



JOURNEY TO ALLAH

in

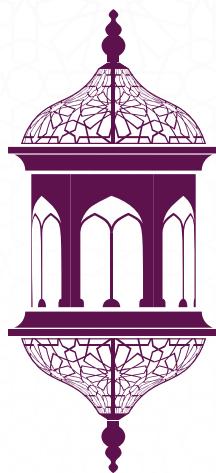
Ramadan

30 Reminders to Taste the Sweetness
of Iman & Transform Your Life



Life With Allah

الحياة مع الله



JOURNEY TO ALLAH

in

Ramadan

30 Reminders to Taste the Sweetness
of Iman & Transform Your Life

3rd Edition 1446 AH/2025

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“Ramaḍān is the month in which the Qur’ān was revealed – a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion (between right and wrong)...”

2:185



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Introduction



All praise and thanks are for Allah, who blessed us with Ramadān, honoured us with the Qur'ān, and granted us the gift of fasting. May His peace and blessings be upon the best of men to have walked upon this earth, the servant of Allah and His beloved Messenger: Muḥammad ﷺ.

Ramadān is an incredible gift from Allah ﷺ. In it, we have endless opportunities to be forgiven, freed from the Hell-fire and admitted into Paradise. In it, our souls can be cleansed, our character can be beautified, and our hearts can be rejuvenated. In it, we can gain control over the nafs, conquer our desires and lusts, and solidify our focus to fulfil our purpose of existence: to worship Allah.

Ramadān helps us to shift our focus from the material towards the spiritual; detach from the world and attach to the hereafter; disconnect from the 'noise' of the world and connect to our Creator.

Ramadān is the month of the Qur'ān. It is the month where we aim to become the people of the Qur'ān: people who constantly recite, learn, reflect and 'live' the Qur'ān. People who spend their nights in qiyām savouring the sweetness of their Lord's words. People whose hearts tremble and tears flow when they recite His verses; who humble themselves to Him in sincere du'a; and who beg Him in sujūd for entry into Jannah and salvation from the Hell-fire.

Ramadān is the perfect opportunity to cleanse our hearts from greed, envy, pride, hatred and the love of the world. It is the optimum time to become the best of Allah's servants: those who bring the most benefit to others, those who treat their parents, spouses, children, families and wider communities with kindness and excellence.

Ramadān is the ultimate īmān-booster. It is an intensive 30-day training programme; a bootcamp in which we can gain new habits, discard the bad ones, and truly transform our lives.

Ramadān is the month of Allah's special care, love, mercy, kindness and generosity. It is a month in which Allah rewards us handsomely for our meagre efforts. It contains a night which is better than a thousand months. Ramadān is the best time to accelerate our journey to Allah ﷺ.

'Journey to Allah in Ramadān' is a guide to deepen our relationship with Allah ﷺ in this blessed month. It explores how we can strive to become His true servants, and endeavour to taste the sweetness of īmān and worship. The book consists of 30 key sections, one for each day of Ramadān. The topics include: inner dimensions of fasting; the night prayer, and other actions of worship; some of the key 'actions' and 'diseases' of the heart; i'tikāf, Laylat al-Qadr and the hereafter.

We ask Allah ﷺ to forgive our mistakes and shortcomings in this publication. We pray that He accepts this meagre effort and makes it a means of forgiveness and eternal goodness. We pray this book will be beneficial for those seeking to strengthen their connection with Allah ﷺ and deepen their understanding of the true meanings of Ramadān.

Life With Allah

Sha'bān 1444 AH/ March 2023



Journey to Allah in Ramadan

We are here on a special journey: a journey of knowing, loving and worshipping Allah, our Creator, our Nurturing Lord.

The journey to Allah is unique, because it is a journey to The One who is The Unique. It is a journey to The One who owns the treasures of the world and beyond, The One whose generosity knows no limits, The One who is the Most Loving. It is a journey to The Most Magnificent, The Most Perfect and The Most Beautiful.

It is a journey, however, paved with obstacles: the glitter and glamour of the world, Shayṭān, and the nafs. It is a journey paved with difficulties, but its destination is unlike any other.

It is also a journey which requires knowledge: knowledge of the route, knowledge of the destination and knowledge of the provisions that we must take with us.

Ramadān is a special gift from Allah, in which we can accelerate in this journey. Join us in this blessed month, as we attempt to not just race ahead in this journey, but to also find joy along the way, *inshāAllah*.

“Know that the path leading to Allah ﷺ is not a journey taken by the feet — rather it is the journey of the heart.”

— Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ





Sha'ban: Preparation For Ramadan

Amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life, Ramadān, by the will of Allah, is the lifeline we desperately need: patience through fasting, tranquillity through the night prayer, purification through repentance, comfort through du'a' and contentment through dhikr.

For this Ramadān to be our best, we should start preparing now, spiritually but also physically. By preparing in Sha'bān, we are more likely to taste the sweetness of fasting and qiyām in Ramadān inshāAllah.

The following are some of the ways in which we can prepare for this momentous month:

① Start fasting, especially if you have qada fasts

Ā'ishah ﷺ said, "I did not see him ﷺ fast in any month as much as he fasted in Sha'bān" (Muslim).

Usāmah b. Zayd ﷺ said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah, I do not see you fasting in any month as much as you fast in Sha'bān." He ﷺ said, "That is a month which people do not pay much attention to, between Rajab and Ramadān. It is a month in which the actions are taken up to the Lord of the worlds, and I like that my deeds are taken up whilst I am fasting" (Nasā'i).

Just as performing the sunnah prayers before the fard prayers awakens the heart, prepares you to enter the fard prayers with greater khushū', and compensates for the deficiencies of the fard prayers, fasting before Ramadān prepares you for Ramadān physically and spiritually.

Ibn Rajab ﷺ wrote, "As Sha'bān is a prelude to Ramadān, fasting and reciting Qur'ān has been prescribed in it just as it has been prescribed in Ramadān. This is so that you are prepared to enter Ramadān and you train yourself to perform acts of obedience." By becoming accustomed to fasting in Sha'bān, fasting in Ramadān will be easier. Similarly, experiencing the sweetness of fasting in Sha'bān will help you to fast in Ramadān with greater enthusiasm.

If you have any outstanding fasts from last Ramadān, use this month to make them up (qaḍā).

② Increase in your recitation of the Qur'an

Ibn Rajab رض wrote, “The predecessors used to devote themselves to the recitation of the Qur'an in Sha'bān, and they would say ‘The month of Sha'bān is the month of the Reciters.’”

Set a realistic – yet slightly ambitious – target for recitation for this month to ensure you have a smoother entry into Ramaḍān. It may be increasing your recitation by 5 minutes or even an extra hour. Whether you increase the amount of time or the number of pages, either way **increase on what you usually do**.

When Sha'bān would begin, 'Amr b. Qays رض would close his shop and free himself for the recitation of the Qur'an, and he would say, “Glad tidings for the one who rectifies himself before Ramaḍān.”

③ Start praying at night

If waking up for tahajjud before Fajr is difficult, pray a minimum of 2 rak'ahs before you go to sleep.

④ Give charity

Our beloved Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسالہ وآلہ وسالہ said, “Whoever provides iftār for a fasting person, he will have the same reward as him, without anything being diminished from the reward of the fasting person” (Tirmidhī).

Give charity in Sha'bān, so that the poor can gain energy to fast in Ramaḍān and perform qiyām, as our predecessors used to do. An additional benefit is that if you donate iftār to the poor in other countries now, it is more likely to reach them at the beginning of Ramaḍān, allowing you to receive the reward of the full month.

Ibn Rajab رض writes, “As Sha'bān entered, the Muslims would dedicate themselves to their Muṣḥafs and would recite Qur'an; and they would take out the zakāh on their wealth, so that it would support the poor in the month of fasting.”

⑤ Start reading/listening to something which will boost your iman

Slowly start weaning yourself off what snatches your time away from Allah (e.g. social media) and substitute it with what will remind you of Him.

⑥ Clear your heart

As this is the month when your yearly actions are raised to Allah عز وجل, purge your heart of hatred and grudges. Forgive people who have wronged you and start talking to people you haven't talked to in a long time. The Messenger of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسالہ وآلہ وسالہ said, “Indeed Allah looks down in the middle night of Sha'bān and He forgives all of His creation, except anyone who commits shirk or harbours hatred” (Ibn Mājah).

⑦ Hold yourself to account

Our actions are raised up **daily** to Allah twice: in the mornings and the evenings.

Then, they are raised up **weekly** to Allah twice: on Mondays and Thursdays. They are then, raised up to Allah **yearly** in Sha'bān. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ liked for his ‘annual performance review’ to correspond with him being in a state of fasting.

Use this month to **evaluate** your last year’s actions. Do as much ‘ibādah as you can, so that the angels will ascend to Allah with your good deeds.

⑧ Purify yourself before Ramadan by seeking forgiveness

Seek abundant forgiveness and turn to Allah in sincere repentance. Allah ﷺ says, “So seek your Lord’s forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance. Surely my Lord is Most Merciful, All-Loving” (11:90).

Purify your heart to welcome Ramaḍān in the best manner possible. Don’t let your sins prevent you from tasting the sweetness of worship in Ramaḍān. Wuhayb b. Ward ﷺ was asked, “Can the sinner taste the sweetness of worship?” He said, “**No, not even the one who considers doing the sin.**”

⑨ Take the following physical steps:

- Adjust your **sleeping routine** from now so that your body is adjusted by the time Ramaḍān begins.
- Buy your Eid outfits and gifts now. If you are going to purchase new items this year, then do it now (in Sha'bān) to **avoid wasting precious time in Ramaḍān**.
- Make a plan for simple and nutritious iftār meals to avoid wasting time in the blessed month.
- Plan how you are going to give your zakāh and şadaqah.

⑩ Draw up your Ramadan timetable

Plan a Ramaḍān timetable. See the next two articles for tips on how to set goals and how to devise a successful plan.

