



**BOSTON  
ISLAMIC  
SEMINARY**

# Ramadan Message

*Dr. Basyouny Nehela*

*President of Boston Islamic Seminary*

# *Ramadan Message*

*“Oh people, the greatest month and blessings will soon shade you...”*

All praise is to Allah (SWT) and His blessings are on the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH).

My dear respected brothers and sisters, Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatu Allah, peace be upon you.

Congratulations on this coming occasion of the blessed month of Ramadan. I would like to encourage every brother and sister to maximize and increase his or her efforts during this great month, for it is indeed a great blessing that we must celebrate and take advantage of, so we may be of the successful and righteous people during this month. I urge all of you to strive hard toward attaining that spirit, and to plan for it. In this regard I would like to share the following message and recommendations with all brothers and sisters:

- I. Recognizing the merits of this great month
- II. Early and sincere preparation
- III. Practicing the five major good deeds
- IV. Strengthening the five major characteristics
- V. Ramadan gift to our Islamic Dawah
- VI. Our Family in Ramadan
- VII. Sharing Ramadan blessings with our fellow citizens
- VIII. Keeping the spirit of Ramadan alive continuously

***I.***

***II.***

### **III. Recognizing the merits of this great month**

This recognition will make us appreciate and value such godly blessings and will encourage us to endeavor towards this great month. To help us attain such recognition, *we should study and ponder about the following verses and Ahadeeth using our heart, soul and intellect.*

- In this month was revealed the best of Books to the best of the Prophets (peace and blessings be upon them all). The Almighty Allah says: *"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong)."* (Al-Baqarah: 185) The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: *"The Scriptures of Ibrahim were sent down on the first of the month of Ramadan. The Torah was sent down on the sixth of Ramadan. The Injeel (Bible) was sent down on the thirteenth of Ramadan. The Zaboor was sent down on the eighteenth of Ramadan, and the Qur'an was sent down on the twenty-fourth of Ramadan."*(Ahmad and At-Tabarani)
- In this month is the best night of the whole year: Laylat Al-Qadr (The Night of Power). As Allah says in Surat (Al-Qadr: 1-5). Thus worshiping on this night is better than worshiping for a thousand months.
- The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: *"When Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are put in chains."* (Agreed upon)
- Our prophet (PBUH) says: *"My Ummah was given five things in the month of Ramadan no other Ummah before them was ever given: The breath of the fasting Muslim is better smelling to Allah than the smell of Musk, and the Angels ask forgiveness for them until they break their fast, and Allah*

*prepares and beautifies His paradise for them saying :My righteous servants are about to be freed from hardship and enjoy you, and the Shayateen (devils) are chained during the whole month, and at the end of the month Allah will forgive all of them (His righteous servants)". He was asked, "Will this forgiveness be on the night of Qadr?" and He responded: "The worker only gets his reward after he finishes his duty". (Ahmad and Alnasaey)*

## **II. Early and sincere preparation**

Our beloved prophet (PBUH) and his righteous followers used to look forward to this holy month and he used to prepare them for Ramadan in many ways:

- **Making supplication**: Pray to Allah that this month reaches you while you are in the best of health and safety so that you can fast and do all your acts of worship with ease and enthusiasm. It is reported that the Prophet (PBUH) used to say from the beginning of Rajab in his prayers: *"O Allah, bless us in Rajab, bless us in Sha`ban, and bless us in Ramadan."* (Ahmad)
- **Showing thankfulness and happiness**: When the month of Ramadan comes, then you should be grateful to Allah and show happiness. The Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) used to greet and congratulate each other on the start of Ramadan.
- **Having a plan and making sincere determination**: You should make a good plan for the whole month about how you will manage your days and evenings during Ramadan. Plan special schedules for your work. Have sincere intention and determination to take full advantage of this time and that you will not do any sin or anything wrongful during this time.
- **Repent and seek forgiveness**: Make sincere repentance and seek the forgiveness of those whom you may have offended or trespassed on.

- **Learn about the rules of fasting:** Fiqh of fasting is very important so that you do not do anything that will invalidate your fast. Learn the way of fasting of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

### ***III. Practicing the five major good deeds***

The month of Ramadan is the month of obedience and doing one obligatory act during the month of Ramadan is considered to have seventy rewards, and doing one optional act is considered to have the reward of an obligatory act. So we must dedicate ourselves to performing all the different forms of worship during Ramadan. Thus we advise ourselves to do the following acts of worship at a minimum.

