

From the Risale-i Nur Collection

*In the
Month of
Ramadan*

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi



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[Since at the end of the First Section brief mention was made of the marks of Islam, this Second Section discusses some instances of wisdom of Ramadan the Noble, the most brilliant and splendid of the marks. It consists of nine points which explain nine of the numerous instances of wisdom in the month of Ramadan.]

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the
Compassionate.

“It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was bestowed from on high as a guidance unto human beings and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard to discern true from false.” (2:185)

First Point

The fast of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam; it is also one of the greatest of the marks and observances of Islam.

There are many purposes and instances of wisdom in the fast of Ramadan which look to both God Almighty's lordship, and man's social life, and his personal life, and the training of his instinctual soul, and his gratitude for divine bounties. One of

the many instances of wisdom in fasting in respect of God Almighty's lordship is as follows:

God Almighty creates the face of the earth in the form of a table laden with bounties, and arranges on the table every sort of bounty as an expression of "From whence he does not expect." (65:3) In this way He states the perfection of His lordship and His mercifulness and compassionateness. People are unable to discern clearly the reality of this situation while in the sphere of causes, under the veil of heedlessness, and they sometimes forget it. But during the month of Ramadan, the people of faith suddenly appear as a well-disciplined army: as sunset approaches, they display a worshipful attitude as though, having been invited to the Pre-Eternal Monarch's banquet, they await the command of "Fall to and help your- selves!" They respond to that compassionate, illustrious, and universal mercy with comprehensive, exalted, and orderly worship. Do those people who fail to participate in such elevated worship and noble bounties deserve to be called human beings?

Second Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in the fast of the blessed month of Ramadan with respect to thankfulness for God Almighty's bounties is as follows:

As is stated in the First Word, a price is required for the foods a tray-bearer brings from the royal kitchen. But to look on those priceless bounties as valueless while tipping the tray-bearer, and not to recognize the one who bestowed them is the greatest foolishness.

God Almighty has spread innumerable sorts of bounties over the face of the earth for mankind, in return for which He wishes thanks, as the price of those bounties. The apparent causes and holders of the bounties resemble tray-bearers. We pay a certain price to them and are indebted to them, and even though they do not merit it are over-respectful and grateful to them. Whereas the True Bestower of Bounties is infinitely more deserving of thanks for that bounty than those causes. To thank Him, then, is to recognize that the bounties come directly from Him; it is to appreciate their worth and to perceive one's own need for them.

Fasting in Ramadan, then, is the key to true, sincere, extensive, and universal thankfulness. For at other times of the year, most people whose circumstances are not difficult do not realize the value of many bounties since they do not experience real hunger. If their stomachs are full and especially if they are rich, they do not understand the degree of bounty present in a piece of dry bread. But when it is time to break the fast, the sense of taste testifies that the dry bread is a precious divine bounty in the eyes of a believer. During Ramadan, everyone from the monarch to the destitute manifests a sort of gratitude through understanding the value of those bounties.

Furthermore, since eating is prohibited during the day, they say: "Those bounties do not belong to me. I am not free to eat them, for they belong to someone else and are his gift. I await his command." They recognize the bounty to be bounty and so give thanks. Thus, fasting in this way is in many respects a key to gratitude; gratitude being man's fundamental duty.

Third Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in fasting from the point of view of man's social life is as follows:

Human beings have been created differently with regard to their livelihoods. In consequence of this, God Almighty invites the rich to assist the poor, so that through the hunger experienced in fasting, they can truly understand the pains and hunger which the poor suffer. If there were no fasting, many self-indulgent rich would be unable to perceive just how grievous are hunger and poverty and how needy of compassion are those who suffer them.

Compassion for one's fellow men is an essential part of true thankfulness. Whoever a person is, there will always be someone poorer than himself in some respect. He is enjoined to be compassionate towards such a person. If he were not himself compelled to suffer hunger, he would be unable give the person - through compassion - the help and assistance he is obliged to offer. And even if he were able, it would be deficient, for he would not have truly experienced hunger himself.

Fourth Point

One instance of wisdom in fasting in Ramadan with respect to training the instinctual soul is as follows:

The instinctual soul wants to be free and independent, and considers itself to be thus. According to the dictates of its nature, it even desires an imaginary lordship and to act as it pleases. It does not want to admit that it is being sustained and trained through innumerable bounties. Especially if it possesses worldly wealth and power, and if heedlessness also encourages it, it will devour God's bounties like a usurping, thieving animal.

Thus, in the month of Ramadan, the instinctual soul of everyone, from the richest to the poorest, may understand that it does not own itself but is totally owned; that it is not free, but is a slave. It understands that if it receives no command, it may not do the simplest and easiest thing; it cannot even stretch out its hand for water. Its imaginary lordship is therefore shattered; it performs its worship and begins to offer thanks, its true duty.