Revive a Neglected Sunnah

Our beloved Messenger ﷺ described Sha'bān as, “**A month which people do not pay much attention to**, between Rajab and Ramaḍān” (Nasā'i). This indicates that many people are heedless of this time, and it is **especially virtuous to worship and remember Allah in places and times of heedlessness**, e.g. in the markets. It also helps us to perform deeds in secret, as others are heedless, and thereby giving us a chance to increase in our sincerity (ikhlāṣ). Whilst we will all be fasting in Ramaḍān inshāAllah, this is our chance to fast in secret.

May Allah al-Mannān (The Bestower) allow us to revive the sunnah of increasing our worship in this month, and allow us to reach Ramaḍān.

“

The month of Rajab is the month for planting, the month of Sha‘bān is the month of irrigating crops, and the month of Ramaḍān is the month of harvesting the crops.”

- Abū Bakr al-Balkhī رض



Set Your Goals For Ramadan

When we have to undertake a project, we invest a great deal of effort and time into ensuring the project will be successful. Projects are initiated, then planned out, then executed and monitored. And once they are completed, they are evaluated.

If we can do this for projects at work, then surely the ‘project’ of Ramadān is far greater. As people seeking the pleasure of Allah ﷺ and Paradise, Ramadān is the ‘dream project’ that has landed effortlessly on our desks.

In order to prepare a plan which will help us to successfully complete this project, we have to be clear about its goals. These goals will provide the framework of a successful Ramadān. Everything we do in Ramadān should lead to the following goals:

The Goals of Ramadan

① Increase and strengthen your īmān

Ramadān is the perfect opportunity to rejuvenate our īmān and accelerate our journey to Allah. We should strive to increase our īmān in Allah by increasing in our *ma'rifah* (knowledge) of Him, *love* for Him, fear of Him, hope in Him, trust in Him and sincerity to Him. Our īmān in Allah's Angels, Prophets, Books, the Last Day and al-Qadr should also increase.

② Embody servitude ('ubūdiyyah) and submission

Ramadān is the training ground to develop 'ubūdiyyah: where we become true servants of Allah through our **constant humility** and awe of him, and always expressing our dire need of Him. We can speed up our journey to Allah by **infusing all our physical acts of worship with the quality of 'ubūdiyyah**. In our everyday lives, we are accustomed to giving in to our desires. If we feel like eating, we eat. If we feel like drinking, we drink. Through Ramadān, we should aim to train the nafs (inner self) to **submit** itself to Allah, and to **comply** with His commands.

③ Taste the sweetness of worship

The goal of Ramadān should not be to just perform x number of good deeds. Every act of worship in Islam consists of both an outer manifestation ('action of the limb') and an **inner reality** ('action of the heart'), which is its **essence** and core. We should

aim to focus on these inner dimensions, through which we will taste the sweetness of worship inshāAllah.

④ Purify your heart

One of the aims of Ramadān is to elevate the soul to its intended station: **the tranquil soul**. Ramadān is the perfect time to purify the heart from diseases such as envy, hatred, pride, anger, hypocrisy and hard-heartedness. When the heart is purified, it is less susceptible to the whispers of shayṭān, and more able to defend itself from doubts (shubuhāt) and desires (shahawāt).

⑤ Develop good character

Excellent character is an integral part of our dīn, and there is no better time to cultivate this than in Ramadān. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “When one of you enters the morning in the state of fasting, he should **neither use obscene language nor act ignorantly**. If anyone insults him or argues with him, he should say: ‘I am fasting, I am fasting’” (Muslim). Ramadān is the perfect time to become the best of Allah’s servants: those who bring the most benefit to others, those who treat their parents, spouses, children, families and wider communities with kindness and excellence.

⑥ Become attached to the Qur’ān and the night prayer

Whilst the primary purpose of fasting is to gain taqwā, the purpose of Ramadān is to connect with the Qur’ān. Ramadān is the month of the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān is guidance, which is supposed to mould our lives. It is not merely to be beautifully recited. The recitation of the Qur’ān is supposed to increase our īmān and deepen the love and awe of Allah in our hearts. This will only occur if we recite with deliberation and reflection.

Qiyām at night is one of the greatest acts of worship a servant can perform. It brings with it a sweetness which is nearly impossible to experience otherwise. By the time Ramadān ends, we should aim for the night prayer to become a habit so that we can make it a part of our everyday lives throughout the year.

⑦ Bring your heart to your ṣalāh, dhikr & du‘ā’

Ramadān is the perfect time to develop and train ourselves to perform ṣalāh, dhikr and du‘ā’ with **excellence**. We should set specific goals in relation to how we are going to improve in each one e.g. increase khushū’, recite the morning and evening adhkār with deep reflection, make du‘ā’ for a longer duration, and so on.

⑧ Develop consistency

Ramadān is a bootcamp for cultivating our hearts, souls, morals and ultimately our lives, so that the obedience of Allah becomes our lifestyle. We should worship Allah

in Ramadān with the mindset that our efforts are not limited to Ramadān; rather we want to transform our lives through it and make it a consistent part of our lives.

9) Attain Allah's forgiveness, freedom from Hell-fire & entry into Paradise

There are endless opportunities to be forgiven in Ramadān, gain freedom from Hell-fire and be admitted into Paradise. We should be **determined** to not miss out on any of these opportunities.

10) Tame your nafs to stay away from sins and attain taqwā

One of the key goals of Ramadān is to tame the nafs and stop sinning. By refusing your nafs what it desires (food, drink, sleep), you develop self-control. This greater level of self-control should help you the next time you are tempted to sin.

Ramadān is the time to **elevate the soul from its base desires** (stomach and private parts). Aim for your fasting and Ramadān to remove the love of the world from your heart; and let your soul soar high above the ground, away from the body, and upwards towards its Creator and Originator.

A large number of goals can feel overwhelming. However, once you have understood the overall goals, do a self-analysis as to where you currently are and what you would like to focus on. Everyone is on their own unique journey. Perhaps you already perform the 5 daily prayers punctually, but your target is to build up a daily habit of ṣalāh al-ḍuḥā. Or perhaps you don't struggle with envy, but you do struggle with anger, so you can focus on managing your anger this Ramadān.

Ramadan: The Battle Against the Nafs

Think of Ramadān as a battlefield. The enemy you are trying to defeat is your nafs. It is an enemy which has conquered you many times over in the past. This Ramadān, however, you are determined that **by the help of Allah, you are going to conquer it**. You are going to be the winner, and not the loser. This will require planning, effort, tonnes of **du'a'** and perhaps even a change in strategy.

One such strategy is to manoeuvre around your nafs, and subtly trick it. When you are struggling to keep momentum, say to yourself: *just a little while longer. After Ramadān, you can go back to enjoying the ḥalāl pleasures. For now, just keep going for a little while longer.* Once, Bishr al-Ḥāfi was walking with one of his companions towards a city. His companion wanted to drink water from a well. Bishr said to him, "We will drink from the next well that appears on the way." Every time they would approach a well, Bishr would say, "From the next well." When they finally reached their destination, Bishr said, "This is how we journey through the world."

We ask Allah al-Ḥayy (The Ever-Living), al-Qayyūm (The All-Sustainer) to make this Ramaḍān our best Ramaḍān, and we ask Him to not entrust us to ourselves for even the blink of an eye.

“The (pious predecessors) used to make du‘ā’ for six months prior to Ramaḍān, asking Allāh to allow them to witness Ramaḍān.”
(Laṭā’if al-Ma‘ārif)





Plan Your Ramadan Timetable

To make the most of the blessed month of Ramaḍān, have a plan. Write down your daily schedule for Ramaḍān. Be happy and **feel excited** knowing that you will be spending quality time with Allah ﷺ.

Depending on your circumstances, your schedule on weekdays may differ from the weekends. Aim to remain busy with good deeds, as having free time makes it easier to fall into sin.

What to Include in Your Timetable:

① Salāh

- The 5 daily prayers, including the sunnah prayers. Be punctual with praying in congregation and aim to be there before the opening takbīr.
- Qiyām al-Layl (Tarāwīh/Tahajjud). Along with fasting, this is the highlight of Ramaḍān. This is the time of the year in which you can truly connect with the Qur’ān. Recite slowly, repeat the āyāt and feel the emotion in your heart. Think that Allah is talking to **you** directly.
- Salāh al-Duḥā. This can be read approximately 15 minutes after sunrise till 15 minutes before Ẓuhr. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever offers Fajr in congregation and remains seated, engaging in the remembrance of Allah until the sun has risen, and then offers two rak’ahs, he will have a **reward equal to that of performing ḥajj and ‘umrah**.” He ﷺ said, “Complete, complete, complete (i.e. complete reward)” (Tirmidhī).
- As many optional (nafl) prayers possible throughout the day and night.

② Qur’ān

- Have an ambitious target for **reciting** as much Qur’ān as possible.
- Along with recitation, allocate time for memorising, reviewing memorisation, **learning the meanings** and **reflecting** on the Qur’ān.
- Bring the Qur’ān alive into your day. Have a minimum of at least one thing you will act upon based on what you recited in the day.

③ Dhikr

- Morning and evening adhkār

- Adhkār after ṣalāh
- Adhkār before sleep
- General dhikr throughout the day and night

Spend time in acquainting yourself with the meanings of the adhkār (remembrances), so that your dhikr is conscious. Similarly, combine dhikr with deep reflection (tafakkur).

④ Du‘ā’

- Du‘ā’ before and after iftār
- Du‘ā’ throughout the day when you’re fasting
- Du‘ā’ in your sajdah
- Du‘ā’ and istighfār in the last third of the night
- Du‘ā’ between the adhān and iqāmah
- Sunnah du‘ās, such as before/after eating, entering/leaving the house, using the bathroom etc. Some of these have incredible rewards, which you shouldn’t miss out on, especially in this blessed month. (See ‘Daily Adhkar’ by Life With Allah)
- Increase your praise (ḥamd) of Allah at the start of your du‘ā. This will specifically help you to build a special bond with Him. (See ‘I Am Near’ by Life With Allah)

⑤ Helping others & family ties

- Try to help others as much as possible, especially the elderly and **vulnerable people** of your community.
- Maintain **family ties** and reach out to people you may have cut off contact with.
- The most deserving of our good relations are our parents. We should serve and be kind to our parents to the best of our abilities.
- Choose **specific acts of kindness** which you will do for your family e.g. unload the dishwasher/give a head massage/help with homework.
- Give **charity**. Try to feed those who are fasting to acquire the reward of their fasts.

