

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

## Fourteen Fruits of Fasting

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Fasting is a notable component in the Abrahamic religions, and has remarkable traditions within the Judaic, Christian and Islamic faiths. In particular, fasting of the month of Ramadan is a pillar of the Muslim faith and a memorable annual ritual, and is a recommended act in other times of the year. Islamic teachings emphasize that the blessings and rewards of any deed are in accordance with the intentions and the depth of knowledge associated with that act. For instance, it was narrated from Prophet Muhammad who said, “Indeed, two individuals amongst my community stand up to prayer, their bowing and prostration being the same, while what is [of distance] between their prayers is like what is between heaven and earth!” [1] Fasting is no exception to this. In fact, Imam Ali was narrated as saying, “Many there are those who fast while having nothing [gained] for them from their fasting except hunger and thirst, and many there are those who stand [to night prayer] having nothing for them from their standing except lack of sleep and difficulty! Beloved and great is the sleep of the wise and their eating!” [2] In other words, a thoughtful and perceptive monotheist takes more benefit from routine activities than an individual who does not reflect and is merely preoccupied with outward acts. Subsequently, one can only imagine the tremendous blessings that the contemplative and deep monotheist can obtain from ritual deeds particularly that of fasting. It is thus very rewarding to ponder upon the various layers and fruits of fasting, which the present writing pursues by the will of God Almighty, as follows:

### 1) **Gaining** *TAQWA*

The blessed Qur’an outlines the following:

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

O you who believe! Fasting was prescribed upon you as it was prescribed upon those before you, that you may gain *taqwa*. (2:183)

*Taqwa* (sometimes translated as piety) is a word that is actually very difficult to translate, and the intended meaning has multiple layers. Overall, it refers to a state of being in which the individual is highly aware of a presence, and perseveringly guards against transgressing any boundaries in that presence. In the blessed Qur’an, there are commandments to observe *taqwa* with respect to God Almighty in numerous places (e.g. in chapter 2, verses 194, 196, 203, 223, 231, 233, 278, 282). This also appears with respect to the Day of Judgment (2:48, 2:123, 2:281), the Fire (2:24, 3:131) and an all-encompassing affliction (8:25). The abovementioned verse (2:183) indicates that a main fruit of fasting is *taqwa*, a deep state that permeates all aspects of the individual’s life and restructures one’s affairs.

Fasting is also a great opportunity for the community to come together more than ever, to create deep bonds and a collective state of *taqwa*, as the Qur’an commands:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and have *taqwa* of Allah; that you may succeed. (3:200)

*Taqwa* itself has numerous beautiful implications and manifestations as outlined by the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali - peace be upon him, in an amazing narration [3]. We emphasize also that (i) the following listing of blessings and fruits of fasting is not exhaustive, (ii) some points may be merged with others, being thought of as their sub-branches, and (iii) they are especially not separate from the

abovementioned blessing, and in fact, are likely either encompassed by *taqwa*, or have *taqwa* as their prerequisite.

## 2) Remembering the poor in this world

An immediate and conspicuous benefit of fasting is that through it one approaches the painful experience of the poor and needy. Hunger reminds one of the hungry. It brings about subtlety and care, a deeper sense of connection to those faced daily with forced fasting! Consider the following saying attributed to Imam Ja'far al-Saadiq - peace be upon him, which points out this very fact:

سَأَلَ هِشَامُ بْنُ الْحَكَمِ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ عَنْ عِلَّةِ الصِّيَامِ فَقَالَ إِنَّمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الصِّيَامَ لِيَسْتَوِيَ بِهِ الْعَنِيِّ وَالْفَقِيرُ وَ ذَلِكَ أَنَّ الْعَنِيَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيَجِدْ مَسَّ الْجُوعِ فَيَرْحَمَ الْفَقِيرَ لِأَنَّ الْعَنِيَّ كُلَّمَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا قَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ فَأَرَادَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ يُسَوِيَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ وَأَنْ يُذِيقَ الْعَنِيَّ مَسَّ الْجُوعِ وَالْأَلَمَ لِيَرِقَّ عَلَى الضَّعِيفِ فَيَرْحَمَ الْجَائِعَ الْآخِرَةَ

Indeed Allah Almighty made fasting obligatory to equate the rich and the poor by it, and this is because the rich were not to be touched by hunger and thus have mercy on the poor, for indeed when the rich intend something, they have it. As such Allah Almighty intended to equate between His creation, and for the rich to taste the touch of hunger and pain in order to have compassion upon the weak, and thus to show mercy on others whom are hungry. [4]

Indeed, deprivations and pains in a person's life can make one distinctly more sensitive to those in similar situations, even after one has passed through those phases in life. What is remarkable about fasting is that such a deprivation and difficulty enters one's life *willfully*, in obedience to God Almighty, which has tremendous value. In fact, acts of patience against unlawful deeds and in staying obedient to God Almighty were recounted as having even more reward than remaining patient when stricken by calamities and difficulties, in a narration [5] by the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny -

## 3) Remembering the poor in the next life

A point worth deep contemplation and introspection is that fasting makes one aware of, and sensitive to, another group of beings: those who have *spiritual* voids, especially the individual who is fasting himself! One comes face-to-face with one's own shortcomings, and experiences how dependent one has become upon illusions and temporary entities. Consider the following simple example: fasting on a fairly relaxed weekend tends to actually be difficult! We do not have food or drinks to preoccupy ourselves with. It's as though we suddenly feel a void and unhappiness when we cannot entertain ourselves as such! This ought to bring about a serious concern: if our real-life definition of happiness is so strongly linked to eating and drinking, are we fulfilling our divine covenants with God Almighty? He Almighty has said:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

We did indeed present the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it;- He was indeed unjust and ignorant. (33:72)

And it is remarkable that aside from the *presentation* above, there's another one mentioned in the Qur'an, for those that betrayed this Trust:

وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرَضًا

And We shall present Hell that day for unbelievers to see, a thorough presentation. (18:100)

Consider the following narration:

كَتَبَ أَبُو الْحَسَنِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُوسَى الرَّضَا ع إِلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ فِيمَا كَتَبَ مِنْ جَوَابِ مَسَائِلِهِ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ لِعِرْفَانَ مَسِّ الْجُوعِ وَالْعَطَشِ لِيَكُونَ دَلِيلًا مُسْتَكِينًا  
مَأْجُورًا مُحْتَسِبًا صَابِرًا وَ يَكُونُ ذَلِكَ دَلِيلًا لَهُ عَلَى شِدَائِدِ الْآخِرَةِ مَعَ مَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْإِنْكَسَارِ لَهُ عَنِ الشَّهَوَاتِ وَأَعْظَمَ لَهُ فِي الْعَاجِلِ دَلِيلًا عَلَى الْأَجْلِ لِيَعْلَمَ شِدَّةَ  
مَبْلَغِ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْفَقْرِ وَالْمَسْكِنَةِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

The reason for fasting is to know the touch of hunger and thirst, for one to be lowly, humble, rewarded, expectant, patient, and for that to be a guide for him upon the difficulties of the hereafter, due to what is in it of the breaking of the passions, preaching to him in this passing [life], a guide to the surely-coming [life], so he knows the severity of it reaching the people of poverty and dire-need in this world and the next [6].