#### **1. Fasting of the righteous:**

Fast Ramadan with genuine and sincere belief, and truly seeking the reward of Allah the Most High, so that He may forgive us our past sins. Learn the best way of fasting: the way of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Fasting is not only abstaining ourselves from eating and drinking and sex, but also by strictly restraining our minds, hearts as well as our eyes, ears, hands, tongue, and other senses and desires. The Prophet (PBUH) said, *"Whoever does not give up bad words and bad deeds, Allah has no need in that he leaves his food and his drink."* (Al-Bukhari)

During this month, we should endeavor to gain true and lasting benefits from our fasting. *Let us make sure to realize the spirit of fasting, let us strive to control and train our behavior, and guide ourselves to be godly.*

## **2. Reciting and studying Al-Qu'ran:**

Angel Jibreel used to see Prophet Muhammad every night during Ramadan and he used to read the Qur'an with him. Some practical lessons that we need to remember:

- ◆ *Increasing recitation of the Qur'an in Ramadan*
- ◆ *Studying the Qur'an in Ramadan*
- ◆ *Getting together for this purpose*
- ◆ *Listening to Qur'an from someone who has preserved it better*
- ◆ *That the night time is the best time to recite or listen to Qur'an*

## **3. Performing night prayer collectively and individually:**

Night prayer in general is the honor of the believer, and a sign of truthfulness, and the best of the prayers after the obligatory ones.

When we remember the huge amount of the hadeeth and verses that talk about the merit of night prayer and the reward of its people we must rush towards this special worship and try our best to be among those whom Allah describes "*Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (in charity in Allah's cause) out of what We have bestowed on them*". (As-Sajdah, 32:16).

But performing night prayer in Ramadan is far more superior than that performed in other months by virtue of the recommendation of the Prophet (PBUH). Abu Hurairah said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to encourage us to pray at night in Ramadan, without making it obligatory. Then he said, 'Whoever prays at night in Ramadan out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.'" We need to earn this great reward so we can be qualified for more blessings from Allah. And the following recommendations are the minimum for all of us:

- ◆ *Praying al-taraweeh collectively every day in the Masjid*
- ◆ *Praying individually at least two Raka'a every day before Al-Suhoor (pre-dawn meal).*

#### **4. Giving charity generously:**

Ramadan generates and uncovers the spirit of giving and caring buried in us. When we deprive ourselves of food and drink we realize well what it means to be hungry and thirsty. We feel the pain of those who cannot find the basic necessities of life. *So we have to be very charitable and generous as our role model the prophet (PBUH) used to be. Ibn `Abbas, narrated that : "The Prophet was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Jibreel visited him, and Jibreel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet used to recite the Holy Qur'an to Jibreel, and when Jibreel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which causes rain and welfare)."* (Al-Bukhari)

Let's plan from today to give kindly and generously in Ramadan, to help the poor and the needy, to contribute generously to useful social and community projects. We suggest for our Ramadan charity to be distributed as follows:

- ◆ *A pledge to all opportunities / national and local organizations which we are invited to support during Ramadan*

Also, let's exercise the full meaning of al-sadaqah (charity) and carry it to its maximum in performing deeds such as helping others, making Da'wah, or just greeting each other with a smile, for greeting your Muslim brother with a smile is an act of charity. This exercise should

be solely for the sake of Allah and without expectation of rewards from anyone else.

#### **5. I'tikaf (Seclusion in the Masjid) during the last ten days:**

I'tikaf means staying in the Masjid (Mosque) with the intention of drawing oneself closer to Allah. We need to practice this at the very least on the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan while seeking Laylat Al-Qadr and tasting the sweetness of such worship. *Our prophet (PBUH) used to make I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan until he died, and then his wives carried that Sunnah after him.* (Agreed upon) We need to do that in the hopes that our souls be softened and inspired by such actions of compliance to the Sunnah of our prophet (PBUH).

Aisha (PBUH) Narrated: *"With the beginning of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (PBUH) used to tighten his belt (i.e. work hard) and pray all the nights, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers."* (Al-Bukhari)

No doubt that spending time in prayer, reading the Qur'an, making *dhikr*, while reflecting on oneself and being secluded a short while from the business of worldly activities is a very important tool of the purification of the heart especially for someone living in such a busy society as ours.