Use Every Moment

There may be times when you are tired or too exhausted to recite the Qur’ān. **Fill this time up with ‘easier’ acts of worship** such as listening to the Qur’ān or a beneficial lecture. Similarly, if you’re doing household chores or commuting, recite the Qur’ān or do dhikr at the same time.

Have a stockpile of books, or even one book, ready to help you become close to Allah ﷺ, His Words and His Messenger ﷺ.

Time to Detox

Ramadān is a month in which we attempt to **train the nafs (inner self) to resist obeying its desires**, and instead **obey Allah ﷺ**. Therefore, it is essential, that along with planning what we are going to do in Ramadān, we should also plan what we are **not** going to do. Ramadān is a time to detox our bodies, and more importantly our hearts from the toxins of 'sins' and the 'diseases' of the heart.

If we fast – by not eating, drinking and abstaining from intimacy – but do not protect our eyes, ears and tongues from sinning, we will miss out on the **essence and spirit of fasting**.

The following are some of the key aspects we should focus on:

① Eating

Food is the fuel of desires. The more we fill our stomachs, the lazier we feel to perform 'ibādah. If we eat a lot, we drink a lot. And this makes us sleep a lot, which leads to us losing out on precious time. The Prophet ﷺ ordered the unmarried companions to fast, because fasting is meant to curtail and restrain sexual desire.

Likewise, we have to internalise that **Ramadān is about fasting, not feasting**. We shouldn't spend too much time preparing our meals. Naturally the long hours leave us hungry, making us want to cook more than usual. Similarly, we should not pressurise our family members to cook elaborate meals for us.

Imām al-Ghazalī ﷺ explained that **one will only reap the full benefit of a fast if one does not overeat at iftār**. We should only eat what we would usually eat on a normal night. Otherwise, the purpose of fasting will not be fulfilled and it will be easier for Shayṭān to make inroads into our hearts.

② Talking

Ramadān is the best time to rectify our speech. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent" (Bukhārī). This includes how we talk to others through our phones and on social media.

③ Sleeping

Ramadān is the best time to reduce sleep, and spend a greater portion of the night in worshipping Allah.

④ Socialising

Too much socialising hardens the heart, and often leads to sinning. Ramadān, especially i'tikāf of the last 10 days, is the perfect retreat: away from people, and **fully focused on Allah**.

May Allah al-Faṭṭāḥ (The Supreme Opener) open the paths of goodness and blessings for us in this month, and may He help us to utilise our time in the best way possible.



Beware of The Sinister Thief: Social Media

Social media has transformed our way of life. While social media may offer some benefits, research has shown that regular use of social media causes mental health problems, addictions, lower attention spans, physical health problems, poor sleep quality, relationship problems and more. However, the most harmful effect of social media is on our hearts and our relationship with Allah ﷺ.

Today, one of the biggest obstacles in our journey to Allah is social media and the entertainment industry. Thus, before the month of Ramaḍān begins, it is vital that we reassess our relationship with social media and reflect on its harms. Ramaḍān is the month in which we should undertake a much needed ‘detox’. Psychologists are now advocating ‘fasting from social media’. If we could do the same in this month for our spiritual health, our Ramaḍān would truly be transformative.

The following are some of the key harms of social media and practical solutions we can take to protect ourselves:

① Time waster & addiction

Social media is the biggest thief of our time. Millions of dollars have been spent on designing social media platforms to ensure that we become addicted to them, using psychological and behavioural techniques such as infinite scrolling, instant gratification, personalised algorithms and constant notifications. These platforms distract us from our goals, hinder us from our social and familial responsibilities, and reduce our ability to focus. Our worship, such as ṣalāh, dhikr and seeking knowledge, is particularly impacted, and we struggle to maintain it for any significant duration.

Solution: As Muslims, every moment of our lives is precious and we must use our time consciously, wisely and productively, especially in Ramaḍān. Therefore, try to **detox from social media completely**. Otherwise, reduce it to the bare minimum: have a set ‘window’ in which you allow yourself to catch up on it, rather than just saying ‘I’m going to reduce it.’ For example, ‘I will use social media for twenty minutes after iftār.’ Deactivate all social media apps and remove them from your phone. You can also use free apps or plug-ins on your browser that restrict the limit on when and for how long you can use social media.

Similarly, don't waste your time arguing pointlessly online. Al-Awzā'ī ﷺ said, "When Allah intends evil for a people, He makes them busy with arguing, and prevents them from (real) action."

② Gazing at haram

Social media platforms are full of ḥarām and harmful imagery. It's common to see enticing pictures and videos of evil acts and the opposite gender. Gazing at ḥarām is a poison which leads to the darkness of the heart and **stops us from tasting the sweetness of īmān and worshipping Allah**. Along with lowering our gazes from anything which incites lust, we should also avoid looking at the glitz and glamour of the world, as this makes our hearts attached to the world.

Solution: We have to protect ourselves from all ḥarām, including looking at that which is ḥarām. Similarly, we should ensure that we are not posting anything which can be a source of temptation for another person. Ramaḍān is the time to end any ḥarām interactions with the opposite gender and unfollow any account that is harmful or not beneficial to your spiritual and mental wellbeing.

③ Backbiting, slander & lying

It is common for people to criticise others or talk badly of others on social media, even sometimes under the guise of 'da'wah'. It is not just the person who backbites that is sinful. Even the one who is listening or reading is sinful as he is complicit in spreading negativity and harm to others.

If what was shared was not even true (and as an observer you are unlikely to know whether it is true or not), then it falls under the extremely dangerous major sin of slander. Spreading false information can have serious consequences for individuals, communities, and the Ummah at large.

Backbiting, slandering and lying are major sins which should not be taken lightly. Each has disastrous consequences in this world and the hereafter.

Solution: Do not spread or share negative information about others. Before posting anything, consider if it is necessary and respectful to share. If you have a concern, speak directly to the person involved, with the correct etiquette. If you are following someone who is speaking badly or negatively of others, unfollow that person. If you want to share information about an event/topic, verify it is correct before you share it, otherwise don't share it.

The Prophet ﷺ was once shown the horrific punishment of a man lying flat on his back and another man standing over his head with an iron hook. (The man standing) would put the hook in one side of the man's mouth and tear off that side of his face to the back of his neck, and (he would tear) his nose from front to back, and his eye from front to back. Then he would turn to the other side of the man's face and do just as he had done with the other side. He would hardly complete this side when the other side would return to its normal state. Then he would return to it to repeat what he had done before. The Prophet ﷺ was told that this was the punishment for a man who goes out of his house in the morning and tells lies that are spread all over the world (Bukhārī).

④ Public sins & justifying sins

Immorality and sin have been normalised and even glamourised on social media. Actions that were taboo and socially unacceptable a mere half a century ago, even amongst non-Muslims, are now commonplace for both non-Muslims and Muslims alike. Sins are no longer considered matters that one should be ashamed of; something which must be kept between oneself and Allah ﷺ. Many of us brazenly expose our sins through online platforms seen and read by tens of thousands of users.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Everyone from my Ummah will be forgiven except those who publicise their sins" (Bukhārī).

Openly sinning not only shows your contempt for the dīn, but encourages others to sin too. Do you want to be carrying the burden of other people's sins?

What is even more lethal is the ever-increasing number of 'Muslims' who try to 'justify' or make 'ḥalāl' what Allah ﷺ has clearly made ḥarām.

Solution: Do not share any of your sins (however 'minor' they may be) in public and on social media. Instead keep your sins secret between you and Allah as far as possible and ask Allah al-Ghafūr (The Most Forgiving) to forgive you. If you have already shared sins on social media, go through your account and delete them immediately. Never ever justify committing a sin; admit your weakness and ask Allah to forgive you.

5) Riya (showing off) & arrogance

The opposite of *ikhlas* (sincerity) is *riyā* (showing off/ostentation) and *sum'ah* (seeking fame), both **diseases of the heart**. In an era of social media and constant 'sharing', we are more susceptible to *riyā*, as we focus on impressing the watchful gaze of our followers instead of being watchful of the Gaze of Allah, *al-Muhaymin* (The Vigilant). We feel pressured to 'share' everything, including our good deeds. This leads us to doing good deeds for others (*riyā*) instead of doing it for the sake of Allah. It also leads to self-admiration ('ujb) and pride (kibr) because the constant validation and attention received through likes, comments, and followers can contribute to an inflated importance of one's inner self (*nafs*) and a sense of superiority over others.

Likewise, if we are involved in seeking knowledge and *da'wah*, we are **more vulnerable** to *shaytan*'s attempts to pollute our efforts with *riyā*.

Solution: In order to avoid the trap of *riyā*, we should not share things unnecessarily — it must be useful and purposeful. We must constantly guard and renew our intentions for sharing good content. We should be humble and modest in our interactions with everyone, and we should always ask Allah to grant us sincerity and humility.

True servitude to Allah ('ubudiyyah) requires us to diminish our self-importance and venerate Allah ﷺ. We must think the highest of Allah and be in awe of His greatness, while thinking of ourselves as insignificant. We will only become true servants of Allah if we avoid actions and situations which inflate our ego.

6) Envy

Gone are the days where we could only envy those whom we saw. Thanks to social media, we have access to the little details of millions around the world. This often leaves us feeling envious of lifestyles we see others enjoying, but we ourselves cannot access. Even though we know that images are heavily filtered and present a distorted image of reality, this does not stop our hearts from feeling envy.

