

Prayer on the Occasion of the End of Ramadan

‘Id al-Fitr

by

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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O Lord we thank Thee at the end of this month of trial and of blessings for all that Thou have given us and also all that has been denied us for we become aware of Thee both through Thy gifts and through all privation which is only a reflection of Thy Transcendence. In fasting we have worn the armor of the purity of Thy Presence against all the vicissitudes and dispersions of the world. We have died to the world to live in Thy Will. Our fast was not only the rejection of food and drink and even the purification of our minds of evil thoughts. It was certainly all of these things according to what Thou hast willed in Thy Sacred Law. But it was even more than that a rejection of all that is other than Thee, for to fast is to put aside everything but Thy Countenance and to live in Thy Presence. It is ultimately to remember Thee and to invoke Thee through Thy Sacred Name.

With the help of the shroud of purity which this holy month has made to descend upon Thy servants, we have come to see the world of Thy Creation not as separation and veil but as signs and portents of Thy Wisdom and Beauty. In the practice of spiritual poverty symbolized by the fast and actualized also by it we have emptied the vessel of our humble existence of ourselves and have been blessed to have it filled with the nectar of Thy Presence as the cosmos was made resplendent by the descent of Thy Word, the Holy Quran, during this month.

Now that we bid farewell to this blessed month and join in celebrating this feast which makes us aware once again of the blessings of life and the food which nourishes and sustains it, enable us to maintain in the days, weeks and months that follow an element of the purity and detachment of Ramadan. Allow us to live in the world in such a way as to be also in Thy Presence. Endow us with the vision of creatures in their inwardness, as they exist before Thy Majesty and as they reflect Thy Beauty and not solely in their outward aspect as veil and separation. May we live throughout the year and in fact all the years of our lives in Thy Sacred Name in such a way that we retain the purity of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan along with the celebration of the goodness and beauty of Thy creation and of Thy gifts during this great feast, the *‘id al-fitr*, which crowns a month when we have tried to live according to Thy Will and to perform the acts of worship Thou hast willed for us. May we always live according to Thy

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He was asked, "When shall a man be freed from his wants?"

"When God shall free him," he replied; "This is not affected by a man's exertion, but by the grace and help of God. First of all, He brings forth in him the desire to attain this goal. Then He opens to him the gate of repentance. Then He throws him into self-mortification, so that he continues to strive and, for a while, to pride himself upon his efforts, thinking that he is advancing or achieving something: but afterwards he falls into despair and feels no joy. Then he knows that his work is not pure, but tainted, he repents of the acts of devotion which he had thought to be his own, and perceives that they were done by God's grace and help, and that he was guilty of polytheism in attributing them to his own exertion. When this becomes manifest, a feeling of joy enters his heart. Then God opens to him the gate of certainty, so that for a time he takes anything from any one and accepts contumely and endures abasement, and knows for certain by Whom it is brought to pass, and doubt concerning this is removed from his heart. Then God opens to him the gate of love, and here too egoism shows itself for a time and he is exposed to blame, which means that in his love of God he meets fearlessly whatever may befall him and reeks not of reproach; but still he thinks "I love" and finds no rest until he perceives that it is God who loves him and keeps him in the state of loving, and that this is the result of divine love and grace, not of his own endeavor. Then God opens to him the gate of unity and causes him to know that all action depends on God Almighty. Hereupon he perceives that all is He, and all is by Him, and all is His; that He has laid this self-conceit upon His creatures in order to prove them, and that He in His omnipotence ordains that they shall hold this false belief, because omnipotence is His attribute, so that when they regard His attributes they shall know that He is the Lord. What formerly was hearsay now becomes known to him intuitively as he contemplates the works of God. Then he entirely recognizes that he has not the right to say 'I' or 'mine'. At this stage he beholds his helplessness; desires fall away from him and he becomes free and calm. He wishes that which God wishes: his own wishes are gone, he is emancipated from his wants, and has gained peace and joy in both worlds."

Abū Sa'īd ibn Abi 'l-Khayr.