#### **IV. Strengthening the five major characteristics**

Fasting also brings out the best in our ethics and manners. Ramadan is a real educational school that trains and transforms Muslims to be better persons, and fasting gives us the opportunity to be extra kind and well-mannered during this month to Muslims and to all human beings, friends and neighbors. Let us show

others that this is our blessed and sacred time. Let us practice all Ramadan in godly fashion and especially observe the following characteristics:

### ***Sincerity***

When we fast, we should gain this quality of watching ourselves and also staying away from riyaa' (showing off). Allah says in a hadeeth Qudsy, "Fasting is for me and I reward for it." (Al-Bukhari)

This is an act that is between Allah and his servants. No one can judge its sincerity except Him. And all endeavoring Muslims should maintain this manner of sincerity to safeguard them and prosper for this great Islamic cause.

### ***Taqwa***

Taqwa in short means God-consciousness, piety, and fear of Allah. It signifies submission to Allah and total commitment to all that is good and rejection of all that is evil and bad. Allah says, "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed upon you as it has been prescribed upon those before you, so that you may attain taqwa." (alBaqarah:183). Taqwa summarizes all the moral and spiritual gifts of Ramadan. We can thus say that Ramadan gives us this great gift of Taqwa and helps us be a wholesome part of the people of Taqwa.

*So we should ask ourselves, when we break our fast: 'Has this fasting day given us more Taqwa and made us fear Allah more? Has it increased our desire to protect ourselves from the hellfire?*

### ***Discipline***

Sometimes we must change and adjust our habits in our daily routines in order to make sure we are not the servants and slaves to our habits and desires, but always the servants of Allah.

We are trained in this month to discipline ourselves for the sake of Allah. In our mornings and evenings, we follow a strict and disciplined schedule of eating and

drinking. We are constantly aware that even in such mundane activities as eating and drinking, we must remain under divine law.

Then after Ramadan, we have to keep this spirit of discipline in other modes of our life and must continue with our submission to the commands of Allah.

***Patience: "Seek help in patience and prayer"***

Ramadan has been called "the month of patience". We must keep in mind that the reward for patience is none other than Paradise.

Patience is the highest point of good behavior without it, a believer cannot rise to the challenges he faces in his religion and the crises that face him in his worldly life. Patience is the elixir that has the power to transform the difficulties of life into pleasures and its worries into relief. It is the cure for all ills, the solution to all problems, and the way to overcome all obstacles.

So fasting is a means of learning self-restraint and patience. With patience we are able to strengthen our resolve to worship Allah alone, with sincerity, and also cope with life's trials and tribulations. So for example with patience we are able to perform our prayers calmly and correctly, without being hasty, and without merely pecking the ground several times!

*In this holy month, we should strive to develop a firm resolve for doing acts of obedience, and to adorn ourselves with this kind of patience – having certainty in the saying of our Messenger (PBUH): "And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship." (Ahmad, at-Tabarani)*

## ***Accountability***

Days and nights pass so quickly, as if they were mere moments. We welcomed last Ramadan, then we bade it farewell, and now we are preparing ourselves to welcome a new Ramadan again. So we should hasten to do good deeds in this month and strive to fill it with what pleases Allah and with what will help us on the Day when we meet Him.

Accountability is the key to measure our improvements and successes in all our work and endeavors, and it should be applied in many forms as follows:

- *One should hold himself/herself accountable for what should be done to uphold Allah's rules, as well as towards our own selves, our families, our communities, and our Da'wah responsibilities.*
- *One should hold himself/herself accountable for what deed was accomplished and in the manner it was accomplished.*
- *One should hold himself/herself accountable for planning what should be corrected and improved upon in the future.*

*We should not delay this kind of accountability to save ourselves from regret, and to use our life wisely and productively.*

## ***V. Our Family in Ramadan***

The blessings and the Goodness of Ramadan must begin at home with our families, both immediate family and extended family. Ramadan should bring you closer to each other. The following are some advices to be considered during the month of Ramadan:

- *Call for a family meeting to plan together how you will help each other to earn the reward of Ramadan and earn the Mercy of Allah so you may be*

*saved from the hellfire and be gathered in paradise. Explain the importance of Ramadan and its implications for the family.*

- *Plan ahead for the time you spend at home in order to balance your responsibilities as a parent and Da'iyah.*
- *Supervise your children's engagement in religious practices such as fasting, reading Qu'ran and praying.*
- *Try to have suhur (pre-dawn meal) together. Break your fast together, make collective Dua'a and pray some optional pray together as much as you can.*
- *Reduce TV watching and prepare the family for the spirit and the blessings of Ramadan.*
- *Participate in all Ramadan community activities as much as you can.*
- *Make Ramadan a blessing not just for every person in the family, but to the family as a whole.*

