

What have we learned from Ramadan?

BS Foad, MD 2018

1-Obedience to Allah and His messenger

2-Patience, perseverance and sacrifice

3-Controlling our desires and understanding our priorities

4-Learning a sense of achievement and joy for being able to accomplish things

5-What counts is our good deeds and sincere intentions

6-Allah is forgiving, merciful and caring

7-Safeguarding our prayers and the importance of the Qur'an

8-Giving in charity

Obedience to Allah and His messenger

We fasted Ramadan because Allah ordered us to fast, seeking reward only from Allah

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

O you who believe fasting has been ordained on you, as it was ordained on those before you, that you may learn Taqwa (righteousness)

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2: 183

Obedience to Allah and His messenger is an integral part of faith

فُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

Say: “Obey Allah and obey the messenger; if you turn away then he is responsible for what he was charged for, and you are responsible for what you were charged with; if you obey him you become guided; his mission is to deliver the message

An-Nur (The Light) 24: 54

And

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

Whoever obeys the message does obey Allah

An-Nesa’a (The Women) 4: 80

And

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

O you who believe obey Allah and obey the messenger, and those charged with authority among you

An-Nesa’a (The Women) 4: 59

Obedience to Allah and His messenger is a prerequisite for obtaining Allah’s mercy

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Establish regular prayers and give in charity and obey the messenger that you may receive mercy

An-Nur (The Light) 24: 56

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said in a Hadeeth Qudsi, relating after his lord:

(Fasting is done for My sake, and I give its reward)

Bokhari

Our intention in fasting Ramadan is to obey Allah, and to get close to Him, and to gain His pleasure. Good deeds that are motivated by sincere devotion to Allah are accepted by Allah, and are rewarded, both in this life, as well as in the Hereafter

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

Whoever does good righteous deeds, man or woman, and has faith, We will let him live a good life, and We will reward him according to the best of his deeds

An-Nahl (The Bees) 16: 97

Disobedience to Allah & His messenger is an indication of rejection of faith

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ط فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

Say: "Obey Allah and the messenger, but if you turn away know that Allah loves not those that reject faith

Al-Imran (The Family of Imran) 3: 32

Learning patience, perseverance and sacrifice

We lose sleep, and we feel hungry and thirsty, and we feel tired, but we endure this hardship because we are fasting for the sake of Allah. We learn patience and sacrifice. We behave in a proper way when fasting, therefore we do not get angry, or use bad language, or get into fights.

We do not hold ill feelings towards others, or refuse to help those who need our help, and we do our work honestly and to the best of our ability. We do not lie or cheat, or give false witness because this will annul our fast, for Allah then has no need for our fast.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (How many persons are fasting, yet all they get out of their fast is thirst; and how many persons are standing up in prayer at night, yet all they get out of it is lack of sleep). The reason these people are not rewarded for their fast and prayer is their lack of sincerity and devotion, or that their behavior is not fitting for a person who is fasting or a person of faith who is reciting the Qur'an and trying to get close to Allah.

The patience and perseverance that we learned in Ramadan will help us cope with tests and trials that we are subjected to in our life. We approach difficult and adverse situations with the understanding that it is either the result of our wrong behavior, therefore we need to correct it, or it is a test and trial from Allah, therefore we need to patiently persevere. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated: (I wonder for the affairs of a believer, all his affair is good for him, and this occurs only for a believer: If he is enjoying a blessing from Allah, he is thankful and grateful, and it is good for him; and if he is experiencing difficulty, he patiently persevere, and it is good for him) Narrated by Ahmad & Muslim. A believer never loses hope of Allah's mercy. The Qur'an states:

وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْأَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

Despair not of the soothing mercy of Allah, for only those without faith ever despair of Allah's mercy

Youseff (Joseph) 12: 87

Those who patiently persevere are given a reward without measure:

إِنَّمَا يُوفَى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Indeed those who patiently persevere will receive a reward without measure