Thus fasting is an opportunity for one to experience the deprivations of the people of poverty in this world (point #2), but also to recognize how deprived one himself may be of spiritual wealth, the only kind of currency that ultimately matters. In a narration we read, “[Real] wealth and poverty are after presentation upon Allah!” [7] It is only that wealth and poverty that stays. Fasting thus can expose the toll that real void, real hunger and thirst, can take upon one. In the famous sermon of the month of Sha’baan, the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny - advised the companions regarding the upcoming month of Ramadan, saying: “Remember through your hunger and thirst in it, the hunger of the Day of Resurrection and Its thirst.” [8]

In fact, one of the multiple blessings of the fasting of the month Ramadan was narrated as “being safeguarded from the hunger and thirst of Resurrection Day.” [9] It is through fasting that the wise monotheist recognizes the utter need to make meaningful lifestyle and habitual changes to fill in the voids manifested in the hereafter as hunger and thirst. It is noteworthy that God Almighty refers in the blessed Qur’an to a group of people whose hearts are empty on the day of reckoning:

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَاءٌ

Hastening forward, their heads upraised, their gaze not reverting to them, and their hearts vacant! (14:43)

Such a void is to be filled in *this* life, before the veils fall off and one reprimands oneself for the opportunities missed. And this void is filled by becoming a real servant of God Almighty, which ultimately means to be attributed by His attributes (see point #14). In particular, one of the names of God Almighty is *al-Samad* (Qur’an 112:2). This has at least two meanings according to narrations: (i) One upon Whom all depend [10], and (ii) One Who has no voids [11]. God Almighty has no imperfections, as a void represents a disconnect, a lack of perfection. And in turn, real fasting enables one to become the servant of *al-Samad*, for in this process one sets aside nourishment by all and is only nourished by Him, filling his voids through Him. Fasting is thus really to eat! In the beautiful poetry by Rumi [12]:

As you seal this mouth, another opens up  
Delighting in bites from the realm of secrets.  
Close off your lips from eating and drinking  
Hasten instead towards the heavenly providence.  
If you empty this stomach from meals  
You shall fill it with majestic jewels  
How many days will you be consumed with desirable delights?  
Try fasting for a few days instead.  
How many days will you stay captive by your sleep?  
Wake up a night and find amazing fortune.

In fact, the one who fasts may become the servant of the One Who “feeds but is not fed” (Qur’an 6:14). In other words, he himself may become one who “feeds but is not fed” (!), in the sense that he is only fed by His Lord, and by no others. Thus, as God Almighty gives in charity but does not receive, similarly the individual develops the character to give but not receive from others, for his Lord suffices him. The Blessed Prophet said, “The upper hand is better than the lower hand.” [13]

#### 4) Humility of the self

Hunger and thirst of fasting bring about a type of vulnerability, or to say more accurately, awareness thereof. We as God's creation have nothing of our own, and our entire being depends upon Him:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ \* إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ \* وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the One Free of need, worthy of all praise \* If He wills, He can do away with you and bring forth a new creation \* And that for Allah is not (at all) difficult. (35:15-17)

*Faqir* is one whose *faqarah* (backbone) is broken; i.e. he has nothing to stand on to support him, which is why this expression applies to the poor that are in dire need. The truth is that we are all *faqir* though we often do not realize this. This is similar to the ignorant person who imagines he knows everything, or the misguided individual who is sure he is on the most righteous path. We have nothing to stand on, save by God. Fasting makes us see this; how our composition and balance can be shaken by a little change of daily routine, by few hours of fasting! And at the time of *iftar* (breaking of the fast), we are again reminded of how utterly in need we are, of how incapable we are on our own, and that it is God Almighty alone who truly fasts and only by His grace we are able to elevate (more on this in point #14). And as one's ego is hit and even shattered by the acts of fasting and *iftar*, one becomes humble in the presence of the Lord of the Universe, for one is no longer the center of the universe, and one begins to see things as they are, not as they may appear, as promised to those who observe *taqwa*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

O you who believe! if you have *taqwa* of Allah, He will grant you a criterion [to distinguish truth from falsehood], and will remove from you your misdeeds, and will forgive you: for Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded. (8:29)

#### 5) Breaking of passions and protection against evil

Fasting breaks the strengths of passions and desires, and controls the faculties that ordinarily immerse one in sins. As a result, fasting rescues the human being from his utter downfall and destruction. It does this in at least two ways: first of all, it lowers the human being's physical intensity, allowing him to pass through the day in an altered state of being. Secondly, as one fasts from natural and routine parts of his life, those which are ordinarily lawful (*halaal*) to him, it becomes remarkably more easy for him to guard against those which are unlawful (*haram*) to him. In the words of Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (al-Sajjad, the Prostrator) - peace be upon him: "The right of fasting [upon you] is for you to know that it is a veil that Allah Almighty has put upon your tongue and your hearing and your seeing and your stomach and your private part in order [for Him] to cover you up with it from the Fire. Then if you abandon fasting, you have torn apart God's veil upon yourself." [14] And when the servant is rescued from the Fire, and has entered God's favor, he has succeeded, as he is free of all chains and restraints, and is able to elevate. God Almighty says: "He who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [success]." (3:185)

#### 6) Appreciating God's bounties

Deprivations may make one sensitive to and cognizant of the blessings and bounties that were taken for granted. Fasting, being a form of willful temporary deprivation, can bring about a deep sense of appreciation for God's favors. And the resulting sense of gratitude leads to an incredible calm and joy in the believer, and allows him to see things differently and to grow. In fact, gratitude towards the Creator is a trademark of the real human being, as in the beautiful prayer of Imam Sajjad - peace be upon him, who said [15]:

... And Praise belongs to Allah, Whom had He withheld from His servants the knowledge to praise Him for the uninterrupted kindnesses with which He has tried them and the manifest favors which He has lavished upon them, they would have moved about in His kindnesses without praising Him, and spread themselves out in His provision without thanking Him. Had such been the case, they would have left the bounds of humanity for that of beastliness and become as He has described in the firm text of His Book: “*They are but as the cattle—nay, but they are further astray from the way!* (25:44)”

And this can explain why the Blessed Qur’an invites the believers to look upon their food when eating:

Then let the human being look at his food. For that We pour forth water in abundance, \* And We split the earth in fragments, \* And produce therein corn, \* And Grapes and nutritious plants, \* And Olives and Dates, \* And enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees, \* And fruits and fodder,- \* For use and convenience to you and your cattle. (80:24-32)

In fact, something remarkable can take place at the time of *iftar*. After a long day of fasting, obviously there’s a special joy to opening the fast. But more careful inspection reveals something deeper, that the joy of consuming the providence is accompanied by witnessing the Provider Himself! It is certainly a happy occasion to feast. But it is an incomparably more sublime event to also witness the Most Compassionate as the Host of this feast. This observation is related to the narration: “For the one who fasts, there are two joys: a joy upon opening one’s fast, and a joy upon meeting one’s Lord.” [16] More on this narration in point #10.

