenty. But we continue to fast from dawn to dusk in obedience of Allah showing that we are sincere in our intentions as well as actions. The Holy Prophet (s) said: Allah has said, 'fasting is for Me and I am the One Who rewards for it.' Question: How can you maintain sincerity even after the month of Ramadan is over?