Az-Zumar (The Groups) 39: 10

Learning to control our desires and understanding our priorities

As human beings we are weak, and can be influenced by such desires as money, power, fame and indulgence in material things. The result is that we may forget our accountability to Allah. The Qur'an states:

رُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَإِ

Fair in the eyes of men the love of things they covet: among women, sons, and heaps of gold and silver, and branded horses and well-tilled land. Such are the enjoyment of this life, but with Allah is the best of all returns

Al-Imran (The Family of Imran) 3: 14

And

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا ۗ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

Whatever you were given are but the convenience of this worldly life and its glitter, but what Allah has in store is better and ever-lasting, will you not then consider?

Al-Qasas (The Stories) 28: 60

And

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌّ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ
الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ
وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

Know that the life of this world is but play, amusement and glitter, and boasting amongst yourselves, and rivalry in possessions and children, the example of which is rain which produces vegetation that delight those who lack faith, then you see it grow yellow, then it crumbles and dies; but in the Hereafter is grievous chastisement and forgiveness from Allah and his good pleasure; the life of this world is nothing but chattels of deception

Al-Hadeed (The Iron) 57: 20

Part of Taqwa is controlling our vain desires. We abstain from food and drink, and from bad habits, and from doing anything that displeases Allah, and we do what is right because this is the behavior of a person who is fasting for the sake of Allah

Learning that what counts is our good deeds and our sincere intentions, and what we have done in our life

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Every person on the Day of Judgment will be asked to account for four areas:

1-His whole life: what did he do?

2-His youth: did he use it properly or abuse it?

3-His money: How did he earn it and how did he spend it?

4-And his knowledge and wisdom: what did he do with it?

Narrated by Termidhi

The Qur'an states:

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَىٰ

وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنتَهَىٰ

That man has nothing to show except what he has done and did strive for

And that his striving will be witnessed

Then he will be rewarded the utmost reward

And it is to your Lord the final return

An-Najm (The Star) 53: 39-42

There are those whom we are happy to see, for they are good people, kind, trust-worthy and honest. They have a tremendous effect on others and they set a good example in their character and behavior. We learn from them and they ask for no reward. In contrast, there are those who waste their time pursuing their vain desires and mislead us from the path of Allah. They cause nothing but trouble and help no one but themselves.

Allah is kind, caring, forgiving and merciful, and he wants to guide us

He does not force against our will. He promised to take care of us, guide us and protect us if we obey his orders and follow his way. But if we ignore him and follow our vain desires, he will leave us in our misguided way that we have chosen for ourselves. However, if we repent and turn to Him and change our ways, and follow his orders then he will forgive us and gives us a second chance.

The Qur'an states:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ
وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ۗ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

Allah wishes to make clear to you and guide you in the ways of those before you, and to turn to you, and Allah is full of knowledge and wise. Allah wishes to accept your repentance, but those who follow their vain desires wish that you may be misguided far away. Allah wishes to make it easier for you, for man was created weak

An-Nesa'a (The Women) 4: 26-28

And

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۗ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

This is my way leading straight, therefore follow it; follow not other paths for it will scatter you away from his path. Thus does He advise you that you may become righteous

Al-Ana'am (The Cattle) 6: 153

It is never too late to repent and seek Allah's forgiveness. The Qur'an states:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say: "O my servants who have transgressed against their own souls do not despair of Allah's mercy, because Allah forgives the sins all, for He is often-forgiving, most-merciful

Az-Zumar (The Groups) 39: 53

But a condition of accepting repentance is that we need to change our wrong ways and to follow and obey Allah

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ
وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

And turn to your Lord in devotion and submission before the penalty befalls you and you will not be helped then. And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord, before the penalty comes to you suddenly and you perceive it not