## 7) Perpetual DHIKR (remembrance)

Amongst the ritual pillars of Islam, fasting is the only action that is actually a lack of action! Others, namely prayer, almsgiving and pilgrimage involve performing something, in contrast to fasting, which is an act of negation. This brings about two magnificent rewards: constancy (discussed here) and sincerity (discussed next). Fasting, due to its negating, hidden nature, stays with the servant hour after hour, even as the servant continues on with his various daily responsibilities and tasks. This is unlike other ritual acts of worship which require physical participation and are thus terminated by daily routine. Fasting as such can leave a deep imprint on the soul of the believer, and continuing even after one opens his fast. This may be one reason the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny, said: “Your breaths in it (the month of Ramadan) are (acts of) glorification and your sleep in it, worship.” [17] The constancy of fasting as such teaches one how it is possible to be deeply devoted to God and His Path in the midst of a normal life and how to be in constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him.

## 8) Sincerity

Fasting, due to its very nature of lack of action, is most distant from the devastation of *riyaa*, i.e. doing things for the sake of others to see. As such, there is a particular sweetness associated with fasting. And through it one begins to develop a close and unique connection with God Almighty. Imam Ja’far al-Saadiq - peace be upon him, was narrated to say: “Allah Almighty did not favor upon a servant anything more mighty than there being in his heart none besides Allah.” [19] Once sincerity enters the picture, all deeds become full of power and filled with meaning, and quality overtakes mere quantity. According to a narration, it was revealed to Prophet Moses - peace be upon him, “O Moses! That by which My countenance is sought, its little is much, and that by which other than Me is sought, its much is little!” [20] And the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny, said: “Make your heart sincere; it shall make the little of deeds suffice for you.” [21]

Overall, sincerity is amongst the most rare jewels to be discovered in the spiritual domain. According to a *hadith qudsi* (divine narration): “Sincerity is a secret amongst My secrets, which I lend upon the heart of

whom I love of My servants.” [18] One must become beloved by God as condition of obtaining sincerity, not vice versa. And to do this, the blessed Qur’an teaches us that we need to follow the Blessed Prophet:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (3:31)

Everything is by the mercy of God Almighty, and it is by His mercy that we come to love Him, and by His mercy that He sent forth His Prophet, whom is to be followed to lead one to the path of becoming beloved by God. And if that happens, numerous blessings including sincerity follow. Following the footsteps of the Blessed Prophet includes properly observing the obligatory acts, each of which impart specific impacts upon one. And it appears that fasting is particularly related to obtaining sincerity and discovering a direct link with one’s Creator.

To emphasize the link between fasting and sincerity, Lady Fatimah - peace be upon her, in her famous Sermon of Fadak in the Mosque of Medina, when describing the wisdom behind various pillars and parts of Islam, said the following for fasting:

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ ... الصِّيَامَ تَثْبِيثًا لِلْإِخْلَاصِ

Allah made ... fasting as a fortification for sincerity. [22]

And in the words of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali - peace be upon him:

فَرَضَ اللَّهُ ... الصِّيَامَ ابْتِلَاءً لِإِخْلَاصِ الْخَلْقِ

Allah made obligatory ... the fasting as a test for the sincerity of His servants. [23]

A test, in Islamic terms, is a thing by which the one being tested is also formed! For the one who begins to fast, a degree of devotion is already in place, and seeing fasting through, observing it day after day, can significantly strengthen this devotion, even shaking the soul deeply, removing the many obstacles and veils on the path to One’s Lord, and enabling a deep, direct relationship. In fact, the reward of fasting has been related as being provided by God Almighty Himself, as narrated in *hadith qudsi* related by the Holy Prophet, “Allah Blessed and Almighty says, ‘Fasting is Mine, and I reward for it, and for the one who fasts there are two joys, when he fasts, and when he meets his Lord Almighty.’” [24]

And in some similar narrations, the term “I reward for it” (*Ana ajzee beh*) has been read in the passive grammatical tense: “I am the reward for it!” (*Ana ujzaa beh*) which has an even deeper meaning. This is discussed in point #14.

## 9) Intervention

Fasting is an act of intervention. There are certain outward actions associated with fasting that alter routine:

(1) One commonly wakes up prior to dawn to eat (a recommended act), and this rise at night has many blessings. For most, the night is to rest, and not much more, whereas according to Islamic teachings night is actually the time to look for the Sun! The usual suns in our lives disappear at nighttime, and this is when we are freer to look for the Real Sun Whose Light gives light to all things. In fact, some mystics have said that the special night of Qadr in the month of Ramadan is realized when all suns turn into moons (!) i.e. we see that all things have no light of their own except by the Light of God Almighty. Thus, nighttime is the time to take a firm stance and to also speak with God Almighty in the most upright speech, as the

veils and illusions are removed:

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيْلًا \* إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا

Surely the rising by night is the firmest footing and the most upright of speech. Surely you have in the day time a long occupation. (73:6-7)

(2) One tends to accompany fasting of the day with more righteous deeds, including praying on time, reciting the Qur'an and improving one's interactions with others, amidst the pressures of thirst and hunger, which itself builds considerable patience and character.

(3) Breaking of the fast (*iftar*) takes place after dusk, and at this point an entirely new chapter begins which typically involves gathering with the family and/or the community, and includes standing in prayers and performing supplications.

Overall, the persistent pattern of alternative hours to wake up and to eat, the various recommended prayers and supplications, particularly in the company of the community of the believers, and often in the houses of God, all combine to deeply affect the believer. And this transformation, this intervention, rejuvenates the soul, giving it a different color, and enables it to survive the challenges of the rest of the year:

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ

(We take our) color from Allah, and who is better than Allah at coloring. And we are His worshippers (2:138).

## 10) Patience in obedience and in the face of difficulties in life

The initial challenges of fasting and the subsequent experience of *iftar* teaches us to be resilient and forbearing in the life of this world. When fasting begins, it is typically accompanied by a sense of difficulty, of facing something that asserts its weight. And as the day passes by, one strives to stay true to the requirements of fasting. Then at the occasion of *iftar*, one experiences an immense pleasure. At this point, the hardships have passed, and the joys and blessings of fasting remain, and one sees that this was an entirely worthwhile effort. The Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny - would say upon opening the fast: "O Allah! For You we fasted, and upon Your providence we opened our fast, so accept it from us. The thirst went away, and the veins became quenched, and the reward has remained!" [25]

And as this happens, fasting of subsequent days becomes less challenging, and in fact, one begins to take pleasure *during* the process of fasting. And the one who fasts may then begin to realize that in this entire worldly life, too, he needs to fast, and that the *iftar* of this major fast is going to occur on the Day he meets his Lord. He begins to realize that any hardships and challenges of staying obedient to God in this life, and of distancing oneself from what He has declared as unlawful, shall only be temporary and will pass away, while encountering His Noble Countenance is a joy that is permanent and one that is incomparable to anything. Let us remember the beautiful narration, "For the one who fasts, there are two joys: a joy upon opening one's fast, and a joy upon meeting one's Lord." [16]

And this can explain why we are commanded to seek help via the act of fasting. In the blessed Qur'an, the commandment to "seek help through prayer and patience" has been mentioned twice (2:45, 2:153). Interestingly, 'patience' here has been aligned with fasting in narrations, saying, "By patience, [Allah] means fasting," [26] and that when difficulty descends upon a person, "let him fast, for indeed Allah Almighty says, 'and seek help through prayer and patience.'" [27].

