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“Allahumma Bariik lana fie Rajab Wa Sha’baan wabalieгна Ramadan”.

“O Allah, make the months of Rajab and Sha’ban blessed for us, and let us reach the month of Ramadan (i.e. prolong our life up to Ramadan, so that we may benefit from its merits and blessings).”

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Wa Ba’d:

Ya Ayyuhal Ladinna Ammanu! It is said that Ibadah without “the presence of the heart” is of no avail and that Almighty Allah’s words, which are addressed to all mankind and not to one people, should be studied with the heart and tongue in absolute accord. Our Beloved Nabee Sallallahoo Alayhi Wasallam said: “It is not a sixth nor a tenth of a persons devotion which is acceptable to Almighty Allah Subhanahu Wata’ala, but only such portion thereof as he or she offers with understanding and with a true devotional spirit”. We are commanded in verse 24 of Surah Al-Anfal:

“O ye who believe! Give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calleth you to that which will give you life; and know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart, and that it is He to Whom you shall (all) be gathered.”

Beloved people of Imaan! The above verse calls us to our Most Exalted Maker and His Beloved Nabee Sallallahoo Alayhi Wasallam. It tells us: “If you answer this call you shall be given life.” It considers life to lie in answering Almighty Allah’s Call, the call of Islam and the Most Noble Qur’an. Imaam Al-Ghazali said: ‘in reading the Most Holy Qur’an one’s heart and intelligence must work together. The lips utter the words; intelligence helps in the apprehension of their meanings and the heart in paying obedience to the dictates of duty’.

Ya Ibad Allah! If the human heart is refractory and refuses to obey the Call of Allah, that is not the end of the matter. I sincerely believe that the gateway to ascension lies in the most Holy and Blessed month of Ramadan, the month of the Qur’an, the month of Ibadah and sacrifice; the month of caring and sharing; the month of fasting; the month of examination and evaluation; and the month of Taqwa and Tawhid.

Ummatal Qur’an! Do not hold back your kindness and generosity, adopt the virtues of benevolence and chivalry and hearken to solve the difficulties of the destitute, for benevolence during the month that belongs exclusively to Almighty Allah is a great profitable quality. The Holy month of Ramadan as a religious and political exercise is an agent of society’s life and growth towards perfection. If a keen eye were to observe the Muslim Ummah during the month of Ramadan and compare it with societies that are deprived of this Divine Gift, it would arrive simply at the judgement that the life of society – true life – is embodied in these spiritual performances as we learn from verse 183 of Surah Al-Baqara:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed To those before you, that you may learn self-restraint.”

“As it was prescribed”: This does not mean that the Muslim fast is like the other fasts previously observed, in the number of days, in the time or manner of the fast, or in other incidents; it only

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means that the principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one. Fasting during Ramadan brings to the mind a measure of hunger, thirst and bodily weakness. But it is a weakness that gives us real strength. With its guiding precepts Ramadan nourishes this genuine feeling in such a fashion that it becomes amalgamated with the individual's nature.

Faya Ayyuhan nas! And when love becomes the mainspring of feeling and spreads its roots deep into the core of a Muh'min's heart, it gives rise to a yearning which, with voluntary zeal, is prepared to do benevolence and service to society. Ramadan eradicates greed, stinginess, enmity, malice, hostility and insolence and has an extraordinary purifying effect on the soul. Ramadan teaches us spiritual purification. It calls us to brotherhood, benevolence, love and friendship. It helps us to encourage one another to benevolence, piety, and worthy deeds and cooperate with one another in generating and sustaining an environment that cultivates the love of virtue and goodness in the light of a pure faith.

Ma'a sheral Muslimeen! This helps to mobilize all the constructive energies of the Ummah toward general welfare and good, not toward corruption and vice. Almighty Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala has prescribed fasting in the month of Ramadan and declared the two to be inseparable. The joining together of these two blessings is an act of great significance primarily because it was in this month that the Holy Qur'an was revealed and the joyful tidings of a new dawn were given to the ailing humanity.

Alal Muslimeena Jami'ah! What could be more fitting and beneficial for a Muslim than that he or she quickened himself or herself with a new life through fasting and Ibadah during this most wonderful month? This, in brief, is the Islamic fast or spiritual fare that is endued with every kind of virtue and free from any hardship or severity that may be beyond the endurance of man. We are reminded in verse 185 of Surah Al-Baqara:

"Allah intends every facility for you. He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance you shall be grateful."

Ih'watal Imaan! The regulations are again and again coupled with an insistence on two things: [a] the facilities and concessions given, and [b] the spiritual significance of the fast, without which is like an empty shell without a kernel. If we realize this, we shall look upon Ramadan, not as a burden, but as a great blessing, and shall be duly grateful for the lead given to us in this manner. All these beneficial qualities have combined to make Ramadan a season of Ibadah and good-doing in which all Muslims, to whatever group, class, race or country they belong, join and fraternize with each other.