Az-Zumar (The Groups) 39: 54 & 55

Safeguarding our prayers in Ramadan

In Ramadan we safeguard our prayers, and we offer additional optional prayers, and we give in charity. We try to perfect our prayers and to concentrate and understand the Qur'an that we are reciting, and we pray with devotion, humility and submission to Allah. The Qur'an states:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

The believers will succeed. Those who are devoted and humble in their prayers

Al-Mumenoun (The Believers) 23: 1 & 2

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The first thing that people will be held accountable for, on the Day of Judgment, is their prayers; if it was complete it will be written for him as such; if it was incomplete Allah will ask his angels: Does my servant have any optional prayer? If he does have optional prayer it will be used to complete his obligatory prayer. Then other areas of his accountability is addressed similarly)

Ahmad, Abou Dawood & Nesa'ee, & Hakim

In Ramadan we offer additional optional prayers, like the Taraweeh prayers offered after Al-Esha'a prayer at night every night in Ramadan. These are held in the mosque, when the Qur'an is recited every night till it is completed usually on the 27th night of Ramadan.

However, some people only go through the motions, and do not pray with earnest or concentration, or not listen to the Qur'an being recited or allow the Qur'an to soften their hearts and make them better human

beings. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (How many are fasting, but what they get out of their fast is nothing but thirst; and how many are standing up in prayer at night, but all they get out of their prayer is lack of sleep) Narrated by Baghawi & Tabarani. In another Hadeeth, the Prophet (PBUH) stated that some people their prayer is not lifted above their head except one foot, implying that it is not accepted or sent to heaven or written in their favor

Ramadan and the Qur'an are inseparable

The Qur'an came down in the month of Ramadan. The Qur'an states:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an came down, as guidance to mankind, and clear signs of guidance and criterion (to distinguish right from wrong)

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2: 185

And

وَالكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ ۗ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

By the book that makes things clear

We sent it down during a blessed night, for We ever wish to warn against evil

Ad-Dukhan (The Smoke) 44: 2 & 3

And

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ
لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

We have indeed revealed this message in the night of power; and what will explain to you what the night of power is? The night of power is better than a thousand months

Al-Qadr (The night of power) 97: 1-3

The Qur'an that we read and recite will bear witness for us on the Day of Judgment. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (Fasting and the Qur'an intercede on behalf Allah's servant on the Day of Judgment: The fasting will say: "My Lord I prevented him from his food and desires, allow me to intercede on his behalf. The Qur'an will say: "My Lord, I prevented him from sleeping at night, allow me to intercede on his behalf". And both are allowed to intercede) Narrated by Ahmad, Tabarani & Hakim.

Giving in charity in Ramadan

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was very charitable, and was most charitable during Ramadan, when Jibreel (Gabriel, the angel of revelation, used to teach him the Qur'an). He was then more charitable and generous than the blowing wind.

We follow his example and give in charity during the month of Ramadan. We help the poor and needy, and support institutions that do good work, like our Islamic center. Prophet Muhammad told us that the charity that we give wipes out the sin, as water extinguishes the fire. The Qur'an refers to our charity as a beautiful loan that we give to Allah, in order to honor our gifts of charity, and to remind us that what we give will be rendered back to us by Allah:

إِنْ تَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

When you loan to Allah a beautiful loan, he will double it to your credit, and will forgive you your sins, for Allah appreciates your service and is forbearing

At-Taghabun (Mutual loss & gain) 64: 17

And

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

Whatever you give (in charity) He (Allah) will replace it, and He is the best to provide sustenance

Sa'Ba 34: 39

In contrast, those who withhold and do not give in charity, and give all kinds of excuses will be punished on the Day of Judgment:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Let not those who withhold covetously of what Allah gave them of His grace think that it is good for them, it is worse for them; whatever they covetously withheld will encircle their necks on the Day of Judgment; to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and earth; and Allah is well aware of all that you do

Al-Imran (The Family of Imran) 3: 180

What do we learn from Ramadan?