## 11) Being able to hear God

Careful reading of the Blessed Qur'an, in which the term 'month of Ramadan' only appears once, can reveal that fasting and the Qur'an are highly related:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

[The specific days of fasting are in] The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance to mankind and clear proofs of the guidance and the distinction; therefore whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein. (2:185)

We see that the month of Ramadan in which fasting occurs is associated with the revelation of God's word. To receive the Qur'an is to hear God's word: this was in its genuine, original and infallible form achieved by the Blessed Prophet. But his followers, too, can receive the Qur'an in their hearts, as the Qur'an is addressed to them in many occasions, and thus they ought to strive to be addressed by God Almighty and to hear Him. It is only the cleansed soul that can communicate with its Creator, hearing Him (discussed here) and speaking with Him (next). This cleansing occurs via both fasting and by the rising of the night. These two occasions, i.e. the month of Ramadan and the night, are in fact intricately linked (as alluded to in point #9), and it is within them that the Qur'an has a very special place. We saw this in the above verse for the month of Ramadan, and in the following verses, for the night:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَرْءُ \* فَمِ اللَّيْلِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا \* نَصِّفْهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا \* أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا \* إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

O you wrapped up in your garments! \* Rise to pray in the night except a little, \* Half of it, or lessen it a little, \* Or add to it, and recite the Quran, a recitation (in measured tones). \* Surely We shall send upon you a weighty Message. (73:1-5)

Thus it is in the majestic time of the night and in the graceful month of Ramadan that the soul is prepared to receive the mighty and weighty word of God.

## 12) Being able to speak to God

The above verses continue:

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْئًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا \* إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا

Surely the rising by night is the firmest footing and the most upright of speech. Surely you have in the day time a long occupation. (73:6-7)

The best time to speak is thus the nighttime! And again there is a very interesting parallel to this: the following famous Qur'anic verse immediately follows the one in which the 'month of Ramadan' was mentioned, suggesting a deep link between fasting and speaking to God:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

And when My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Me: Let them then respond to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way. (2:186)

The above verse has many aspects and secrets. It reveals the utter proximity of God Almighty to His servants. Note, for instance, that when the servants inquire about God from His Apostle, God does not say, 'tell them I am indeed close'. Instead one immediately hears, 'I am indeed close'. And the expressions

'I' and 'Me' have been mentioned seven times in this short verse. It is in the month of Ramadan, and in the night, that we are especially able to speak with our Lord, for the veils have been lifted, and we are able to hear Him. Most of us read the words of the Qur'an and recite supplications: but by His will and guidance, one can come to actually hear *Him* and speak to *Him*.

### 13) Reaching wisdom and beyond

Let us now recite parts of the amazing hadith of the night of ascension (*mi'raaj*) as narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, where a long, beautiful and sobering dialogue between God Almighty and the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny - is reported. In a part of this narration, God Almighty is reported to address the Prophet, "O Ahmad! If you love to be the most pious of the people, then be indisposed to this world and be eager to the Hereafter." He asked, "My God! How should I be indisposed to this world and be eager to the Hereafter?" He replied, "Take from this world very little of food, drink and garment, and do not store for tomorrow, and persevere upon my remembrance." He said, "O Lord! and how am I to persevere upon your remembrance?" He said, "By secluding from the people, and your despise towards sweetness and sourness, and emptying of your stomach and home from this world. O Ahmad! Take caution against being like a child, who when looking at green and yellow [color variety] loves it and when given a sweet or sour thing is taken in by it." He said, "O Lord! guide me upon a deed by which I seek proximity to you." He said, "Make your night day and your day night!" He said, "O Lord! How is that?" He said, "Make your sleep prayer and your food hunger." [28]

This part emphasizes the intricate links between fasting of the day and praying of the night (see points #9 and #11). Childish attachments of the day to sources of joy and light are to be put out especially by fasting, making the day night, and the real Sun must be looked for at nighttime especially in prayer, making the night day. Both work together hand in hand, and elevate one to wisdom and all the way up to certitude and to witnessing the Light of the Heavens and the Earth.

In subsequent parts of the narration, God Almighty said: "O Ahmad! If you only tasted the sweetness of hunger and silence and solitude, and what they [their observers] inherit from them!" He asked, "O Lord! What is the heritage of hunger?" He replied, "Wisdom, and protection of the heart, and nearness to Me, and constant [spiritual] sorrow, and littleness of maintenance amongst the people, and utterance of the truth, and one does not care whether he lives with ease or with difficulty! O Ahmad! Do you know in which time the servant seeks nearness to Me?" He replied, "No, my Lord!" He said, "When he is in a state of hunger or prostration." [28] In another part of the narration, God Almighty said, "O Ahmad! [take] silence upon yourself, for indeed the most flourishing of hearts is the hearts of the righteous and the silent, and indeed the most ruined of hearts is the heart of those who speak with that which does not concern them. O Ahmad! indeed worship is ten parts, nine of which is seeking the lawful (*halaal*), so when you cleansed your food and drink, then you are in my protection and guard." He asked, "O Lord! And what is the first of worship?" He replied, "The first of worship is silence and fasting." He said, "O Lord! And what is the heritage of fasting?" He replied, "Fasting leaves wisdom as heritage, and that leaves knowledge as heritage, and knowledge leaves certitude (*yaqeen*) as heritage, and when the servant attains certitude, he does not care how his day's condition is whether in difficulty or ease." [28]

It is also seen here that silence and fasting go hand in hand. They, in parallel, void the seeker's being from the superficial and enable him to receive and digest secrets. To be able to hear God, one needs to keep silent and fast, and only after one hears Him, one shall be able to make upright speech. It is also seen from this important narration that contrary to what is commonly perceived, knowledge does not simply precede action, but also follows it, and is a sweetness to be tasted. This is an important teaching in Islam, and is also emphasized in other places in the Blessed Qur'an and narrations. For instance, God Almighty says, "If you have *taqwa* of Allah, he shall grant you a criterion," (8:29) and "have *taqwa* of Allah and Allah

teaches you” (2:282), and “those who strive hard in our (cause), we shall certainly guide them to our ways” (29:69), and it was narrated that, “He who acts according to what he knows, Allah shall teach him that which he does not know.” [29] The last narration especially points out that the relationship between knowledge and action is circular, knowledge being the first, and the last, and in every cycle it is enriched and further pierces the soul.

We also note, as we saw in the beginning of the narration, that hunger has an incredible heritage. It is not only during the act of fasting, but in general, in daily life, that this can be experienced. In the important narration of Unwan al-Basri who sought spiritual advice from Imam Ja’far al-Saadiq - peace be upon him, the Imam replied, “I advise you with nine issues, and indeed these are my advice to the seekers of the path to Allah Almighty, and Allah is whom I ask to make you succeed in practicing this. Three of them are with regards to self-discipline (*riyadhab*), three in forbearance, and three in knowledge, so preserve them and be very careful of not taking them lightly!” Then the Imam said, “Now, the ones with regards to self-discipline: [i] be careful of not eating what you do not crave, for that inherits stupidity and foolishness, and [ii] do not eat except when you are hungry, and [iii] when you eat, eat of that which is legitimate (*halaal*) and mention the name of Allah and remember the narration of the Apostle – peace be upon him and his progeny: ‘No man filled a container worse than his stomach, and if he has to [eat], then a third for his food, a third for his drink and a third for his breath.’ ” (the other 6 recommendations are mentioned in the footnote) [30].

