

Have you ever reflected upon the reason Ramadhaan was selected as the month of fasting? Allaah SWT Himself has described it:

Ramadhaan is the month in which the Qur-aan -- guidance to people, containing clear pronouncements of the guidance and the criteria of right and wrong -- was sent down. Therefore, whoever of you is present in this month, must spend it in fasting... This is so that you exalt the greatness of Allaah for the favour that He has guided you, and so that you may give thanks. Al-Baqarah 2:185

Thus, Ramadhaan was selected because it was the month when revelation of the Qur-aan began and as such, people could exalt the greatness of Allaah for His favour of guidance. The fasting itself was prescribed so that people can thank Allaah for bestowing them the guidance.

In essence then, the month of Ramadhaan is a month-long celebration of the revelation of the Qur-aan so that people can rejoice in this greatest bounty of Allaah SWT by glorifying Him profusely and by fasting as an expression of gratitude for this immense favour.

Why is the revelation of the Qur-aan the greatest mercy of Allaah SWT that He Himself ascribes it to His attribute of being the Most Gracious (Ar-Rahmaan), and why does it deserve a month long celebration? To understand the immenseness of this mercy, people have to realize that through the Qur-aan Allaah SWT has given us a system of life that is perfectly balanced, optimally designed, fully-integrated and completely harmonized with our nature and the nature of our surroundings (i.e., earthly environment). This system covers every aspect of life and, if practised as designed and as demonstrated by the Prophetic model<sup>{footnote}</sup> Unfortunately, it is not being practised in that manner currently anywhere in the world, so there are no living examples of Islam's unparalleled beauty as a complete way of life. Under these circumstances it is the most important religious obligation of each and every Muslim to strive for establishing Islam the way it was established in Madeenah.<sup>{/footnote}</sup>, produces a just, peaceful, optimal, caring and sharing society characterized by excellence and magnanimity. It is a turnkey system that can be implemented as packaged, without needing any alterations or customizations, to produce the most excellent results, requiring only sincere faith and whole-hearted commitment from humanity.

The greatness of this mercy is further realized when we think that it would have been absolutely impossible for humankind to come up with such a system on our own, regardless of how much we would have tried, whatever means and technology we would have used, and whatever research we would have conducted. Even in this day and age when human beings boast of their amazing technological advancements, all the greatest scientists of the world cannot team up and produce any workable system that has even any semblance of balance whatsoever in it. The reality is that whatever human beings do is destructive in its net impact because it may be useful in one aspect but may cause untold problems in other aspects of human life and

environment. That is why we see destruction in the world everywhere. This is the result of human advancement in the physical fields of study that can be experimented upon in laboratories. Can you imagine our failure in the arena of human social and societal systems that are the subject matter of the Qur-aanic system? The more one reflects upon these matters, the more he or she will realize the immenseness of this mercy of Allaah SWT.

So how do we celebrate this greatest of Allaah's mercies? Naturally the only way we can really celebrate this bounty of Allaah SWT is by refreshing our minds with all the guidance and the complete system enunciated in this book, examining whether we are practising that guidance or not, evaluating if we are practising it in the right manner or not, and correcting wherever we find ourselves deficient. That is where the Taraweeh  $\hat{S}$ alaah comes into play.

The purpose of the Taraweeh  $\hat{S}$ alaah is to stand exalting the greatness of Allaah SWT, and to be standing in His audience in a respectful manner and reciting or listening with full attention to the word of the Lord under awe and with humility to fulfil the abovementioned objectives. During this recital, whenever a command comes that can immediately be executed by performing a sajdah, executing it right away. For all other commands and teachings, after the recital of a certain portion of the book, bowing to Allaah SWT as a gesture of obedience to whatever has been read or heard and then prostrating to signify full submission and to express gratitude. That is the essence of Taraweeh  $\hat{S}$ alaah and that is the way of reciting the Qur-aan practised by the Prophet and by his  $\hat{S}$ ahaabah. That is why this  $\hat{S}$ alaah and Tahajjud  $\hat{S}$ alaah were called Qiyaam because their primary purpose was reminding oneself of the words of the Lord while standing respectfully, humbly and attentively.

Unfortunately, we have converted it into a mechanical ritual whereby we go through the movements devoid of the spirit. The emphasis is on finishing, not on refreshing and reminding ourselves of the message. As far as the system that the Qur-aan proposes, hardly anyone thinks about it.

The biggest barrier in this respect is lack of the knowledge of the Qur-aanic Arabic. This can be compensated if people spend extra time earlier in the day to read the translation and Tafseer of the portion that is to be recited in Taraweeh  $\hat{S}$ alaah at night. To make it happen, we need to re-examine our time commitments and find time to do so by getting rid of some of the things we are busy with. That is where planning for Ramadhaan becomes important.

There may be some people who, even after exhausting their efforts (and Allaah knows whether one has exhausted all efforts to find time or not), can only spare time either for reading the translation and Tafseer or for Taraweeh  $\hat{S}$ alaah. Such a person should offer 'Ishaa with Jamaa'ah in Masjid and then come home and stand in the audience of Allaah SWT and read that much of the Qur-aan with translation and Tafseer.

The reward that Allaah SWT has promised for reciting the Qur-aan is for those who understand fully what is being said and have full and sincere intention of acting accordingly. If one is not understanding what is being said and does not know what is being asked of them, they will lose all the reward that Allaah SWT has assigned to understanding the message with the intention of acting upon it, which leaves only a small fraction for just reciting or listening to the words.

Prudent people would spend their time where they get the most return by understanding the message with the intention to live by it. They are the ones who will really be celebrating the revelation of the Qur-aan.