## **VI. Ramadan gift to our beloved organizations**

Alhamdulillah, with the approaching of the month of Ramadan, we have to feel the special bounty of Allah upon us. He has appointed us to carry out and spread His divine mission and made us busy doing this godly and prophetic work in our Islamic organizations. And such bounty requires an additional effort and a special appreciation and thanks, especially when we are about to welcome the month of Ramadan. I would like to therefore remind ourselves of the following tasks for the month of Ramadan:

- *To be grateful to Allah by acknowledging His blessings on us and for being a practicing Muslim, committed to his Da'wah and endeavoring in such organizations that promote the values of the creator.*
- *To renew our pledge to Allah by being more dedicated to our Islamic Da'wah, and by sincerely adopting and taking on attitudes and concepts*

*used by the prophet (PBUH) to built his community, such as: sincerity, sacrifice, brotherhood, dedication, perseverance, and trust.*

- ▣ *To discuss and study this message in our community meetings and follow up with each other in fulfilling all above deeds and characteristics as a minimum.*
- ▣ *To intensify individual recruitment during the month of Ramadan by selecting committed and effective volunteers to join our Islamic organizations in carrying the most honorable of tasks.*
- ▣ *To maintain and increase our public Dawah programs in the month of Ramadan and as one of its good deeds.*

I believe that achieving these tasks during this holy month of Ramadan will translate into a great progress for our society and will be a stepping stone in upholding our responsibilities towards our Islamic mission.

### ***VII. Sharing Ramadan blessings with our fellow citizens***

Ramadan is the month of compassion. This compassion is not only by extending kind words and kind acts towards ourselves and our own community but more importantly and more imperatively towards all of Allah's creation; especially towards our non Muslim neighbors in the country in which we live. The prophet of Allah (PBUH) said: "*Gabriel kept on commending the right of the neighbor to me almost to the point I thought he would make him an heir*" (Abu Dawud). Because of this hadith, we find Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As when he used to slaughter a sheep he used to say to his servant: "*Have you presented a gift from it to our neighbor, the Jew?*"

We learn from that:

- ▣ *The neighbor in Islam includes Muslims and non Muslims.*
- ▣ *Caring about our neighbor is highly recommended in Islam.*
- ▣ *Sharing goodness with our neighbor is a must.*

Based on this, we believe that caring about the soul and the heart of our neighbors is the most highly recommended act in Islam. Sharing the blessings and the happiness of such an occasion as Ramadan with our neighbors is a very important act of compassion that Muslims should express towards their neighbors during this holy month of Ramadan. We should therefore aim for the following during this holy month:

- *Understand that the holy month of Ramadan offers us a great and unique opportunity to share our religion's values, and principles with non-Muslim.*
- *Plan together in advance for Da'wah Ramadan activities, for your school, work place, friends, and neighbors.*
- *Put up a Ramadan banner on your local masjid or on your house door. It can be something handmade or something more formal, to educate people passing by about this blessed month and what it means to Muslims.*
- *Give kids Ramadan Mubarak balloons and candy. Let your neighbors' kids also feel the happiness of Ramadan by including chocolate and candy among your snacks.*
- *Publish Ramadan information in your neighborhood ,or school, or office newsletter*
- *Have a neighborhood Iftar gathering. You don't have to invite everyone. Perhaps just the closest neighbors can attend this event.*
- *Be sure to invite Muslim families and friends who are comfortable interacting with non-Muslims in this event, and brief them about how they should properly share Ramadan with the neighbors. Also, have some written material on Ramadan available for your guests and put it on some fancy paper to add to the festive air of the evening.*

### **VIII. Keeping the spirit of Ramadan alive continuously**

This is our tool of evaluation for what we will be doing in the month of Ramadan, because as we know fasting, praying during the night, reading the book of Allah and giving charity should not be relegated to Ramadan alone. These good deeds, and others like staying away from gossip and slander, are things we should do all the time. By keeping the spirit of Ramadan alive throughout the year, we can safeguard our religion and will be able to seize many opportunities to earn the mercy and blessings of Allah which will help us to be successful in all aspects of life.

**Finally:** *Making sincere and constant supplications. And don't forget to include your brothers and sisters, our Islamic work, and our society.*

May Allah accept from all of us and make us sincere and successful.

**Dr. Basyouny Nehela**

**President of Boston Islamic Seminary**