God Almighty says:

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

Eat and drink, but do not waste by excess; surely He does not love the wasters. (7:31)

The word *israaf* originates from the root *sarafa* which means to transgress the limits in a deed that one is committing. It is surely a serious transgression and excessiveness to eat too much, and the result is that God Almighty does not love such a person, and in fact, the container of such excessiveness (his stomach) is the worst of its kind. From this perspective, we see that throwing food away is no worse than filling the stomach with it! (and of course there are alternatives to both). A great person once said, “The amount of food which is necessary for your body, you eat it; that which is more, it eats you!” [31] What more damage and waste than the fact that by eating to fullness, wisdom is left out: in a narration we read, “Wisdom does not enter (one with a) stomach filled with food,” [32], and in another that God Almighty informed the Holy Prophet, “I never despised a container as I despised a stomach that is full!” [33]

Overall, the practice of not eating until one is hungry and stopping before one is full appears to have been the practice of the righteous [34], and can help the seeker tremendously on the path. This is because hunger, even in the case when it is attained by simply not eating to fullness, may possibly bring about some of the previously mentioned blessings (e.g. remembering the poor of this life and the next, humility, perpetual *dhikr*, sincerity) and the blessings mentioned in the hadith above (wisdom, protection of the heart, etc.).

#### 14) God’s vicegerency

The reward of fasting is unparalleled, as we are about to see, and it is worth wondering why this is so. In a *hadith qudsi*, it was narrated that God Almighty said, “Every good deed for the son of Adam [brings about] ten like it up to seven hundred times except for fasting, for it is Mine, and I am the reward for it. He abandons the meal amidst his desire for My sake. It is for Me and I am the reward for it. And he abandons the drink amidst his desire for my sake. It is for Me and I am the reward for it.” [35]

As we saw in point #8, some narrations mention “Fasting is Mine and I reward for it.” In this particular narration, we read “I am the reward for it.” This latter is more consistent with the beginning of the hadith

which recounts the reward of fasting to exceed all other rewards. To see this, we note that God Almighty replaces anything that the servant gives with something, as we read in the Blessed Qur'an:

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for whom [He wills]. And whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will replace it; and He is the best of providers." (34:39)

The question at hand is what is the replacement. The blessed Qur'an states that "whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it." (6:160). This is the least promised blessing. For the particular act of charity, God Almighty says, "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing." (2:261) Entering a completely different plane is what fasting achieves. In fasting, the servant gives away not merely things that belong to him, but his utter needs, things that commonly define him, for the sake of God, and it is thus not surprising that the reward may be the most amazing, God Almighty Himself! For He is indeed the "Ultimate End of the aspirations of the people of gnosis" (يا غَايَةَ آمَالِ الْعَارِفِينَ) as mentioned in the beautiful supplication of Kumayl, and the "Ultimate End of the seekers and eagers, and the Finality of the aspiration of the hopeful" (يا غَايَةَ الطَّالِبِينَ) as mentioned in the majestic supplication of Arafah.

Fasting is an act of glorification (*tasbih*), for through it one sees that God Almighty is the only one that truly and constantly fasts, negating all needs, faults and shortcomings. At the same time, as fasting is an act of negation, the one who fasts also glorifies himself. He realizes that amidst all his needs and vulnerabilities, has been asked to move ever closer to God Almighty, even exceeding the station of angels. He thus begins to transcend towards his Lord, elevating from the lowly world and entering the domain of divine attributes. Meanwhile, at the time of *iftar* he is reminded that it is only by the will and upholding of God Almighty that he is able to negate and elevate, and that without Him he is incapable of doing so.

The one who truly fasts performs the deepest form of charity by negating himself, and as a result, is raised towards becoming God's vicegerent, having been emptied and cleansed from everything. He abandons food and drinks, which are not limited to the material ones as observed in the outward act of fasting, but any nourishment, any knowledge, any experience that is not lawful to him, so that God Almighty nourishes him with His own very qualities. It is worth recalling the following particular phrase in the hadith of ascension (point #13) in which God Almighty says to His Blessed Apostle, "O Ahmad! indeed worship is ten parts, nine of which is seeking the lawful (*halaal*), so when you cleansed your food and drink, then you are in my protection and guard." This food and drink has multiple layers, and once these are purified, all good follows.

One ought to especially contemplate what seeking proximity to God Almighty really means, given that He is not material. It is not to reach a geographic location, but to *become* something. The following narrations in particular are very revealing: God Almighty revealed to Prophet David - peace be upon him: "Shape your character with my characters (*akhlaaq*)." [36] Also, interpreting God Almighty's word, "And to Allah belong the best names (*Asma al-Husna*), so invoke Him by them (7:180)," Imam Saadiq (peace be upon him) said, "By God! We [the Household of Prophethood] are the *Asma al-Husna*!" [37]. The ultimate point of creation appears to be to manifest God Almighty's Blessed Names and to become His true servant and vicegerent in this way, as alluded to in the story of Adam (2:30-33), and fasting is a tremendous vehicle to this end.

## Conclusion

Fasting appears at first a difficult act, but one comes to eventually realize that *not* fasting is the real

difficulty, the real source of deprivations and sorrows! In the verse of the fasting of the month of Ramadan, God Almighty says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ

Allah intends ease for you, and does not intend difficulty for you. (2:185)

This may be seen to explain why fasting is not prescribed upon those who are sick or traveling, as mentioned immediately preceding this. But it also may point to the fact that by prescribing the very act of fasting, God Almighty intends for ease to enter the human being's life. In other words, even though the act of fasting itself may appear difficult at first, it makes it easier for one to attain *taqwa* and to attain all kinds of resulting blessings. By contrast, without this amazing deed, with all its fantastic fruits, one will have a restricted, tight and difficult life of little nourishment and strength. God Almighty says:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

And whosoever turns away from My Remembrance, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment. (20:124)

And in the narration of ascension, we read: "The pleasant life is one whose companion does not tire from My remembrance, and does not forsake My bounty, and does not neglect My right; he seeks My contentment in his night and his day." [38]

And finally the verse 2:185 concludes:

وَلْيُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلْيُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاهُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

And that you should complete the number [of days of fasting] and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for His having guided you and that you may give thanks. (2:185)

Indeed, God Almighty is to be exalted and praised outwardly and with deep sincerity inwardly for the unparalleled fruits, beauties and blessings of the act of fasting. We ask Him to make us amongst His best servants.

#### References:

[1] *'Awwali al-Laali*, vol. 1, p. 322. The original text reads:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَيْنِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يُفُومَانِ فِي الصَّلَاةِ وَرُكُوعُهُمَا وَ سُجُودُهُمَا وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ مَا بَيْنَ صَلَاتَيْهِمَا مِثْلُ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَ الْأَرْضِ

[2] *Nahj al-Balaaghah*, Wisdom 145. The original text reads:

كَمْ مِنْ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الْجُوعُ وَ الظَّمْأُ وَ كَمْ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ قِيَامِهِ إِلَّا السَّهَرُ وَ الْعَنَاءُ حَبْدًا تَوْمِ الْأَكْبَاسِ وَ إِفْطَارُهُمْ

[3] *Nahj al-Balaaghah*, sermon 193. A translation can be found at:

<http://www.al-islam.org/nahj/default.asp?url=193.htm>

[4] *Man Laa Yahdhuruh al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 73.

