

Most people think that the obligation to fast is an act of observance first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but that is incorrect. As we are told in Surat Al-Baqara in the words, "... as it was prescribed for those before you," fasting was also made compulsory for earlier peoples through revelation. Although it gradually became sociologically corrupted, forgotten, shortened or altered, fasting is still an act of worship known to previous communities of believers.

One of the essential pieces of wisdom behind fasting is that it develops and strengthens the taqwa [meticulousness in guarding against evil] among people. The word 'taqwa' essentially means 'protection against, avoidance.' It expresses a person's effort to avoid suffering in this world and particularly in the Hereafter by complying with the commands and prohibitions laid down by God.

Someone who fasts through the month of Ramadan is abiding by one of God's commandments and acting in the knowledge that he is being observed by Him at every moment. The person possesses taqwa by dint of avoiding various prohibitions, such as eating and drinking, that are legitimate at times other than Ramadan. In addition, by fasting, that person trains himself to abide by other commandments and prohibitions of God's in daily life.

A Muslim who becomes familiar with discipline during fasting will strive to maintain that awareness during the rest of the year and will renew that awareness in the following Ramadan. From that perspective, fasting and Ramadan means a process of development, the strengthening and refreshing of taqwa in both individual and societal terms.

In fasting, a person also remembers his helplessness and the fact that he is nothing but a servant of God's and that he is indebted to Him for all things. He will turn to God in helplessness and gratitude, and by remembering other servants in need, he will then treat them with affection and compassion. Additionally, resisting various needs that are legitimate at times other than Ramadan, solely for the sake of God's approval, teaches patience and fortitude.

Through the obligation to fast shared by all Muslim communities across the world in the month of Ramadan, consciousness of being servants of God is raised to a peak. The spiritual climate during Ramadan also has a great impact in societal terms; Ramadan is a month when people are also more scrupulous about fulfilling their other obligations than at other times. Many people perform the compulsory prayers with greater devotion and concentration by means of the special nature of this month; they read the Qur'an more, they are scrupulous over other prayers such as tarawih, they speak more about faith-related issues and they avoid those things prohibited by God in the Qur'an.

During the month of Ramadan, people read and reflect and speak about the Qur'an and remember God a great deal. This act of observance is instrumental through the emotional joy it produces in repairing any weakening of awareness of being a mere servant of God's that may occur over the year. The significant fall in crime rates during the month of Ramadan and other statistics clearly show how societies benefit from Ramadan and are all concrete evidence of this fact.

As revealed in verses 184 and 185 of Surat Al-Baqara, fasting is made obligatory in Ramadan because this is the month when the revelation of the Qur'an began. This reveals the importance to people of the revelation of the Qur'an and also indicates that people need to concentrate and reflect on the messages of the Qur'an, the one true guide, during this month. Our holy book, the Qur'an, a source of healing to which

people must turn at every moments of their lives, must be reflected on and included in our lives at all times.

These verses reveal that the Qur'an is guidance for all mankind and that it contains messages clearly differentiating truth from superstition. Ramadan is therefore a month when people can concentrate and reflect more, thanks both to fasting and to an increased understanding of the commands and prohibition in the Qur'an.

Through our fasting and other observations discharged in the month of Ramadan, Almighty God is remembered and appreciated more; greater gratitude is felt for His blessings through thirst and hunger and, as a result, people's taqwa is refreshed, renewed and strengthened.

Through the fertility of this month, social solidarity and mutual aid rise to the highest levels, and there is frequent remembrance of the poor and lonely. There is much more help for the poor and needy, in the month of Ramadan, which is often limited during other months on pretexts such as 'My means are very limited.' This is also significant in terms of showing the great benefit that comes from Muslims being united.

The month of Ramadan is a prosperous and auspicious one in all respects. The important thing, however, is for the lofty spirituality, sensitivity toward spiritual values and increasing compassion and mutual aid shown in this month to become part of every moment of people's lives.

Adnan Oktar's piece on Arab News & Aaila Magazine & The Peninsula Qatar:

<http://www.arabnews.com/islam-perspective/news/764101>

<http://aaila.org/issue/ramadan-2015/article/ramadan-is-a-month-of-fasting-and-the-quran>

<http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/special-page/islam/347058/ramadan-is-the-holy-month-of-fasting-and-the-quran>

Ramadan 2015, Lifestyle

Ramadan Is a Month of Fasting and the Qur'an

By Harun Yahya Fri, Jun 05, 2015

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You who have faith! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you – so that hopefully you will have taqwa – for a specified number of days. But any of you who are ill or on a journey should fast a number of other days. For those who are able to fast, their duty is to feed the poor. And if someone does good of his own accord, it is better for him. But that you should fast is better for you, if you only knew.