Ma Ummatunna Bi Hamdillah! This glorious month of Ramadan comes to every town and village at the same time and sheds its lustre on the cottage, the shed, the mansion and the castle alike. It makes no distinction and allows for no discrimination. Its glory and radiance is spread all over the Muslim World for anyone to see. When the month of Ramadan comes it appears that a huge canopy of effulgence and serenity has been stretched over the lands of Islam. The spiritual response it evokes among the Muslims is so spontaneous that fasting becomes easy for them and their hearts melt and they are drawn inwardly to various acts of Ibadah, adoration, compassion and kindness.

Ayyuhal Muh'minooon! When the well-to-do person offers generous help to the needy, a proper and subtle approach should be adopted in order to preserve the dignity of the needy person and to avoid undesirable psychological consequences. Islam asks the wealthy to hold their hands low while giving so that the needy person's hand is above while he or she takes, in order that he or she does not feel humiliated and crushed. They should refrain from being proud and

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overbearing. Of the prominent signs of a Muslim during the month of Ramadan are kindness, humbleness, and benevolence, a sincere kindness and generosity that are inspired by a special motive.

Ibad Allah! It is a kindness that is done for the sake of Almighty Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, even though the persons to whom it is done be strangers one does not know and with whom one has no acquaintance or kinship. We witness the results of this religious, heavenly exercise designed to strengthen willpower, and even the body, and to make life healthier. The magnificent and eloquent presence of the multitudes of our people today all over the world, among the young and the elderly, women, men and children – all these are fruits of Ramadan. Alhumdolillah! The most wonderful month of Ramadan constitutes a Divine programme for the health and consolidation of society by the making of human beings and strengthening personal relations between them. What I would like to stress today Insha'Allah – is that we should use the provisions that we have gathered from past Ramadan's, and this year is no exception, to strengthen the spirit of piety within us throughout the year. I offer this explanation in order that the Muslim Ummah may ascertain the fruits and worth of Ibadah and religious austerities on the basis of a careful examination and evaluation.

Ya Ra'a Kummullah! Life is another name for the struggle between the urges of the self and the dictates of the mind. But in this struggle it is not the carnal desires that always triumph as some people imagine. Such a notion does little credit to those who expound it for it betrays a melancholic mistrust of human nature and a cynical denial of truth. In the Divine scheme of creation man occupies a place midway between the beast and the angel. The office of Khalifah [vicegerent] demands that man should not only cultivate a close affinity with the Divine Being he is going to represent but also with the place where he has to carry out his mission.

Ya Ayyuhal Gafieloon! It is for this reason that feelings, conditions and impulses of hunger, thirst and sex, love of ease and curiosity and creativeness, aptitudes for trade and industry, and desire for variety and change have been made a part of our being. A human being is a combination of body and soul. Our soul pulls us towards its origin and reminds us of our true destiny. It opens within us the window through which we can behold the beauty and expansiveness of the Celestial World and inspires us to revolt against the ugly, materialistic conception of life and allows us to soar high into the great beyond by breaking open the golden cage that has imprisoned us.

Fallahool Musta'aan! It invites us to spend a few hours of our life away from the monotonous routine of eating and drinking and seeking appeasement of the other urges of the flesh [even it be only once in a year] and taste the spiritual joy of hunger and thirst [with the means of supporting life available in plenty] which is not felt even in the enjoyment of delicious foods and drinks. It holds the brief spell that a human being devotes to inner contentment and tranquility, and freedom from sensual appetites, as a real worth of life and a priceless moment of felicity and self-realization.

Ayyuhal Ih'wattoo Fillah! The history of religion and ethics is, in reality, a lengthened shadow of the struggle between the body and the spirit. When the beast within us is let loose and the stomach becomes the pivot of human existence nothing is allowed to stand between us and the fulfillment of our desires. We grow excessively intolerant of checks and restraints and of everything that reminds us of our end or gives the warning of the Day of Final Requitul. Often our entire life is spent without a moment of inner peace or awakening.

Aina Izzatul Islam! The Nabee Sallallahoo Alayhi Wasallam said: "Begin your fasting on seeing it (the new moon) and end your fasting on seeing it. If there be a cloud and the moon cannot be

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sighted complete thirty days of fasting”. [Tirmidhi]. Another tradition says: “Do not fast unless you have sighted the [new] moon and do not end the month of fasting until you have sighted the [new] moon. If the horizon be not clear reckon up and calculate.” [Sihai-i-Sitta] [with the exception of Bukhari.]

O people of Imaan! Almighty Allah shall take away the sorrow and darkness of the world and the Aghirah [Hereafter] from the heart of every one of you who brings relief to a suffering soul. He will reward the good-doers for their good deeds, for He loves those who do good deeds. When a person blessed with Divine wealth of faith and Islam and also familiar with the history, philosophy and design of fasting in the earlier religions observes the condition of their adherents who carry it out and compares it with the Islamic conception and structure of fasting, his or her heart is filled with gratitude and the stirring words of praise and thanksgiving from verse 43 of Surah Al-Araf come spontaneously to his or her lips:

“Praise be to Allah, Who hath guided us to this (Felicity): never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah.”

And Almighty Allah knows best.

The Truth is from Almighty Allah Most Exalted.

The errors are mine and I stand to be corrected.

Baarak Allaahu Feekum wa-sal Allaahu wa-Sallam 'alaa
Nabiyyinaa Muhammad Sallallahoo Alayhi Wasallam.

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