[5] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 2, p. 91:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص الصَّبْرُ ثَلَاثَةٌ صَبْرٌ عِنْدَ الْمُصِيبَةِ وَ صَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ وَ صَبْرٌ عَنِ الْمُعْصِيَةِ فَمَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى الْمُصِيبَةِ حَتَّى يَرُدَّهَا بِحُسْنِ عَزَائِمَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ ثَلَاثِمِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ مَا

بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَ مَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سِتِّمِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ نُحُومِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَى الْعَرْشِ وَ مَنْ

صَبَرَ عَنِ الْمُعْصِيَةِ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ تِسْعِمِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ نُحُومِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَى مُنْتَهَى الْعَرْشِ

[6] *Man Laa Yahdhuruh al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 73.

[7] *Nahj al-Balaaghah*, wisdom 452:

الغنى و الفقر بعد العرض على الله

[8] *Al-Amaali* of Sheikh Sadooq, p. 93, *Wasa'il al-Shia*, vol. 10, p. 113:

ادْكُرُوا بِجُوعِكُمْ وَ عَطَشِكُمْ فِيهِ جُوعٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ عَطَشُهُ

[9] *Man Laa Yahdhuburub al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 74, *al-Khisaal*, vol. 2, p. 530:

أَمَانٌ مِنَ الْجُوعِ وَالْعَطَشِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

[10] *Ma'aani al-Akhbaar* by Sheikh Sadooq, p. 6. The original text reads:

عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ الْقَاسِمِ الْجَعْفَرِيِّ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع جُعِلَتْ فِدَاكَ مَا الصَّامُ قَالَ السَّيِّدُ الْمَصْمُودُ إِلَيْهِ فِي الْقَلِيلِ وَالْكَثِيرِ

Imam Baghir - peace be upon him - was asked about al-Samad. He said, "The Master to Whom all turn in needs, whether small or big."

[11] *Ibid*. The narration reads as follows:

عَنْ الرَّبِيعِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا الْحَسَنِ ع جِئَ سَائِلٌ عَنِ الصَّامِ فَقَالَ الصَّامُ الَّذِي لَا خَوْفَ لَهُ

Imam Musa al-Kazim said, "Al-Samad is One for Whom there is no void."

[12] The original text in Persian reads:

این دهان بستنی دهانی باز شد  
تا خورنده لقمه‌های راز شد  
لب فروبند از طعام و از شراب  
سوی خوان آسمانی کن شتاب  
گر تو این انبان ز نان خالی کنی  
پر ز گوهرهای اجلالی کنی  
چند خوردی چرب و شیرین از طعام  
امتحان کن چند روزی در صیام  
چند شب‌ها خواب را گشتی اسیر  
یک شبی بیدار شو دولت بگیر

[13] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 4, p. 11.

الْيَدُ الْعُلْيَا خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْيَدِ السُّفْلَى

[14] *Man Laa Yahdhuburub al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 618. The text reads:

حَقُّ الصَّوْمِ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ حِجَابُ صِرْتِهِ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى لِسَانِكَ وَ سَمْعِكَ وَ بَصَرِكَ وَ تَطْبِقُكَ وَ فَرْجِكَ لَيْسَتْ بِكَ بِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ فَإِنْ تَزَكَّتِ الصَّوْمَ خَرَقَتْ سِتْرَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ

[15] The collection *al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah*; supplication 1. This part of the prayer reads:

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَوْ حَبَسَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ مَعْرِفَةَ حَمْدِهِ عَلَى مَا أَبْلَاهُمْ

مِنْ مَنِّهِ الْمُتَتَابِعَةَ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نِعَمِهِ الْمُتَنَاطِرَةَ لَتَصَرَّفُوا فِي مَنِّهِ فَلَمْ يَحْمَدُوهُ وَتَوَسَّعُوا

فِي رِزْقِهِ فَلَمْ يَشْكُرُوهُ، وَلَوْ كَانُوا كَذَلِكَ لَخَرَجُوا مِنْ حُدُودِ الْإِنْسَانِيَّةِ إِلَى حَدِّ الْبَهِيمِيَّةِ،

فَكَانُوا كَمَا وَصَفَ فِي مُحْكَمِ كِتَابِهِ: إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْإِنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

[16] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 4, p. 65. Narrated from Imam Saadiq - peace be upon him - who said:

رُوي عن الإمام جعفر بن محمد الصادق (عليه السلام) أنه قال: للصائمين فرحتان، فرحة عند إبطاره و فرحة عند لقاء ربه

A variation was also narrated in *Amaali* of Sheikh al-Toosi, Session 17, hadith 57 (no. 1088 overall), narrated from the Blessed Prophet - peace be upon him and his progeny - who said:

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ جَدِّهِ عَنْ عَلِيِّ ع قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص لِلصَّائِمِينَ فَرِحَتَانِ فَرِحَةٌ عِنْدَ فِطْرِهِ وَ فَرِحَةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ لَخُلُوفٌ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ

الْمِسْكِ

For the one who fasts there are two joys: a joy upon his opening of the fast and a joy on Resurrection Day, and the smell of the mouth of the one who fasts is more pure according to Allah than the smell of perfume.

[17] Sermon of the last Friday of the month of *Sha'baan*, *Amaali* of Sheikh Sadooq, session 20, hadith 4, p. 85; *Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha*, vol. 1, p. 295.

هُوَ شَهْرٌ دُعِيتُمْ فِيهِ إِلَى صِيَامِهِ اللَّهُ وَ جُعِلْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ كَرَامَةِ اللَّهِ أَنْفَاسُكُمْ فِيهِ تَسْبِيحٌ وَ نَوْمُكُمْ فِيهِ عِبَادَةٌ وَ عَمَلُكُمْ فِيهِ مَقْبُولٌ وَ دَعَاؤُكُمْ فِيهِ مُسْتَجَابٌ فَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ

.بَيِّنَاتٍ صَادِقَةٍ وَ قُلُوبٍ طَاهِرَةٍ أَنْ يُؤَقِّفَكُمْ لِصِيَامِهِ وَ تِلَاوَةِ كِتَابِهِ

[18] *Bibaar al-Anwaar*, vol. 67, p. 249:

قال رسول الله صل الله عليه و آله: مخبرا عن جبرئيل عن الله عز و جل أنه قال: الإخلاص سر من أسرارى استودعته قلب من أحببت من عبادى

[19] *Mustadrak al-Wasaa'il*, vol. 1, p. 101:

قَالَ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: مَا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى عَبْدٍ أَحَلَّ مِنْ أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مَعَ اللَّهِ غَيْرَةٌ:

[20] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 8, p. 45:

يا موسى! ما أريد به وجهي فكثير قليله و ما أريد به غيري فقليل كثيره:4

[21] *Bihaar al-Anwaar*, vol. 70, p. 175:

عن النبي صل الله عليه و آله: أخلص قلبك بكفك القليل من العمل

[22] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 29, p. 223 (another similar narration appears on p. 241).

فَجَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْإِيمَانَ تَطْهِيراً لَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّرِّ، وَ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْزِيهاً لَكُمْ عَنِ الْكِبْرِ، وَ الرِّكَاءَ تَرْكِيبَةً لِلنَّفْسِ، وَ نَمَاءً فِي الرَّزْقِ، وَ الصِّيَامَ تَنْزِيهاً لِلْإِخْلَاصِ، وَ الْحَجَّ تَشْيِيداً لِلدِّينِ، وَ الْعَدْلَ تَنْسِيباً لِلْقُلُوبِ، وَ طَاعَتَنَا نِظَاماً لِلْمَلَأَةِ، وَ إِمَامَتَنَا أَمَاناً مِنَ الْفُرْقَةِ، وَ الْجِهَادَ عِزّاً لِلْإِسْلَامِ، وَ الصَّبْرَ مَعُونَةً عَلَى اسْتِيحَابِ الْأَجْرِ، وَ الْأَمْرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مَصْلِحَةً لِلْعَامَّةِ، وَ يَرْ الْوَالِدِينَ وَقَايَةً مِنَ السَّخَطِ، وَ صِلَةَ الْأَرْحَامِ مَنَمَاءً لِلْعَدَدِ، وَ الْقِيَّاصَ حَقناً لِلدَّمَاءِ، وَ الْوَفَاءَ بِالنَّدْرِ تَعْرِيفاً لِلْمَغْفِرَةِ، وَ تَوْفِيَةَ الْمَكَائِلِ وَ الْمُوَازِينَ تَعْيِيراً لِلْبَيْخُسِ، وَ النَّهْيَ عَنِ شُرْبِ الْحَمْرِ تَنْزِيهاً عَنِ الرَّجْسِ، وَ اجْتِنَابَ الْقَذْفِ حِجَاباً عَنِ اللَّعْنَةِ، وَ تَرْكَ السَّرِقَةِ إِجَاباً لِلْعَقَةِ، وَ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ الشَّرْكَ إِخْلَاصاً لَهُ بِالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ، فَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَ لَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَّا وَ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ، وَ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ فِيمَا أَمَرَكُمْ بِهِ وَ نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ إِذَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

[23] *Nahj al-Balaaghah*, wisdom 252.

[24] *Man laa Yahburuh al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 75. The text reads:

وَ قَالَ ص قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى الصَّوْمُ لِي وَ أَنَا أَجْرِي بِهِ وَ لِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ حِينَ يُفْطِرُ وَ حِينَ يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

[25] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 4, p. 95. The original text reads:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ ع أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص كَانَ إِذَا أَفْطَرَ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ صُنْمًا وَ عَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْنَا فَتَقَبَّلْهُ مِنَّا ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَ ابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوقُ وَ بَقِيَ الْأَجْرُ

In another narration (*al-Sunan* of Abu-Dawood), we read:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَ ابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوقُ وَ تَبَّتِ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

The thirst went away, and the veins became quenched, and the reward has remained God willing.

[26] *Man Laa Yahburuh al-Faqih*, vol. 2, p. 76. The text reads:

وَ قَالَ ع فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَ الصَّلَاةِ قَالَ يَغْنِي بِالصَّبْرِ الصَّوْمُ

[27] *Ibid*. The text reads:

وَ قَالَ ع إِذَا نَزَلْتَ بِالرَّجْلِ النَّارِ أَوْ الشَّدَّةِ فَلْيَصُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ يَقُولُ وَ اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَ الصَّلَاةِ

[28] *Irshaad al-Quloob*, vol. 1, p. 203, section, 54; *Bihaar al-Anwaar* (narrated from Irshaad), vol. 74, p. 27. The original text reads:

يَا أَحْمَدُ إِنْ أَحْبَبْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ أَوْزَعَ النَّاسِ فَأَهْضِدْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ ارْغَبْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ  
فَقَالَ يَا إِلَهِي كَيْفَ أَهْضِدُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ ارْغَبُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ قَالَ خُذْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا حَيْثُ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَ الشَّرَابِ وَ اللَّبَاسِ وَ لَا تَدَّخِرْ لِعَدِّ وَ دُمَّ عَلَى ذِكْرِي فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ وَ كَيْفَ أُدْوِمُ  
عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ فَقَالَ بِالْحُلُوةِ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَ بُغْضِكَ الْحُلُوةِ وَ الْحَامِضِ وَ فَرَاغِ بَطْنِكَ وَ تَبَيُّتِكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا  
يَا أَحْمَدُ فَاحْذَرِ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِثْلَ الصَّبِيِّ إِذَا نَظَرَ إِلَى الْأَخْضَرِ وَ الْأَصْفَرَ أَحَبَّهُ وَ إِذَا أُعْطِيَ شَيْئاً مِنَ الْحُلُوةِ وَ الْحَامِضِ اعْتَرَبَ بِهِ فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ ذُلِّي عَلَى عَمَلٍ أَتَقَرَّبُ بِهِ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ  
اجْعَلْ لَيْلَكَ نَهَاراً وَ نَهَارَكَ لَيْلاً قَالَ يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ ذَلِكَ قَالَ اجْعَلْ نَوْمَكَ صَلَاةً وَ طَعَامَكَ الْجُوعَ

...

يا أحمد! لو دقت خلاوة الجوع والصمت والحلوة وما ورثوا منها. قال: يا رب! ما ميراث الجوع؟ قال: الحكمة وحفظ القلب والتقرب إلى والجزئ الدائم وحفة المؤمن بين الناس وقول الحق ولا يبالى عاشن يبشر أم بعسر

يا أحمد! هل تدرى بأى وقت يتقرب العبد إلى؟ قال: لا يا رب. قال: إذا كان جائعاً أو ساجداً

...

يَا أَحْمَدُ عَلَيْكَ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّ أَعْمَرَ الْقُلُوبِ قُلُوبَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَ الصَّائِمِينَ وَ إِنَّ أَخْرَبَ الْقُلُوبِ قُلُوبَ الْمُتَكَلِّمِينَ بِمَا لَا يَعْنِيهِمْ  
يَا أَحْمَدُ إِنَّ الْعِبَادَةَ عَشْرَةٌ أَجْزَاءُ تَسَعَةٌ مِنْهَا طَلَبُ الْحَلَالِ فَإِذَا طَبَّيْتَ مَطْعَمَكَ وَ مَشْرَبَكَ فَأَنْتَ فِي حِفْظِي وَ كَنْفِي  
قال: يا رب! وما أول العبادات؟ قال: أول العبادات الصمت والصوم. قال: يا رب! وما ميراث الصوم؟ قال: الصوم يورث الحكمة، والحكمة تورث المعرفة، والمعرفة تورث اليقين، فإذا استيقن العبد لا يبالى كيف أصبح بعسر أم يبشر

[29] *A'laam al-Deen*, p. 301; *Bihaar al-Anwaar* (narrated from *A'laam*), vol. 75, p. 189, narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baaghir - peace be upon him, who said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِمَا يَعْلَمُ عِلْمَهُ اللَّهُ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

