

THE BEGINNING OF GUIDANCE



Ustadh Ubaydullah Evans

The Beginning of Guidance by Imam Ghazali

- In previous sessions, Ustadh Ubaydallah went over the part of Imam Al-Ghazali's Beginning of Guidance talking about the different facets of our day and approaching it with etiquette that can connect us with Allah SWT. In this session, he specifically wanted to speak about fasting because we are now within the last ten days.

Redemption

- If we have been negligent in our worship, the Mercy of Allah SWT gives us a chance to redeem ourselves. The fact that we can make up our prayer is a blessing from Allah SWT. If you have not been benefitting from the blessed times throughout the year, such as the Day of Ashura, Allah SWT gives you the month of Ramadan in its entirety. If you do not benefit from the whole month, you have the last ten nights. Even if you do not make the most of the last ten nights, there is Laylatul Qadr. That is the blessing Allah SWT bestowed upon us.

The First Level of Fasting

- Imam Al-Ghazali talks about the three types of fasting. The first is the general type of fasting, which is abstaining from food and water. This is something that we think of common place, but those outside of the tradition would often find this to be difficult and sometimes hard to imagine. Fasting is a demanding act of worship.

The Second Level of Fasting

- The second kind is that of the special people; it is a deeper level. It is refraining from prohibited acts related to the tongue, eyes, and ears. As it relates to the eyes, there are three: looking away from that is disliked by Allah SWT, lowering your gaze, and looking at other Muslims with a judgmental eye. It is important to leave that which does not concern us, just as the Prophet SAW indicated.
- As it relates to the tongue, there is lying, backbiting, talebearing (telling lies and stories about people), and/or gossiping. Sometimes, we say things like “I would say that even if s/he were here right now!” It does not mean that it is not backbiting. Even the listener is the partner of the speaker, so it is important not to listen to such acts.
- Be careful not to argue or quarrel with people. Fasting is a shield, as told to us by the Prophet SAW. If someone tries to argue with you, tell them “I am fasting.” Do not let an ignorant person take your shield.

- Even fasting at these two levels, every good deed is multiplied by ten times and as much as up to 700 times. Allahu akbar!

The Third Level of Fasting

- The reason there is an amazing reward for fasting is that it is a manifest sign of sincerity. Only Allah SWT knows you are doing it, whereas with the other pillars of Islam, others see you performing the acts of worship. We do not even fathom of breaking the fast because we know that Allah SWT is watching and seeing us.
- The third level means that you fast from everything else except from Allah SWT. It does not mean we do not give the rights of people around us, such as our family, neighbors, and friends, it means that the heart only belongs to Allah SWT. Nothing gains ownership of the heart except my Lord.
- This is zuhd (renunciation of the world). People think that you have to own very little material items to practice zuhd. That is a misnomer. Zuhd is about nothing owning you except for Allah SWT. A proper relationship with the dunya is that you use it to fulfill your responsibilities and use it to gain an even higher position with Allah SWT. That does not mean you can't save up for things like the education of your children, it means that your reliance is not upon anything you have, but rather on Allah SWT. When you do not have something, you are content with what you do not have.

FAQs

- How does Allah SWT allow us to redeem ourselves with our worship?
- What are three ways you can spiritually break your fast with the eye?
- What should you do if someone tries to argue with you while you are fasting?
- Why is there a great reward for fasting?
- What is referred to as the third level of fasting?
- What are the 3 aspects of special fasting?
- What are the 5 things that spiritually break the fast?
- Why is there such a big reward for fasting?
- What is the highest level of fasting?
- What are the 3 levels of fasting?