Fifth Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in fasting in Ramadan from the point of view of improving the conduct of the instinctual soul and giving up its rebellious habits is as follows:

Due to its heedlessness the human soul forgets itself; it cannot see its utter powerlessness, want, and deficiency and it does not wish to see them. It does not think of just how weak it is, and how subject to transience and to disasters, nor of the fact that it consists merely of flesh and bones, which quickly decay and fall apart. Simply, it assaults the world as though it possessed a body made of steel and imagined itself to be undying and eternal. It hurls itself on the world with intense greed and voracity, and passionate attachment and love. It is captivated by anything that gives it pleasure or that profits it. Moreover, it forgets its Creator, who sustains it with perfect compassion, and does not think of the consequences of its life and its life in the hereafter. Indeed, it wallows in dissipation and misconduct.

However, fasting in the month of Ramadan awakens even the most heedless and obstinate to their weakness, impotence, and want. Hunger makes them think of their stomachs and they understand the need therein. They realize how unsound are their weak bodies, and perceive how needy they are for kindness and compassion. So they abandon the soul's pharaoh-like despotism and recognizing their utter impotence and want, perceive a desire to take refuge at the divine court. They prepare themselves to knock at the door of mercy with the hands of thankfulness - so long as heedlessness has not destroyed their hearts, that is.

Sixth Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in fasting in Ramadan from the point of view of the revelation of the All-Wise Qur'an, and the month of Ramadan being the most important time in its revelation, is as follows:

Since the All-Wise Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadan, to shun the lower demands of the soul and trivialities and to resemble the angelic state by abstaining from food and drink in

order to greet that heavenly address in the best manner, is to attain to a holy state. And to read and listen to the Qur'an as though it were just revealed, to listen to the divine address in it as if it were being revealed that very instant, to listen to that address as though hearing it from God's Noble Messenger (Upon whom be blessings and peace), indeed, from the Angel Gabriel, or from the Pre-Eternal Speaker Himself, is to attain to that same holy state. And to act as an interpreter and to cause others to listen to it and in some degree to demonstrate the wisdom in the Qur'an's revelation is to greet that heavenly address in the best manner.

Indeed, it is as if the world of Islam becomes a mosque during the month of Ramadan in every corner of which millions of hafizes (those who know the whole Qur'an by heart) make the dwellers on the earth hear the heavenly address. Each Ramadan proclaims in luminous shining manner the verse "it was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was bestowed from on high;" it proves that Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an. Some of the members of the vast

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congregation listen to the reciters with reverence, while others read it themselves.

Following the appetites of the base instinctual soul while in that sacred mosque, and quitting that luminous condition through eating and drinking is truly loathsome and makes such a person the target of the aversion and disgust of the congregation in the mosque. People who oppose those fasting during Ramadan are to the same extent the target of the aversion and disgust of the whole world of Islam.

Seventh Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in the fast of Ramadan with respect to man's gain and profit, who comes to this world to cultivate and trade for the hereafter, is as follows:

The reward for actions in the month of Ramadan is a thousand fold. According to Hadith, each word of the All-Wise Qur'an has ten merits; each is counted as ten good deeds and will yield ten fruits in Paradise. While during Ramadan, each word bears not ten fruits but a thousand, and verses like Hayat al-Kursi (2:255) thousands for each word, and on Fridays in Ramadan it is

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even more. And on the Night of Power, each word is counted as thirty thousand merits.

Indeed, the All-Wise Qur'an, each of whose words yield thirty thousand eternal fruits, is like a luminous Tree of Tuba that gains for believers in Ramadan millions of those eternal fruits. So, come and look at this sacred, eternal profitable trade, then consider it and understand the infinite loss of those who do not appreciate the value of its words.

To put it simply, the month of Ramadan is an extremely profitable display and market for the trade of the hereafter. It is an extremely fertile piece of land for the crops of the next world. For the growth and flourishing of actions it is like April showers in the spring. It is a brilliant holy festival for the parade of mankind's worship in the face of the sovereignty of divine lordship. Since it is thus, mankind has been charged with fasting in order not to heedlessly indulge the animal needs of the instinctual soul like eating and drinking, nor to indulge the appetites lustfully and in trivialities. For, by temporarily rising above animality and quitting the calls of

this world man approaches the angelic state and enters upon the trade of the hereafter. By fasting, he approaches the state of the hereafter and that of a spirit appearing in bodily form. It is as if man then becomes a sort of mirror reflecting the Eternally Besought One. Indeed, the month of Ramadan comprises and gains a permanent, eternal life in this fleeting world and brief transient life. Certainly, a single Ramadan can produce fruits equal to that of a lifetime of eighty years. The Qur'an stating that the Night of Power is more auspicious than a thousand months is a decisive proof of this. Yes, the most luminous Night of Power of this gloomy worldly life is Ramadan.

For example, a monarch may declare certain days to be festivals during his reign, or perhaps once a year, either on his accession to the throne or on some other days that reflect a glittering manifestation of his sovereignty. On those occasions he favors his subjects, not within the compass of his laws generally but with his special bounties and favors through his unveiled presence and his wondrous activities. He favors

directly with his especial regard and attention those of his nation who are loyal and worthy.