BS Foad, MD 2018

(1)Obedience to Allah & His messenger) We fast Ramadan because Allah ordered us to fast: ***“O you who believe fasting is ordained on you, as it was ordained on those before you, that you may learn Taqwa (righteousness)”*** Al-Baqara 2: 183. Obedience to Allah & His messenger is an integral part of faith: ***“Say: “Obey Allah and obey the messenger”*** An-Nur 24: 54; ***“Whoever obeys the messenger obeys Allah”*** An-Nesa’a 4: 80. We need to obey Allah’s messenger in order to receive Allah’s mercy and be forgiven: ***“Establish regular prayer, and give in charity, and obey the messenger that you may receive Allah’s mercy”*** An-Nur 24: 56; ***“Say: “If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you”*** Al-Imran 3: 31. Disobeying Allah’s messenger is a sign of Kufr (rejection of faith): ***“Obey Allah and the messenger, but if you turn away know that Allah loves not those that reject faith”*** Al-Imran 3: 32.

(2)Learning patience, perseverance and sacrifice: We endure hunger and thirst, and we watch our behavior when we fast Ramadan, because we are fasting for the sake of Allah. We control our anger, do not use bad words or get into fights. We do our work honestly and try to help others. We get our reward from Allah only when we behave in a righteous way. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us: (If you do not stop lying, cheating and giving false witness, then there is no need for Allah that you stop eating and drinking) Bokhari. The patient perseverance that we learned in Ramadan will help us when we face difficulty, tests and trials in our life. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (I wonder for the affairs of a believer, all his affair is good for him: when he is enjoying a blessing he is grateful and it is good for him, and when he is facing difficulty he patiently persevere, and it is good for him) Ahmad & Muslim. A believer never despairs of Allah’s mercy: ***“Never despair of Allah’s mercy, only those who lack faith ever despair of Allah’s mercy”*** Youseff 12: 87. The reward of those who patiently persevere has no measure: ***“Those who patiently persevere will have a reward without measure*** (Az-Zumar) 39: 10.

(3)Learning to control our desires: “Fair in the eyes of men the love of things they covet: women, sons, heaps of gold and silver, branded horses, and well-tilled land. Such are the enjoyments of this life, but with Allah is the best of all returns” An-Nesa’a 4: 14. Part of Taqwa is controlling our vain desires.

(4)Learning that what counts is our good deeds and sincere intentions: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (On the Day of Judgment every person will be asked to account for 4 areas: His whole life, what did he do? His youth, did he abuse it? His money, how did he earn it and how did he spend it? And his knowledge what did he do with it) Termidhi. The Qur’an states: ***“That man has nothing to show except what he has done and strived for. And that his striving will be witnessed; and that he will be rewarded the utmost reward; and that it is to your Lord is the final return”*** An-Najm 53: 39-42.

(5)Allah is kind, caring, forgiving and merciful: “Allah wishes to make clear to you and to guide you in the ways of those before you, and to turn to you, for Allah is full of knowledge, wise. Allah wishes to accept your repentance, but those who follow their vain desires wish that you may

be misguided far away; Allah wishes to make it easier for you, for man was created weak” An-Nesa’a 4: 26-28; ***And He is the one who accepts repentance from His servants, forgive the bad deeds, and knows what you do***” Ash-Shura’ 42: 25

(6)Safeguarding our prayers in Ramadan & offering additional optional prayers: *“The believers will succeed, who are devoted and humble in their prayer”* Al-Mumenoun 23: 1 & 2.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us that we will be asked to account first about our prayers, and whether our obligatory prayers were completed or not (Abou Dawood, Nesa’ee & Hakim). Those who pray absent-minded or only go through the motions, or do not have proper sincere intentions their prayers are not accepted.

(7)The Qur’an that we recite will intercede on our behalf: The Qur’an came down in Ramadan: ***“The month of Ramadan during which the Qur’an was sent down as guidance to mankind”*** Al-Baqara: 185

(8)The charity that we give will help wipe out our sins