Sometimes the feeling of envy (*hasad*) creeps up on us without us realising. **If we fight back against it, we will be rewarded.** However, if we act upon this feeling, and allow it to eat up our insides, then this is *ḥarām* and it **ruins our good deeds**. Envy can be deadly: it leads to hatred and tension, tears down relationships and breaks families. Likewise, we are also responsible for ensuring that we do not inadvertently cause others to feel envious of us, so we should be mindful of what we share.

Solution: Ramadān is a month to detox from social media to combat negative effects of seeing profiles and updates from 'photoshopped' lives, such as ungratefulness, self-loathing, and depression caused by envy. To combat envy, stop following people who

you are likely to feel envious of. Reflect on Allah's blessings and remember that He is The Most Just (Al-'Adl). Consider that the person you are envious of may have ten problems for every one blessing you see. Similarly, protect yourself and your family by not sharing your personal life or triumphs on social media at all.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Resort to concealing the fulfilment and success of your needs, for verily every one endowed with a blessing is envied” (Tabarānī).

In summary, as Muslims we must be consciously mindful of the various dangers of social media on our hearts, our spiritual wellbeing and our connection with Allah ﷺ. This Ramaḍān, if you can undertake a complete social media detox, do that. Otherwise, put in place strict measures to control your social media use.

May Allah al-Tayyib (The Pure) purify us from our addictions, liberate us from the prison of 'social media', and attach our hearts to Him.





Welcome, O Blessed Month!

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Do good all the time, and seek to be recipients of the ‘outpouring’ of Allah’s mercy. Indeed, Allah showers down these (special) ‘outpourings’ of His mercy to whomsoever He wills from His slaves” (Tabarānī).

Although Allah ﷺ constantly showers His mercy, love and blessings upon us throughout the year, there are certain times of the year wherein He is even more Generous to us. These are the special seasons, days and moments in which it is even easier to acquire His pleasure, earn His forgiveness and be saved from the Hell-fire. **The blessed month of Ramadān is one such season when we witness the fruits of Allah’s love and kindness.**

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The month of Ramadān has come to you, a **blessed month** in which Allah – Exalted and Majestic is He – has obligated (its) fasting upon you. In it, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell-fire are closed, and the rebellious devils are chained. In it, Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is truly deprived!” (Nasa’ī).

Ibn Rajab ﷺ quoted the earlier scholars as saying: ‘This ḥadīth is the **basis for congratulating one another for the arrival of Ramadān**. Why shouldn’t the believer be congratulated when the gates of Paradise have opened? Why shouldn’t the sinner be congratulated when the gates of the Hell-fire have closed? Why shouldn’t the intelligent one be congratulated for a time when the devils are chained? How can this time be compared to any other time?’

Allah ﷺ instructed His beloved ﷺ:

فُلِّيْقَضِلُّ اللَّهُ وَبِرَّ حَمَّتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلَيْمَرْحُونَ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

“Say: In Allah’s grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever (wealth) they accumulate” (10:58).

Ramadān is indeed from the mercy, kindness and generosity of Allah upon us. Let us rejoice and **feel happy with its arrival**. Let us be from those who are pleased with Ramadān and are eager to strive in it. Let us show Allah how happy we are with His special month through our intentions, worship and desire for reward.

Let us not be of those who become miserable with Ramaḍān's arrival and feel 'forced' to fast its days.

The Immense Kindness of Allah

Allah ﷺ says in the Holy Qur'ān,

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ

"(Fast for) a limited number of days..." (2:184).

Fasting is obligatory upon us only for a limited number of days (29/30 days). From His mercy, Allah made this amount manageable and easy for us. Furthermore, He made this short amount of time a source of immense blessings.

Hafṣah b. Sīrīn ﷺ quoted Abūl-Āliyah ﷺ as saying, "The fasting person is in a state of worship so long as he does not backbite anyone, even if he is sleeping in his bed." Then Hafṣah would say, **"How wonderful it is that I am in a state of worship whilst I am sleeping on my bed."**

We also witness the immense generosity of Allah in the following ḥadīth. A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of Allah, if I testify that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah, I pray the five prayers, I give zakāh, I fast Ramaḍān and I stand in prayer during its nights; then who do you think I am from?" He ﷺ said: **"From the ṣiddīqīn and the martyrs"** (Ibn Ḥibbān).

The ṣiddīqīn are those who have attained the highest status of īmān, conviction and truthfulness. Even in difficult times, their actions consistently verify their words. Examples of such people include the best of the Prophets' followers, such as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ.

Ramadan: The Annual Milestone

Just as Friday punctuates our week, and the five daily prayers punctuates our days, Ramaḍān punctuates our year. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The five daily prayers, Jumu'ah to Jumu'ah, and Ramaḍān to Ramaḍān expiate for (the sins perpetrated) in between them, so long as one stays away from the major sins" (Muslim).

Ramaḍān is the benchmark of the year. If we strive hard during it to stay away from sins and attain the pleasure of Allah al-Karīm (The Most Generous), we will enjoy its fruits throughout the year. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ wrote, "Whoever's Jumu'ah is safe from evil, his week will be safe from evil. Whoever's Ramaḍān is safe from evil, his year will be safe from evil. Whoever's ḥajj is safe from evil, his life will be safe from evil."

Ramadan: The Example of Yusuf ﷺ

Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ writes:

“It has been said that the example of the 12 months is like the children of Ya‘qūb ﷺ: Ramaḍān is like Yūsuf ﷺ, while the remaining months resemble his brothers. Just as Yūsuf was Ya‘qūb’s most beloved child, Ramaḍān is likewise Allah’s most beloved month.”

Reflection 1:

From his mercy and compassion, Yūsuf forgave his brothers and said, ‘There is no blame on you today’ (12:92). **Ramaḍān is likewise the month of compassion and mercy.** It is a month of blessings, goodness, freedom from the Hell-fire, and forgiveness from the All-Powerful King.

Reflection 2:

The brothers of Yūsuf ﷺ came to ask him if he could remedy their situation. Subsequently, Yūsuf ﷺ treated them with kindness and was hospitable to them. He provided them with food and told his servants: ‘Put their (traded) goods back into their saddlebags, so that they may recognise them when they go back to their family, and perhaps they may return’ (12:62). Thus, one person remedied the shortcomings of eleven others. **Likewise, the month of Ramaḍān is one month that remedies our shortcomings and deficiencies of the other eleven months.**

Reflection 3:

Ya‘qūb ﷺ had eleven sons who were living with him and whose actions he would see at all times. However, his eyesight did not return due to any of their clothing. Instead, it returned due to Yūsuf’s shirt. **Likewise, if the sinner smells the scents of Ramaḍān, sits with those who remind him of Allah, recites the Qur’ān, and avoids backbiting and vain talk, he will be forgiven after being a sinner.** He will become close after he was far. His heart which was previously blind, will now have the ability to ‘perceive’. Throughout his entire life, he will be granted tawfiq (divine providence) to obey Allah, and in his last moments, his soul will be extracted gently from his body. When he eventually meets Allah, he will be blessed with forgiveness and lofty ranks in Paradise.

So, by Allah, **take advantage of this blessing during these few days;** and you will soon see endless blessings and a very long period of rest and relaxation, Allah willing.”

(Adapted from Bustān al-Wā'iṣīn)

‘O Seeker of Good, Come Forward! O Seeker of Evil, Stop!’

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When it is the first night of the month of Ramadān, the devils and the rebellious jinn are tied up; the doors of Hell-fire are closed, and none of its doors are opened. The doors of Paradise are opened, and none of its doors are closed. A caller calls out: ‘O seeker of good, come forward! O seeker of evil, stop!’ Indeed, Allah frees slaves from the Hell-fire every night” (Tirmidhī).

As we enter the blessed month, let us supplicate like our beloved Prophet ﷺ did:

اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلِهَ عَلَيْنَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَالْإِيمَانِ، وَالسَّلَامَةَ وَالإِسْلَامَ، رَبِّنَا وَرَبِّكَ اللَّهُ

O Allah, make this moon (month) pass over us with blessings, īmān, peace, and in the state of Islam. (O moon,) my Lord and your Lord is Allah.



“

By Allah, if it was said to the people of the grave, ‘make a wish!’ they would wish for one day of Ramadān.”

- Ibn al-Jawzī 



Knowing Allah: The Beginning of the Journey

We all want happiness. How we each define this and seek it, however, often differs. For some of us, happiness is wealth and material abundance. For others, it's fame and renown. For some, it is sensual pleasure and gratification. And for others, it is a breakthrough in their field of expertise.

Today, despite the unbounded pleasures and excess we are surrounded by, more of us than ever remain unfulfilled. We are unhappy. No matter how much we buy and consume, or how much we're validated and gratified, there still lurks within us a void, a lingering feeling of emptiness that we cannot remove. That reassuring satisfaction and contentment we hope will come, actually never does.

Why? It's because we've ignored and suppressed an inborn instinct to know and worship our Maker. Nourishing this instinct is man's path to happiness.

Knowing Allah and, as a natural outcome, fulfilling our obligations to Him is the true antidote to today's emptiness and despair.

Allah ﷺ created us to worship Him. To worship Him, we need to know Him. *Qiwām al-Sunnah al-Āṣbahānī* ﷺ writes, “The first command Allah obligated upon His creation is to know and recognise Him. Once they know Him, they will worship Him. Allah says, ‘So, know that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah’ (47:19). Thus, the Muslims should know the Names of Allah so they can venerate and glorify Him as He deserves to be venerated and glorified.”

If we don't know about the beauty and kindness of Allah, we can't love Him. If we can't love Him, we can't worship Him. Similarly, without knowing about His greatness and majesty, we can't embody true servitude ('ubūdiyyah) and humble ourselves to Him. **Knowing Him is essential to forming a strong bond with Him.**

The Joy of Knowing Allah

Our souls' greatest need is to know and recognise our Creator and Originator. Knowing Allah brings joy to the heart, nourishes the soul, and is the ultimate source of bliss in this worldly life. We will never be truly happy until we know Allah and become deeply acquainted with Him.

The journey to becoming acquainted with Allah and enjoying His closeness is a long journey, but it is sweet. Only those who've traversed it can tell you of its pleasures and joy. It's what the scholars referred to as the 'paradise of the world'.

