

Ramadan Mubarak! A Message From Imam Zaid
By Imam Zaid Shakir

The Month of Ramadan is upon us. During this special time, we should all reflect on the many blessings God has bestowed upon us. Those of us who live here in the West have been blessed with many material bounties that are unimaginable to many of our coreligionists in the East. The amount of food we enjoy and unfortunately the amount that many of us waste, the expansiveness of most of our homes, our ready ability to own cars, trucks, and vans, our easy access to higher education, our ability to marry at a young age, all of these blessings and many others are incomprehensible to many Muslims in faraway lands struggling to live from day to day.

Perhaps the greatest blessing we enjoy is the blessing of security. This is a great blessing that many people take for granted. The ability to be safe in ones home, to walk the streets without fear of assault, to travel freely down the highways and byways without fear of brigandage or harm to our person or loved ones, the ability to rest comfortably at night without fearing a sudden deadly intrusion, or a violent explosion as a projectile tears through the roof or walls of our dwelling visiting us with hell on earth. This is a great, expansive blessing.

God mentions that security is one of the great blessings He bestowed upon the Quraysh, the people of our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God upon him. He mentions in the Qur'an:

Therefore, let them worship the Lord of this [Sacred] House; he who has fed them, warding off from them hunger; the one who has made them secure from fear. (106:3-4)

This latter blessing, the great blessing of security, the blessing that allows us to enjoy all other blessings, should never be taken for granted, for it can be taken away at any moment, and we could be cast into the throes of terrible tribulation with sudden swiftness. One of the ways to perpetuate the blessing of security and the many other blessings we enjoy is to express our deep thanks for them. That expression of thanks lies in our being good productive citizens, it lies in our faithful devotion to our Lord, and it lies in our demonstrating to people the good of our religion through our actions before we endeavor to do so with our words. It lies in our endeavoring to share our blessings with those who are less fortunate than us.

The details relating to how we do these things are known to all of us and are as numerous as each and every one of our individual lives. Those details are revealed to us by God when we endeavor to be sincere in our service, true in our devotion, honest in our conviction to assist our fellow human beings. Ramadan is an excellent time to start for those of us who have been limping down the road of life oblivious to the blessings we enjoy; lacking any consciousness of the obligations those blessings impose on us. Ramadan focuses our appreciation of the food and other material blessing we enjoy by allowing us to experience at a personal level the reality of deprivation. Ramadan focuses our devotion to God by facilitating heightened levels of devotional acts by couching them in a communal manifestation. Ramadan focuses our sincerity to God, for it is centered around fasting, the one act of worship it is impossible to "show off" with before other human beings, for at the end of the day, God alone knows if we are truly fasting. Ramadan, if we allow it to do so, focuses our spiritual energies by reintroducing the great blessing of the Qur'an into our lives. Finally, Ramadan focuses our attention on the centrality of charity in our lives, by encouraging us to greater levels and acts of charity during this time, a time when our beloved Prophet, peace and blessings of God

upon him, the most generous of all people ordinarily, was excessively generous.

Let us translate that heightened focus on God, and our appreciation for His blessings into heightened levels of servitude to Him and to our fellow human beings. If we can do that as an entire community, with ample conviction, God will continue to shower His blessings down upon us and He will bless us to be secure in our lives and property, just as He has blessed us to be secure from material want. Such blessings are commensurate with “the best community raised up to serve humanity (3:110).” However, for the manifestation of those blessings to be real, our service to God and to our fellow humans has to be real. So let us proceed through this blessed month with consciousness, willing devotion, and sincerity. By doing so we will express our appreciation to our Lord, and work to perpetuate the many blessings He has bestowed upon us.

Ramadan Mubarak!

Your Brother in Islam,

Imam Zaid Shakir

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Baitul Hikmah 2010

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