[30] Some of the inspired scholars were highly mindful of this hadith: for instance the revered Qadhi (spiritual teacher of the late Allamah Tabataba'i, with the famous exegesis of the Qur'an, Tafsir al-Mizaan) would instruct his students to write this narration and practice it, and also to have it with them in their pocket and study it once or twice a week. Source: *Bihaar al-Anwaar*, vol. 1, p. 224-226, Book of Knowledge, Sec. 7, "Etiquettes of seeking knowledge and its rulings", hadith 17. For the complete text, and translation to English and Farsi, see:

[http://www.iec-md.org/maaref/rewaayat\\_onwaan\\_basri.html](http://www.iec-md.org/maaref/rewaayat_onwaan_basri.html)

As for the other six pieces of advise, we mention them here (the hadith contains other very enlightening backs and forths between the Imam and Unwan al-Basri which can be seen in the link above):

And the ones with regards to forbearance: [i] whoever says to you: 'if you say one [bad] thing [to me], you will hear ten [from me]', reply back saying: 'if you say ten things, you will not hear one!' [ii] And he who swears at you, say to him: 'if you are truthful in what you say, then I ask Allah to forgive me, and if you are lying in what you say, then I ask Allah to forgive you!' [iii] And he who promises you profanity, promise him good counsel and consideration! And the ones with regards to knowledge: [i] ask the people of knowledge what you do not know, and be careful of never asking them obnoxiously or testingly, and [ii] never practice anything with your own opinion, and exercise precaution in all [affairs] in which there is a way [to do so], and [iii] fear giving religious decrees (*fatwa*) as you are dreadful of the Lion and do not make your neck a bridge for the people!

[31] As narrated in the book "*Rooh-e Mojarad*" (p. 184) written by Ayatullah Tehraani in remembrance of his spiritual guide, Sayyid Hashim Haddad (the Blacksmith).

[32] '*Awaali al-La'aali*, vol. 1, p. 425.

قال عليه السلام لا تدخل الحكمة جوفاً ملىء طعاماً

[33] *Amaali* of Sheikh Mufid, session 23, hadith 21, p. 192:

يقول لك ربك يا محمد ما أبغضت وعاءاً قطاً كبغضتي بطناً مائلاً

Also narrated with some difference in *Bihaar al-Anwaar*, vol. 63, p. 336.

[34] For instance, see letter by Ayatullah Mirza Jawad Maliki Tabrizi to Sheikh Muhammad Hossein Kompani:

<http://www.hawzah.net/fa/magazine/magart/6433/6655/78624> (in Farsi)

[35] *Mustadrak al-Masaa'il*, vol. 7, p. 503. The original text reads:

ابن أبي جمهورٍ الأَحْسَائِيُّ فِي دُرَرِ اللَّائِلِي، عَنِ النَّجَّيِّ ص أَنَّهُ قَالَ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى كُلُّ عَمَلٍ لِيَنِي آدَمَ الْحَسَنَةُ بَعَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةِ ضِعْفٍ إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَ أَنَا أُحْزَى بِهِ يَتْرُكُ الطَّعَامَ بِشَهْوَتِهِ مِنْ أَجْلِي هُوَ لِي وَ أَنَا أُحْزَى بِهِ وَ يَتْرُكُ الشَّرَابَ بِشَهْوَتِهِ لِأَجْلِي هُوَ لِي وَ أَنَا أُحْزَى بِهِ لِحُلُوفِ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطِيبٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ رَائِحَةٌ مِنَ الْمِسْكِ

[36] *Mustadrak al-Wasaa'il*, vol. 2, p. 425. The text reads:

تَخَلَّقَ بِأَخْلَاقِي وَ إِنِّ مِنْ أَخْلَاقِي الصَّبْرُ

[37] *Al-Kaafi*, vol. 1, p. 144. The Arabic text reads:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ لِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا قَالَ مُحَمَّدٌ وَ لِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى الَّتِي لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ عَمَلًا إِلَّا بِمَعْرِفَتِنَا

[38] Reference in footnote #27. This part of the narration reads:

يَا أَحْمَدُ هَلْ تَدْرِي أَيْ عَيْشٍ أَهْنَأُ وَ أَيْ حَيَاةٍ أَبْقَى قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ لَا قَالَ أَمَّا الْعَيْشُ الْهَيْئَةُ فَهُوَ الَّذِي لَا يَفْتُرُ صَاحِبُهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِي وَ لَا يَنْسَى نِعْمَتِي وَ لَا يَجْهَلُ حَقِّي يَطْلُبُ رِضَايَ فِي لَيْلِهِ وَ نَهَارِهِ وَ أَمَّا الْحَيَاةُ الْبَاقِيَةُ فَهِيَ الَّتِي نَعْمَلُ لِنَفْسِهِ حَتَّى تَهْوَنَ عَلَيْهِ الدُّنْيَا وَ تَصْغُرَ فِي عَيْنِهِ وَ تَعْظُمَ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَهُ وَ يُؤَثِّرُ هَوَايَ عَلَى هَوَايَ وَ يَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتِي وَ يُعْظِمُ حَقِّي عَظَمَتِي وَ يَذْكُرُ عِلْمِي بِهِ وَ يُرَاقِبُنِي بِاللَّيْلِ وَ النَّهَارِ عِنْدَ كُلِّ سَيِّئَةٍ أَوْ مَعْصِيَةٍ وَ يُنْقِي قَلْبَهُ عَنْ كُلِّ مَا أَكْرَهُ وَ يُبْعِضُ الشَّيْطَانَ وَ وَسَاوِسَهُ وَ لَا يَجْعَلُ لِإِبْلِيسَ عَلَى قَلْبِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَ سَبِيلًا فَإِذَا فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ أَسْكَنْتُ قَلْبَهُ حُبًّا حَتَّى أَجْعَلَ قَلْبَهُ لِي وَ فَرَاغَهُ وَ اشْتِغَالَهُ وَ هَمَّهُ وَ حَدِيثَهُ مِنَ النِّعْمَةِ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ بِهَا عَلَى أَهْلِ مَحَبَّتِي مِنْ خَلْقِي وَ أُنْفِخَ عَيْنَ قَلْبِهِ وَ سَمِعَهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ بِقَلْبِهِ وَ يَنْظُرُ بِعَيْنِهِ إِلَى جَلَالِي وَ عَظَمَتِي وَ أَصْبِيحُ عَلَيْهِ الدُّنْيَا وَ أُبْعِضُ الدُّنْيَا وَ أُبْعِضُ إِلَيْهِ مَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدَّلَاتِ وَ أُحَدِّثُهُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَ مَا فِيهَا كَمَا يُحَدِّثُ الرَّاعِي غَنَمَهُ مِنْ مَرَاتِعِ الْمَلَكََةِ فَإِذَا كَانَ هَكَذَا يَفِرُّ مِنَ النَّاسِ فِرَارًا وَ يَنْمُلُ مِنْ دَارِ الْفَنَاءِ إِلَى دَارِ الْبَقَاءِ وَ مِنْ دَارِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِلَى دَارِ الرَّحْمَنِ