“There is an ‘early paradise’ in the world. It is to know Allah, to love Him, find comfort in Him, long to meet Him, fear Him and obey Him. Beneficial knowledge leads one to attain this. Whoever’s knowledge leads him to enter this ‘early paradise’, will enter Paradise in the next world. And whoever does not sniff the fragrance of the ‘worldly paradise’, will not sniff the fragrance of the Paradise of the hereafter.”

- Ibn Rajab 

One of the predecessors said, “How unfortunate are the people of the world who left the world without having experienced its greatest delight!” When he was asked, “What is its greatest delight?”, he replied, **“Knowing Allah, loving Him, finding comfort in His closeness, and longing to meet Him.”**

Allah has chosen humans to be the noblest of creation and gifted them with the intellect to recognise and know Allah. Imām al-Ghazalī  writes, “The honour and excellence of the human being, by which he surpasses all other creatures, is his ability for knowing Allah. Knowing Allah  is the human’s beauty, perfection and glory in this world; and his provision for the hereafter.” How sad it is then for a person to merely sleepwalk through life, ignorant of his Creator, solely concerned with satisfying his stomach and desires.

The best and most important knowledge a person can attain is the knowledge of Allah. There is no knowledge more grandiose, more majestic and more beautiful than it. It is the basis of all branches of knowledge, and the secret to attaining eternal success.

And yet as we age, our knowledge of Allah does not increase. Unfortunately, we take great pains to learn and educate ourselves in other sciences, but we hardly spend any time or expend our resources to learn about Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

Thus, ma’rifah (a deep awareness and knowledge of Allah) is the starting point in our journey to Allah. **This Ramadān, our goal should be to gain the closeness of Allah and to worship Him in the best way possible.** We can only do this if we gain a deeper appreciation of who He is. Every act of worship which we will do in this month should help us to deepen this knowledge.

How Can We Attain the Ma'rifah of Allah?

Although we cannot fully comprehend the majesty and sublimity of Allah ﷺ, we can try our best to increase our ma'rifah of Him by doing the following:

① By reflecting and pondering on the Noble Qur'an i.e. tadabbur

The Qur'an is the manual which Allah sent down to guide us to Him. Allah tells us in His Own Words who He is – in the most profound manner possible.

Ramadān is the month of the Qur'an. Your goal in this month should not be merely to finish x number of completions. As you recite the Qur'an throughout this month, make it your goal that each time you recite, you will try to increase your ma'rifah and īmān in Allah. And this will only happen if you recite with tadabbur (see p. 68).

② By reflecting on the signs of Allah which are around us i.e tafakkur

The signs of Allah are all around us and within us. Allah ﷺ repeatedly reminds us in the Qur'an to reflect over His creation. This Ramadān, to increase your ma'rifah, go out in nature and do dhikr whilst simultaneously reflecting on Allah's creation.

③ By understanding, reflecting and living in the shade of the most Beautiful Names of Allah

This Ramadān, connect to Allah through His Names by either reading a book about Allah's Names or listening to a series of lectures on this topic or attending a class on it. Once you have understood the Names, reflect on them each time you come across them whilst reciting Qur'an.

This Ramadān, feel a sense of closeness to Him and become deeply acquainted with Him by **asking Him through His Names. Reflect on how the different Names manifest in your life, so you feel intimately connected to them.** For example, reflect on His Name 'al-Karīm (The Generous)' by thinking about His gift of Ramadān to you: another opportunity for forgiveness, freedom from Hell-fire and entrance into Paradise. Another month in which you can cleanse yourself, gain His closeness and taste the sweetness of worship.

④ By worshipping Allah

Worshipping Allah leads to an increase in ma'rifah. It's a cycle: the more you know Allah ﷺ, the more you will worship Him. And the more you worship Him, the more you will know Him.

Throughout this month, whilst worshipping Allah, ask yourself: am I gaining a deeper appreciation of Allah through my worship? Do I feel closer to Him?

What Does Ma'rifah Lead To?

Knowing Allah is the gamechanger. A deep attachment to Allah leads to viewing the world through an 'Allah-centric' lens. Once we get to know Allah, we will see manifestations of His Majestic and Beautiful Attributes in every aspect of our lives and all around us.

Ma'rifah makes us realise the stark difference between who Allah is and who we are; and why He is worthy of our complete servitude ('ubūdiyyah). **The greater the ma'rifah, the greater the level of 'ubūdiyyah.** The more we realise how Great Allah is, the more we will realise how small we are; the more we realise how Powerful He is, the more we will realise how weak we are; the more we realise how Magnificent He is, the more we will realise how dependent we are on Him; the more we realise how vast His knowledge is, the more we will realise how ignorant we are.

Ma'rifah leads us to **love** Him and **fear** Him more than anyone else. Ma'rifah leads us to humble ourselves to Allah, feel shy of Him, hope in Him, trust Him, and repeatedly turn to Him in repentance. It makes us love to spend time alone with Him and long to meet Him.

The more we know Allah, the stronger our **īmān** and **yaqīn** (conviction) in Him will be. The easier it will then become for us to **submit to Him** and eagerly rush to fulfil His commands. The more we know Allah, the more likely we are to honour and love His creation. Ma'rifah leads to **purified souls**, and purified souls make the world a better place. A world with less evil, greed, corruption and selfishness.

Ma'rifah stops us from sinning, and is the precursor to **taqwā**, which is the reason why we fast (see p. 39). Ma'rifah makes us content with His decree and makes us immensely grateful for all of His blessings. In an era where many are confused, and some are even leaving Islam, ma'rifah helps us to remain steadfast on His **dīn**. It is the key to combating the many false ideologies and value systems that are bombarding us.

Once we get to truly know Allah, He becomes our goal. We are happy to sacrifice our worldly comforts and desires for His sake. We are ready to live for Him and die for Him. Everything we do is for Him Alone.

The ultimate goal of ma'rifah in this world is to reach the pinnacle of worship: **iḥsān**. **Iḥsān** is "Worshipping Allah as though you are seeing Him; for if you cannot see Him, He truly sees you" (Muslim). And by doing so, the servant will attain the greatest joy in the hereafter: seeing Allah and meeting Him.

May Allah al-Hādī (The Guide) guide us to Him. May He make us know Him, worship Him and appreciate Him as He deserves to be appreciated.



‘Ubudiyyah: Speed Up Your Journey

Today, man thinks he has no need of Allah. Technological advancements and material abundance make many believe that their accomplishments are due to their own efforts. Failing to recognise the Source of all blessings leads to ingratitude and arrogance. It is this arrogance which leads to rejecting Allah, which can be seen in the rise of atheism and secularism in the world. Instead of calling to the worship of the One True God, society glorifies and calls to the worship of the ‘self’. Individual liberty and the pursuit of pleasure have become the new religion.

Man’s arrogance makes him think that he is strong, independent and can do as he freely wishes. It leads him to trampling over the rights of Allah’s creation and causing chaos on the earth. Allah ﷺ says, “But man crosses the limits, because he deems himself to be free of need” (96:6-7).

We often forget that as humans, we are intrinsically weak. We were created from dirt. We started off from a drop of dirty “worthless fluid” (77:20) which is not even pleasant to smell. With such humble origins, we should never feel proud or act arrogantly. We cannot even be certain of what will happen tomorrow. No matter how rich and powerful we may become in this world, a day will come – very soon – in which our bodies will start giving in on us; our mental faculties will begin to deteriorate; and soon we will be dead.

Without Allah, we are nothing. We need Him for everything. We need Him to feed us. We need Him to grant us health, money, spouses, children, family and friends. And most importantly, we need Him to guide us, to love us, and to protect us.

‘Ubudiyyah: The Purpose of Life

Allah ﷺ did not leave us to wander aimlessly in this life, or live a life full of angst and confusion, never finding peace and contentment. He ﷺ told us exactly why He created us and what our purpose in life is. He ﷺ says, “I did not create jinn and men except so that they worship Me” (51:56).

Tbādah (worship) and ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude) are the believer’s life goals. When we say *lā ilāha illā-Allāh*, we are saying that Allah Alone is worthy of our worship. This is our life mission statement.

‘Ubūdiyyah is a state of the heart, which manifests itself in external acts of worship. The goal of all physical acts of worship is to attain the state of ‘ubūdiyyah. ‘Ubūdiyyah is to **fully humble oneself to Allah, submit to Him and love Him more than anyone else.**

“The intended outcome of all acts of worship is to magnify, venerate and be in awe of God.” - al-‘Izz b. ‘Abd al-Salām 

‘Ubūdiyyah is to fully surrender yourself to Him and to **express your dire need of Him.** It is to free yourself from the dictates of your desires and nafs, and devote yourself to Allah. It is to realise that He is your *Rabb* –The Nurturing Lord – and you are His ‘abd – His humble, weak slave, who is always in need of Him and cannot do anything without Him.

‘Ubūdiyyah is attained through ma‘rifah: through gaining a deep awareness of who Allah is and how Majestic and Perfect He is; and then **contrasting** this with your sins and endless shortcomings. Even the good you do is full of deficiencies. ‘Ubūdiyyah is to see yourself as completely helpless and impoverished: every atom in your body is completely dependent on Him. You feel that were He to leave you to fend for yourself for even the blink of an eye, you would perish. Thus, you constantly seek His help for everything. You rely on Him and turn to Him for all your needs, whether big or small. This is the essence of لَحْوٌ وَلَا فُرْجٌ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ : a treasure from the treasures of Paradise.

A key component of ‘ubūdiyyah is **love.** When a servant thinks of how much Allah blesses and endows him, his heart can only be overwhelmed with love for Him (see p.143 on loving Allah). Reflecting on the generosity, kindness and love of Allah; and then **contrasting** this with our sins and meagre offerings of worship, should fill our hearts with shame and make us lower our heads in humility to Him. Constant reflection on this should lead to a state of heart in which the servant is always seeking the pleasure and love of his Master .

