**Ramadan Classes**

**Class 2**

**Book of fasting - Chapter One**

Greet your class. Ramadan Mubarak! I hope fasting is going well for those of you who are fasting today ☺

Briefly introduce the book (also show the book cover) and the topic of discussion…

Imam Ghazali was a scholar who wrote books, which explain to us the deeper meaning behind our Islamic practices.

So today we are here to dicover something **new** about a practice that you may already know about or you may already do.

**What Makes Fasting So *Very* special?**

* **Ramadan is a very special time of the year.**

Ramadan is a time when the doors of Heaven are wide open. The Prophet (saw) said that Heaven has a special gate called *Rayyan* that can be entered *only* by those who fast.

This month of fasting is a great blessing that we are grateful for, infact it is the most special month of the year! However, sometimes we do struggle…parents and children alike! So today we are going to discuss some of Imam al-Ghazali’s deepest teachings on this act of worship, which might help us to understand the amazing benefits and blessings we receive in this month.

* **Imam al Ghazali explains that fasting is like a safe fortress.**

It’s a place we can go to *learn* how to be less attached to all our worldly desires and appetites.

What does this mean? Well by giving up food and drink, we realise that we do have the willpower to detach ourselves from delicious food and drink…so then can realise that we can also lessen our desire for things like money and fashion, games or being popular! And what would be the benefit to us in giving up some of these things? We often are so full of our attachments that we have no time to consider the things that are important and will really make us happy.

*Fasting really is a way for us to learn to reach a greater state of peace in our hearts.*

* **Imam al-Ghazali teaches us that fasting has an outer part and an inner part and both parts are very beneficial.**

*The outer part of Fasting.*

We’ll start by speaking of the outer Part of fasting. This is what can be seen, like giving up food and enjoying a meal at the day’s end. What are the outer benefits? Well we know that intermittent fasting and eating less is healthy for our bodies and that there is great joy in eating together with our family and friends at the end of the day.

*The inner part of fasting.*

What about the inner part of fasting? Can any of you think of what is going on i*nside* you that can’t be seen?”

In the story, the children discuss (on pg 9) how they just can’t wait for the fast to end! What special virtue do you need to have to get through a fasting day…all the way to the end?

Patience!

The inner part of fasting is patience. Our beloved Prophet (saw) said, “*Half of fasting is made up of patience.”*

Pg 9

Abid added, “If Mother made a yummy cake and left it on the table, I would really want to run up and have some right away! But when we are fasting, we know we have to be patient and wait for later. Fasting is a great chance to polish our hearts by practicing being patient.”

Patience is not that easy to learn, and that why we struggle sometimes to fast, however, lets look at what Allah swt says in the Quran regarding the reward for patience…

*The patient ones shall be granted their reward without measure”* [39:10].

Subhanallah! That means a vast reward!

Pg 11

Fatima said, “I love people when people are patient. Its much better than being with people who are always in a hurry to be first, or to get something for themselves.”

“It’s easier to spend time with friends who are content with whatever is happening – not like kids and adults who are always stressed and worried.”

Allah (swt) tells us in the Quran “God is with those who are patient”

So the whole time that we are practicing patience we have the support of the creator of the universe! Isn’t that something?!

*When we understand the inner and outer meaning of fasting, we not only feel the joy of eating after a long day, but we also have the even greater joy of polishing our hearts and being closer to God (swt)!*

* **The reward and honour of fasting**

*Fasting is especially honored by God, among all the different kinds of worship, fasting is particularly special.*

As Allah (swt) honours the Ka’ba, his sacred house…even though all the Earth belongs to Him, or how Friday is a special day out of all the days of the week, Fasting is special among the 5 pillars of worship.

So, what are the reasons it is so special?

Firstly, only Allah (swt) knows if you are really fasting. It is only truly visible to him. If you sneaked a cookie or a sip of water while fasting, no one would see this but Allah! So fasting is clearly just between Him (swt) and you.

Other acts of worship like doing wudu, praying, giving charity and the Hajj can be *seen* by others but *only Allah can see fasting*!”

Secondly, the effort we put into fasting, results in us receiving help and guidance from Allah (swt)

There is a verse in the Qur’an that says, *And those who strive for our sake, We shall guide to Our ways* [29:69]*.*

When you are not eating or drinking, it makes it much harder for those inner whisperings to creep in from the lower self, encouraging you to do the weak or wrong thing. That means fasting is part our inner struggle against our false lower selves.

* **So what have we learnt today?**

*The virtues that come with fasting are like a protective shield and a door to worship and Heaven. (for the youngest children you could demonstrate this concept using a cardboard shield prop…talk about the vices this shield is deflecting).*

Fasting like all forms of worship has an outer and an inner meaning. We see the health benefits and the community benefits of fasting in Ramadan. The inner meaning is even more profound and important, as Imam al-Ghazali explains it is really like a safe Fortress (a protective shield).

Inside the fortress of fasting, we learn to resist temptation (the low whisperings). We develop patience and self-control in giving up food and drink for part of the day. With the additional help and guidance from Allah because of our effort, after Ramadan that self-control makes us stronger and more able to resist things that are low or forbidden. It makes it easier to stay away from the things that Allah (swt) doesn’t like, the things that cause harm to ourselves or to others (like anger or back-biting).

According to the Prophet (saw), “All the children of Adam (as) would be able to gaze on the dominions of the heavens if our hearts weren’t surrounded by low whisperings.”

Fasting helps to weaken those whisperings, Alhumdulillah, so that our vision of our goal to reach heaven will be stronger and clearer!

In a Hadith qudsi (direct quotation from Allah swt but not contained in the Quran) The Prophet (saw) says that God says,

“Truly, God Most High, boasts to his angels about a young person who has devoted himself to God’s worship and service, saying “Oh, young person, you who have given up your desires and sacrificed this time of health and strength for My sake, to Me you are like one of My angels.”

Isn’t that something, subhanallah!

**Related activities could be suggested. Page 81**