In the same way, the All-Glorious Monarch of eighteen thousand worlds, who is the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, revealed in Ramadan the illustrious decree of the All-Wise Qur'an, which looks to the eighteen thousand worlds. It is a requirement of wisdom, then, that Ramadan should be like special divine festival, a dominical display, and a spiritual gathering. Since Ramadan is such festival, God has commanded man to fast, in order to disengage him to a degree from base, animal activities.

The most excellent fasting is to make the human senses and organs, such as the eyes, ears, heart, imagination and thoughts, fast together with the stomach. That is, to withdraw them from unlawful things and from trivia, and to urge each of them to their particular worship. For example, to ban the tongue from lying, backbiting, and obscene language and to make it fast; and to busy it with such activities as reciting the Qur'an, praying, glorifying God's names, asking for God's blessings for the Prophet Muhammad (Upon

whom be blessings and peace), and seeking forgiveness for sins; and for example, to prevent the eyes looking at members of the opposite sex outside the stipulated degrees of kinship, and the ears from hearing harmful things, and to use the eyes to take lessons and the ears to listen to the truth and to the Qur'an, is to make other organs fast too. As a matter of fact, since the stomach is the largest factory, when it has an enforced holiday from work through fasting, the other small workshops are made to follow it easily.

Eighth Point

One of the many instances of wisdom in Ramadan from the point of view of man's personal life is as follows:

It is a healing physical and spiritual diet of the most important kind. When man's instinctual soul eats and drinks just as it pleases, it is both harmful for man's physical life from the medical point of view, and when it hurls itself on everything it encounters whether licit or illicit, it quite simply poisons his spiritual life. Further, it is difficult for such a soul to obey the heart and the spirit; it will fully take the reins into its own hands and then

man cannot ride it, it rather rides man. But by means of fasting in Ramadan, it becomes accustomed to a sort of diet. It tries to discipline itself and learns to listen to commands.

Furthermore, it will not invite illness to that miserable, weak stomach by cramming it with food before the previous consignment has been digested. And by abandoning even licit actions as it is commanded, it will acquire the ability to listen to the commands of the Shari' a and the reason, and so to avoid illicit actions. It will try not to destroy his spiritual life.

Moreover, the great majority of mankind frequently suffer from hunger. Man, therefore, needs hunger and discipline, which train him to be patient and forbearing. Fasting in Ramadan is patient endurance of a period of hunger that continues for fifteen hours, or for twenty-four if the pre-dawn meal is not eaten, and it is a discipline and training. That is to say, fasting is also a cure for impatience and lack of endurance, which double man's afflictions.

Furthermore, the factory of the stomach has many workers, and many of the human organs

are connected to it if the instinctual soul does not take a rest from activity during the day for a month, it makes the factory's workers and those organs forget their particular duties; it busies them with itself so that they remain under its tyranny. Also, it confuses the rest of the organs in the human body with the clangor and smoke of that spiritual factory's machinery. It continuously attracts their attention to itself, making them temporarily forget their exalted duties. It is because of this that for centuries those closest to God have accustomed themselves to discipline and to eating and drinking little in order to be perfected.

Through fasting in Ramadan the factory's workers understand that they were not created for the factory only. While the rest of the organs, instead of delighting in the lowly amusements of the factory, take pleasure in angelic and spiritual amusements, and fix their gazes on them. It is for this reason that in Ramadan the believers experience enlightenment, fruitfulness, and spiritual joys which differ according to their degrees. Their subtle faculties, such as the heart,

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spirit, and intellect, make great progress and advancement in that blessed month through fasting. They laugh with innocent joy in spite of the stomach's weeping.

Ninth Point

One of the instances of wisdom in fasting in Ramadan with regard to shattering the instinctual soul's imaginary lordship and making known its worship through pointing out its impotence is as follows:

The instinctual soul does not want to recognize its Sustainer; it wants its own lordship, like Pharaoh. However, much torment it suffers, it retains that vein. Hunger, however, destroys it. Hence, fasting in Ramadan strikes direct blows at the soul's pharaoh-like front, shattering it. It demonstrates its impotence, weakness, and want. It makes it realize that it is a slave.

Among the narrations of Hadith is the following: "God Almighty said to the instinctual soul: 'What am I and what are you?' The soul replied: 'I am myself and You are Yourself.' So He punished it and cast it into Hell, then asked it again. Again it replied: 'I am myself and You are

Yourself.' However, He punished it, it did not give up its egoism. Finally, He punished it with hunger; that is, He made it go hungry. Then again He asked it: 'Who am I and who are you? ' And the soul replied: 'You are my Compassionate Sustainer and I am your impotent slave!'"

O God! Grant blessings and peace to our master Muhammad that will be pleasing to You and fulfilment of his truth to the number of the merits of the letters of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, and to his Family and Companions, and grant them peace.

Limitless in His glory is your Sustainer, the Lord of Almightyness, [exalted] above anything that men may devise by way of definition!

* And peace be upon all His message-bearers.
* And all praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of All the Worlds (37:180-2)

APOLOGY: This Second Section was written at speed in forty minutes when both myself and the rough-copy scribe were ill; it is bound therefore to lack order and contain defects. We await from our brothers that they look on it with tolerance. They may correct it as they think fit.

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