‘Ubūdiyyah is a constant state: a permanent lifestyle. It is not limited to performing the five daily prayers, occasional dhikr or du‘ā’ or giving charity. It is a **state which permeates every aspect of your life: everything you do is for Him.** Even your everyday mundane actions such as eating and drinking become an act of worship through your intention.

‘Ubūdiyyah is to humble yourself and **submit** yourself to the commandments and prohibitions of Allah. It is to give preference to His commands, whether they appear rational to us or not. If we are unable to rationalise something of Allah’s words or the

words of His Prophet ﷺ, then we should consider our intellect to be deficient, not the words of Allah and His beloved.

“Whoever seeks eternal happiness should stand firmly at the doorstep of ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude).” - Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ

‘Ubudiyyah: The Greatest Honour

‘Ubūdiyyah is the loftiest and most honourable status any human being can attain. Allah repeatedly praises His Prophets – the best of men – with the epithet ‘abd (servant). He says, “Glory be to the One who made His servant (i.e. Muḥammad ﷺ) travel by night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā...” (17:1). Similarly, about Sulaymān and Ayyūb ﷺ, Allah said “What an excellent servant he was!” Allāhu Akbar! Imagine Allah ﷺ describing you as an excellent servant. Can there be a greater honour than this?

“It is enough of an honour for you that you are His servant, and it is sufficient glory for you that He is your Lord!” - Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

‘Ubudiyyah Liberates You

Islam came to liberate humans from the worship of other human beings, desires, animals, and celestial bodies. Islam came to liberate man from worshipping the creation of Allah to worshipping the Creator of all creation. This is the peak of freedom.

Every human worships someone or something. Some people worship money, others worship power. Others worship fame, pleasure, beauty, knowledge, people, nature and even animals! All these objects of worship are delusions that leave its adherents unfulfilled. One can only be **truly free, happy, and at peace, if he chooses to submit to and worship Allah** ﷺ. Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ writes, “The happiest of all creation are those who have the highest levels of servitude to Allah.” This is because the more the servant humbles himself to Allah, the closer he is to Him, and thus he receives a greater share of His special care and love.

The more you enslave yourself to Allah, the freer you will be. The more you attach yourself to Allah, the less you will depend on His creation.

The words ‘servitude’, ‘slave’, and ‘servant’ may carry negative connotations, due to their historical associations. Servitude to Allah, however, is nothing like servitude

to other human beings. Servitude to Allah brings with it deep contentment, joy and comfort. Also, Allah does not benefit from the servitude of man, but rather the servant himself benefits and is honoured by it.

All human beings are servants of Allah – whether they acknowledge it or not. This is because Allah is the Ultimate Master; the only One who has complete authority and ownership over the universe. Whilst we can choose many things, many other things are out of our control.

Whilst some of His servants are His servants by lack of choice, those who believe in Allah are His servants by choice. They recognise Him, worship Him and choose to submit to Him. They are His true *'ibād* (servants). Imām al-Shāṭibī ﷺ writes, “The objective of the shari‘ah is to free the human from the grip of his own whims and desires, so that he becomes a (obedient) servant of Allah by choice, just as he is a servant of Allah by no choice of his.”

Fasting and ‘Ubudiyyah

Fasting is an expression of our ‘ubūdiyyah to Allah ﷺ. Fasting frees the human being from being enslaved to his desires, habits and physical needs. By fasting, we obey Allah’s command and submit ourselves to Him. By fasting, you say to your nafs: even though you may desire something, my obedience and loyalty is reserved for someone far greater: Allah, my Lord, my Creator!

Fasting reveals to us how weak we are. Just a few hours without food and drink makes us cranky and, sometimes, physically weak. Thus, if done properly, fasting will purify us from arrogance.

Speed Up in Your Journey to Allah this Ramadan

There is a secret which enables a person to race ahead in his journey to Allah. It is ‘ubūdiyyah. ‘Ubūdiyyah is to infuse all the outer physical acts of worship with full humility, submission, love, fear and hope. Even if the quantity of your actions is small, the quality of your actions will allow you to reach far ahead of your peers.

Humbling oneself and showing your servitude is the quickest route to Allah. One of the pious predecessors said, “I have tried coming closer to Allah by entering all the doors of worship. But every time I came close to a door, I found that it was crowded with people; thus, I was unable to enter until I approached the **door of humility and desperate need for Him**. I found that it was in fact the nearest and widest of all doors to Allah; there were not any crowds at it nor were there any barriers. As soon as I placed my foot inside, He took my hand and admitted me inside.”

Make this Ramadān special by infusing all your physical acts of worship with the quality of ‘ubūdiyyah. When you fast, fast like an obedient servant, one who does not complain of hunger, but is so eager to please his Master. Fast with humility, with your heart devoted to Him, with full hope in Him Alone.

When you pray, pray like a servant. Pray with khushū‘, with full humility and focus. Feel like a humble beggar in the courtyard of the Most Magnificent. As you stand, lower your gaze and be in awe of the majesty of The One you are addressing. Express your lowness by rubbing your face – the most noble part of your body – on the ground.

When you make du‘ā, make the du‘ā’ of a servant. Affirm your helplessness and desperate need for Him. Turn to Him as a humble beggar and cry to Him. Feel that not a single hair in your body can do without Him. This Ramadān, train yourself to ask Allah for all your needs throughout the whole day. By reciting the sunnah adhkār and du‘ās, feel your need for Him, even if it appears to be something mundane (e.g. going to the bathroom, leaving the house).

We ask Allah, The Lord of the heavens and the earth, to make us from His special servants who love Him, humble themselves to Him and submit to Him.





Tasting the Sweetness of Iman & Worship: A Beautiful Journey

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever fasts Ramadān with īmān and iħtisāb (hoping for reward), all his previous sins will be forgiven. Whoever performs qiyām in Laylat al-Qadr with īmān and iħtisāb, all his previous sins will be forgiven. Whoever performs qiyām in the month of Ramadān with īmān and iħtisāb, all his previous sins will be forgiven” (Bukhārī).

Notice the caveat of ‘īmān’ and ‘iħtisāb’ with these actions of Ramadān. When you fast in Ramadān, it cannot be because of habit, or because it’s what your family does and is deemed ‘culturally’ the right thing to do. The repetition of īmān and iħtisāb in the above ḥadīth reminds us that all our good deeds should be an expression of our servitude (‘ubūdiyyah) and obedience to Allah.

Fasting must be accompanied by īmān. It cannot merely be a physical act. It is deeply tied to the state of your heart. Fasting with īmān means to firmly believe that this is a command from Allah: He has made it compulsory, and He will reward you for it. Fasting with iħtisāb means to fast hoping for reward only from Him; to not feel that you are being forced to fast, or that the fast is too long and feels like a burden. It is simply and purely for Him. A person who fasts with īmān and iħtisāb is not only content and peaceful, but he is happy that Allah gave him an opportunity to fast.

The Goal of Ramadan: Strengthen Your Iman

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed īmān wears out in the heart just as clothes wear out — so renew your īmān” (Tabarānī).

Īmān is like a tree. If it isn’t tended to, it will wither and die. It has to be constantly watered with **beneficial knowledge, righteous deeds** and the remembrance of Allah. And just as a strong healthy tree must be protected from pests and weeds, we must protect our hearts from sins, desires, and doubts for our īmān to be strong.

The purpose of the acts of worship is to revive the hearts with īmān. **The month of Ramadān is a perfect opportunity to rejuvenate our īmān and kickstart our journey to Allah.** This is because we combine some of the greatest acts of worship such as fasting, ṣalāh, the night prayer, charity, ītikāf, dhikr etc. for thirty consecutive days. We also try our best to stay away from sins and we try to have excellent character (akhlāq)

in our interactions with people. If someone manages to do all of the above well, it will have a huge impact on reviving his heart, filling it with the light (nūr) of īmān, ready to thrive in its journey to Allah.

Let us make it our goal this Ramadān to ensure that everything we do will increase our īmān. The goal should not be to just perform x number of good deeds. Rather than focusing on quantity, let us focus on quality by learning about the inner dimensions of worship. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes, “**You may find a person who fasts, prays, does dhikr and recites Qur’ān abundantly, but nothing from his actions reach his heart: no fear, no hope, no love, no conviction in Allah and no happiness with Him.**”

Our īmān will only be strengthened if we combine the external physical acts of obedience with the internal ‘actions of the heart’. The actions of the heart include: knowledge of Allah (ma’rifah), sincerity (ikhlās), piety and mindfulness (taqwā), repentance (tawbah), trust in Allah (tawakkul), hope (raja’), fear (khawf), gratitude (shukr), patience (şabr), love (ħubb), yearning for Allah (shawq) and certainty (yaqīn).

“The predecessors used to advise that one should perfect his deed and do it well, rather than doing too much of it: for fewer actions performed with perfection are better than abundant actions performed heedlessly and poorly.” - Ibn Rajab ﷺ

Taste the Sweetness of Iman & Worship in Ramadan

One of Allah’s greatest blessings upon the servant is that He makes īmān beloved to him, He adorns his heart with the beauty of īmān and He makes him taste its sweetness.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “There are three [qualities] which, if they are found in anyone, shall cause him to experience the sweetness of īmān: that Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than everything else; that he loves a person only for Allah’s sake; and that he hates to return to disbelief after Allah had saved him, just as he would hate being thrown into the fire” (Bukhārī).

The sweetness of īmān refers to **feeling joy in doing good deeds** and in undergoing difficulties for the sake of Allah. The servant worships and undergoes difficulties, forsaking worldly pleasures in pursuit of the eternal pleasures of the hereafter. It is a **contentment** experienced by those who worship Allah sincerely.

Instead of ‘ibādah feeling like a burden or a chore, you rush to and relish to worship Allah and serve His creation. Ibn Rajab ﷺ writes, “**Īmān has a flavour and a sweetness**

which is tasted by the heart just as the sweetness of food and drink is tasted by the mouth; for indeed *īmān* is the sustenance of the hearts, just as food and drink are the sustenance of the body.”

Many of us exert ourselves in acts of worship, and yet do not experience this sweetness and happiness. The reason is because we focus solely on the outer physical actions, and we neglect the actions of the heart.

Likewise, if our hearts are sick and diseased due to committing sins and following desires, we cannot enjoy the ‘sweetness of *īmān*’. When we are sick, we do not enjoy the taste of food. Sometimes we cannot even taste the flavour of the food. If we are feeling nauseous, even the most expensive meal would not entice us to eat.

In order to taste the sweetness of *īmān*, we have to purify our hearts from its diseases (pride, envy, greed, heedlessness, hypocrisy etc). The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever does three things will experience the taste of *īmān*: ...a servant who purifies himself. A man asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah! What does it mean for a person to purify himself?’ He replied, ‘He knows that Allah is with him wherever he may be’” (Bayhaqī).

The Worldly Paradise

Experiencing the sweetness of *īmān* and acts of worship is life-changing. It is what makes the journey to Allah beautiful. Once you have experienced it, you will know real happiness and forever crave its delight. You will realise that no other blessing can compare, and become protective over it. It is something you can read about extensively, but cannot fully appreciate it until you experience it.

A saint of Allah said, “There are times when I say: if the people of Paradise have anything like this, then how blissful must their lives be!” Another stated, “There are times when the heart bursts in joy (out of the love for Allah).”

After quoting the above, Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله writes, “Glorified is the One who lets His slaves witness His Paradise well before they meet Him, who opens its doors to them in this world of deeds; and who gives them some of its joy, its breeze and its perfume, so that they may seek it and hasten towards it with all their strength.”

Begin Your Journey to Allah

The month of Ramadān is a perfect opportunity to experience the joy of *īmān* and worship: to deeply connect with Allah, to live a life with Him. In our journey to Allah, the initial stages will feel very difficult at times. We have to fight against the nafs, persevere and keep going, until our hearts become attached to Allah. Once our hearts are attached to Allah, the acts of worship will no longer feel difficult and we will begin

to enjoy them. Abū Zayd ﷺ said, “I forced my nafs (inner self) to go to Allah whilst it was crying, until I was able to take it to Him whilst it was laughing.”

This Ramadān, start your journey to Allah with sincere repentance (tawbah), and revel in the joy of reuniting with your Creator after having been away. **This Ramadān, feel the joy of hunger when fasting**, and give up your desires (which you love) for your Beloved, who you love much more.

This Ramadān, relish the sweetness of ṣalāh. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “My utmost joy has been put in ṣalāh” (Nasā’i). Soothe your heart by conversing and crying to your Lord in the stillness of the night, alone. Make the Qur’ān your best friend, and find immense peace in its recitation as, “There is nothing sweeter to the lover than the words of his beloved, for it is the joy of their hearts and their utmost desire” (Ibn Rajab ﷺ).

This Ramadān, serve your family, neighbours and the creation of Allah selflessly and happily. Overcome your ego and emulate the sublime character of Allah’s beloved, Muhammad ﷺ. Feel greater joy in giving charity and helping others than the recipients of the charity themselves.

“The one who is sincere for Allah will taste the sweetness of servitude to Allah, to the extent that it will prevent him from servitude to anyone else. This is because there is nothing sweeter nor more joyful or blissful than the sweetness of īmān, which consists of servitude to Allah, loving Him and being sincere in the religion for Him. This requires the heart to journey to Allah: to turn to Him in constant repentance, to love Him and to be in constant awe of Him.” - Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ

Let us always ask Allah with the words of His Beloved ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ زِينْنَا بِزِينَةِ الْإِيمَانِ، وَاجْعَلْنَا هُدَاءً مُهَدَّدِينَ

O Allah, adorn us with the beauty of īmān and make us those who guide others and are guided themselves.

May Allah al-Mu’min (The Giver of īmān and safety) make our īmān firm in our hearts and may He make us die on īmān. May He grant us the bliss of īmān and worship in this world, and the bliss of His company in Paradise.

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

“Believers! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwā (piety and mindfulness of Allah)”

(2:183).



The Purpose of Fasting

Why do you fast? Is it because everyone around you does so? Is it because it's one of the five pillars?

Have you ever wondered why fasting is one of the five pillars? Although we strive to learn about the legal rulings of fasting, we often miss out on reflecting upon its greater objectives. **Fasting is a deeply spiritual act of worship. Its purpose is to transform us, both internally and externally.**

The main reason why we fast is because Allah ﷺ commanded us to do so. Like all other commandments in our dīn, fasting is an expression of our 'ubūdiyyah (servitude). Fasting trains us to submit to Allah and to obey Him.

Allah ﷺ says,

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ

“...Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwā (piety and mindfulness of Allah)” (2:183).

The greatest purpose of fasting is to attain taqwā. Taqwā is to protect yourself from the punishment of Allah by avoiding His prohibitions and implementing His commands.

Taqwā is the believer's key provision in his journey to Allah. All the Prophets of Allah called their people to worship Allah and to live a life of taqwā. Taqwā is the path to attaining the love, mercy and help of Allah. Taqwā allows us to distinguish between truth and falsehood, to overpower Shaytān and to gain victory over our enemies. Through taqwā, our sins are forgiven, great rewards are amassed, and our deeds are accepted. Through taqwā, our difficulties are eased, and Allah al-Razzāq (The Ultimate Provider) provides for us from sources we could never even imagine! Taqwā is the ultimate ingredient for success, as it is a shield from the Hell-fire and the path to Paradise.

How Does Fasting Lead to Taqwa?

The purpose of fasting is to train the nafs to resist its desires. Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله described fasting as the 'rein of the muttaqīn (the pious)'. When we fast, we temporarily

make ḥarām on ourselves things that are usually ḥalāl (eating, drinking etc). Fasting teaches us to say ‘NO!’ to our nafs and desires. This helps us to develop taqwā, making it easier to restrain ourselves from ḥarām throughout the year.

Fasting is, therefore, a means of **training ourselves to obey Allah**.

When we become used to eating and drinking at the same time every day, our bodies start to crave food and drink when we pass that time (and often before!). By fasting, we wean our nafs off from what it is accustomed to, refusing to give in to its desires. **Instead of allowing our nafs to control us, we control our nafs.**

Shayṭān has access to us through two primary means:

- ① **Shahawāt:** these are the **desires** and worldly attractions we experience, especially the desires of the private parts (lust) and the stomach (gluttony). Shahawāt are related to our behaviour and actions.
- ② **Shubuhāt:** these are **doubts** which we may experience, about the commandments of Allah, and perhaps even Allah Himself. Shubuhāt are related to īmān (belief) and knowledge.

When we fast, we reduce our intake of food and drink and have a tighter reign over our desires (shahawāt). This reduces Shayṭān’s ability to attack us, and so we are less susceptible to falling prey to his whispers.

In this manner, we sin less and our hearts are purified, preventing the shubuhāt (doubts) from entering our hearts. We are able to clearly see the truth and submit to it more willingly. We become closer to our Creator, attaining genuine happiness and contentment, and advancing towards our eternal home. Allah ﷺ says, “And as for those who feared standing before their Lord and **restrained themselves from (evil) desires**, Paradise will certainly be (their) home” (79:40-1).

Numerous Wisdoms

Like all other acts of worship, fasting has numerous benefits and wisdoms. Fasting liberates us from the shackles of our desires, habits and physical needs. By fasting, you say to your nafs: even though you may desire something, my obedience, love and loyalty is reserved for someone far greater: Allah, my Lord, my Creator! Fasting proves to us how weak we are and how desperately we are in need of Allah. Just a few hours without food and drink makes us cranky and, sometimes, physically weak.

Fasting increases our īmān in Allah and the hereafter. Fasting helps us get closer to Allah, become more attuned to Him watching us, and more eager to please Him.

Each time your stomach growls, you could easily eat without another human being knowing. However, you stop yourself from doing so, because you are aware that Allah is watching you. This presence of the heart and watchful awareness (known as 'murāqabah') leads to *ihsān*, the pinnacle of our relationship with Allah ﷺ. *Ihsān* is, as our beloved ﷺ described, "That you worship Allah as though you are seeing Him; for if you cannot see Him, He truly sees you" (Muslim).

"Fasting reminds a person of the hunger and thirst of the people of the Hell-fire and thus encourages him to increase in good deeds, in order to be saved from the Hell-fire." - Al-'Izz b. 'Abd al-Salām ﷺ

Fasting softens a person's heart, increases his empathy for the poor and encourages a person to give charity. Fasting also has numerous health benefits. Many illnesses are caused by overeating or eating foods which are harmful to the body. Fasting purifies the body from toxins, and is a preventative means of protection from many physical illnesses. Fasting **sharpens the mind** and boosts brain function.

Fasting should help us to:

Attain *taqwa*

Develop control over our *nafs*

Increase our *iman* in Allah

Increase our servitude to Allah

Develop *ikhlas* (sincerity)

Increase our *sabr*

Increase our empathy for the poor

Attain *ihsan*

Increase our *zuhd* (detachment from the world)

Purify our hearts

Remove toxins from the body

Reflect on our weaknesses

Marvel at Allah's greatness

Fill our hearts with the conscious remembrance of Allah

Beautify our character

Resist Shaytan's attacks on us

Fasting teaches us zuhd (detachment from the world): it was prescribed so that we reduce the amount of food we eat, and not increase it. The purpose of fasting is to make us less attached to food, drink and our desires, and by doing so we realise the worthlessness of the world. In a society where gluttony and lust are shamelessly promoted, **fasting should make us realise that our purpose in this life is not to eat, drink and fulfil our sexual desires.** But rather these are means, to be used in moderation, to worship Allah ﷺ.

Fasting: The Soul's Nourishment

Fasting nourishes the soul just as food nourishes the body. Allah created humans with two parts: a body and a soul. The body is from the earth, and more animal-like. The soul, on the other hand, is from the Upper Realms and is more angel-like. When we keep the body hungry, and make it stay awake at night, the soul feels a lightness and longs for the place it was created from (i.e. Upper Realms). On the other hand, if we fill the body's appetite, keep it in comfort and let it sleep, then the body becomes attached to the earth. The soul then becomes heavy and attached to the earth, instead of roaming in the Upper Realms.

Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ explains that fasting resembles imitating angels. When we fast, we resist our desires, and angels do not have any of these desires. Humans are in between animals who completely give in to their desires, and angels who do not have any desires. When the human falls prey to his desires, he joins the rank of the animals; but if he strives and controls his desires, he reaches the rank of the angels. Angels are close to Allah, and whoever imitates them, will also draw closer to Allah. **This is one of the secrets of fasting.**

Fasting, Not Feasting

Sometimes we may wonder why, despite fasting, we do not attain all of the benefits of fasting. Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ explains, “**The essence and secret of fasting is to weaken the forces which are Shayṭān's means of leading one back to evil.** This can only happen if one reduces one's intake of food, and only consumes what one would normally consume in the evening if he was not fasting...How will fasting help the individual overcome shayṭān and break one's desires if he makes up at iftār time for what he missed out on eating throughout the day? And perhaps he might even indulge in a variety of extra foods?

It has even become the custom to stock up for Ramadān with all kinds of foods so that more is consumed during that time than in the course of several other months put together. It is well known that **the objective of fasting is to experience hunger and to break one's desire, in order to strengthen the soul in attaining taqwā.”**

He goes on to explain that if the stomach is starved from morning till evening, and then at iftār time, is given delicacies till its fill, an adverse reaction will occur. Even more desires of the individual will be stirred, much more than on an average day where the person was not even fasting. Thus, rather than attaining the objective of fasting, we become more distant from it due to overeating.

Likewise, if we overeat at iftār time we're more likely to feel sleepy later on, and the night prayers will become difficult. More time may even be wasted in the bathroom.

Excessive food and intimacy cause the heart to become hard. It increases heedlessness and creates a barrier between us and the remembrance of Allah. On the other hand, an empty stomach softens and illuminates the heart. This makes it easier for us to remember Allah consciously. Sometimes some people may sleep throughout the day so they do not experience hunger and thirst. However, feeling hunger and thirst is necessary to attain the objectives of fasting. This is why one of the etiquettes of fasting is to avoid excessive sleeping during the day, so that one feels hunger and thirst.

In conclusion, don't fast to lose weight, or because it's the current hype. Fast because **Allah** commanded you to do so. Fast so that you can truly worship Him, and not your 'inner desires'. Fast so that you can control your nafs, instead of letting it control you. Fast so that you can shield yourself from shayṭān and lust. Fast so that you can attain His love. Fast to become close to Allah. Fast **for** Allah.

May Allah al-Muhaymin (The Ever Vigilant) make our fasting a means of being ever-conscious of Him. May He make fasting beloved to us and may He enrich our hearts and lives with its blessings.





Fasting & Sabr: A Training Programme to Stop Sinning

Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, “Fasting is half of ḥabir” (Tirmidhī).

Ḥabir, often translated as **patience**, refers to holding back our reactions and being in control of our emotions, and to **persevere** in doing something we dislike, for the sake of Allah ﷺ. Ḥabir is a key provision in our journey to Allah.

The reward of ḥabir is unique. Allah ﷺ informs us,

إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الْصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرُهُمْ بِعَيْنِ حِسَابٍ

“Certainly, those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure” (39:10).

Like fasting, the reward of ḥabir has been left unspecified. It has been kept a surprise. This is because it is a difficult quality to attain. To persevere and not give up, to endure life’s difficulties without complaint and to continue struggling against all the odds is a trait of the great. It is as Allah described, one of the “**matters that require strong resolve**” (31:7).

Ḥabir is the path to attaining Allah’s forgiveness, mercy, and guidance. It is the secret to worldly and eternal success. It is the means of being protected from one’s enemies, and to becoming a role model for the believers. Ḥabir leads to one enjoying the **special companionship** (ma‘iyah) of Allah, and attaining His love.

The Three Types of Sabr

Fasting combines the three types of ḥabir:

① Ḥabir in obeying Allah

The first type of ḥabir involves persevering and remaining steadfast on the commands of Allah. Throughout Ramadān, standing for long during the night prayers, spending long durations in the recitation of the Qur’ān, and i’tikāf in the masjid require ḥabir. Fasting for 20+ hours in certain countries, along with other life commitments, such as long hours at work, isn’t always easy. Thus, enduring the hunger, thirst and fatigue for the sake of Allah develops ḥabir.

② Ḩab in staying away from sins

The second type of Ḩab is Ḩab in staying away from sins. Fasting especially, is designed to help us develop this type of Ḩab. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Fasting is a shield from the Hell-fire” (Tirmidhī). Fasting restrains lust and greed for food. Fasting also includes the ‘fasting’ of the tongue, eyes, ears etc. Controlling these impulses should make us less vulnerable to shayṭān and sinning. When this occurs, our hearts become purified, and we will inshāAllah be saved from the punishment of the Hell-fire.

③ Ḩab in regards to the trials Allah has decreed

Fasting nurtures the soul to bear difficulties. It develops a person’s willpower and resolve. A person who fasts regularly (and properly) is much more equipped to respond to life’s challenges with patience and fortitude.

Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ categorised those who fast into three categories:

1. Ordinary

- Abstaining from food, drink and intimacy.

2. Elite

- Protecting the eyes from looking at ḥarām and anything which takes you away from the remembrance of Allah.
- Protecting the tongue from lying, backbiting, arguing and foul language etc.
- Protecting the ears from listening to ḥarām.
- Protecting the rest of your body from ḥarām.
- Not eating to your fill at iftār time.
- Hoping that Allah will accept your fast, and at the same time fearing that your fast may not be accepted.

3. Super-Elite

- Abstaining from worldly thoughts and concerns, and everything other than Allah.

Fasting is a physical and spiritual detox: it removes the toxins from the body and the spiritual heart, allowing our bodies and souls to heal and become healthy. Fasting is a training programme to help us stop sinning, especially the sins of the tongue, the eyes and the ears.

The Tongue

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “There are many who fast, who gain nothing of their fast except hunger; and there are many who stand for the night prayer, who gain nothing of their prayer except sleeplessness” (Ibn Mājah).

This ḥadīth illustrates the wisdom behind fasting. It is not merely to give up food, drink and intimacy, but rather it is to be conscious of Allah ﷺ in every action.

In order to protect ourselves from this warning, we should be extremely conscious of: our tongues in Ramaḍān. This includes:

Backbiting and slandering

Lying

Foul language

Saying hurtful things

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever does not give up lying and false conduct, Allah has no need in him giving up his food and his drink” (Bukhārī). Similarly, he ﷺ said, “Fasting is a shield, as long as one does not damage it.” In another narration, he ﷺ said, “By lying or backbiting” (Nasā’i).

We should be very conscious of every word we utter. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed, one of you utters a statement which pleases Allah, thinking it does not amount to much; yet Allah decrees His pleasure with him because of it, until the day he will meet Him. And indeed, one of you utters a statement which angers Allah, thinking it does not amount to much; yet Allah decrees His anger with him because of it, until the day he will meet Him” (Tirmidhī).

“If you see hardness in your heart, weakness in your body, and deprivation in your livelihood, know that you have spoken about something that does not concern you!” - Mālik b. Dīnār ﷺ

Ramaḍān is the perfect time to cultivate our *akhlāq* (good character), to develop self-restraint, and to control our tongues; and this should be something we carry forward to the rest of the year, and make it a permanent part of our lives. The Prophet ﷺ taught us a method to use during our fasts: “When one of you wakes up fasting, he should neither use obscene language nor act ignorantly. If anyone insults him or argues with him, he should say: ‘I am fasting, I am fasting’” (Muslim). This also teaches us that a true Muslim is conscious of other’s feelings and does not hurt them with his words.

“A man fasts from the pure and lawful, but he breaks his fast with the evil and unlawful: the flesh of his brother (i.e. ruins his fast by backbiting his brother).” - Yāḥyā b. Kathīr 

Similarly, we should be conscious in our dealings, and we should make an active effort to stop cheating, being fraudulent in our dealings, and dealing with interest (ribā).

Ramāḍān should train us to become **real** Muslims, as our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe” (Nasā’i).

Anger

‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak  was asked, “Summarise for us good character in one phrase.” He replied, “**Avoiding anger.**” Ramāḍān is the time to control our anger, and especially when we may be feeling irritable due to hunger ('hangry'). If you feel angry, seek Allah’s protection from shayṭān, perform wuḍū, move away and control your tongue. Ramāḍān is the time to develop forbearance, to overlook people’s faults and to refrain from reacting when provoked.

“Tie up your anger with a ‘chain’ of forbearance. Anger is like a dog; if it is let loose, it will wreak havoc.” - Ibn al-Qayyim 

The purpose of fasting is to attain taqwā: to train ourselves to stop sinning. Sometimes we may limit our understanding of worship and taqwā to something which is only between us and Allah. But what **fasting teaches us is that Allah takes the rights of His servants very seriously.** If we violate the honour and rights of our fellow believers, our fasting becomes deficient, and may not be accepted to Allah. Hours and nights of worship can be reduced into nothing, and it may be due to just a minute of backbiting. The nūr of fasting and qiyām should become apparent in our daily lives, and especially in our interactions with our families, neighbours and colleagues.

“Let there be an aura of tranquillity and dignity on the day of your fast. And don’t make the day when you fast the same as the day you don’t fast.” – Jābir 

The Eyes

We have to protect ourselves from all ḥarām, including looking at that which is ḥarām. This has become especially more important in our times, with the increase in shamelessness, easy access to ḥarām images and the normalisation of it. The eye is the entry point to our heart. What we look at affects our emotions, desires and thoughts. **Gazing at ḥarām gives shayṭān open access to our hearts.**

Once you see something ḥarām and it captivates you, your heart becomes imprisoned by it, and you can't stop thinking about it. This is why the scholars said that lowering the gaze liberates the heart from the clutches of one's desires. Allah ﷺ says, "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity. **That is purer for them...**" (24:30). Thus, one of the most powerful means to purify the soul is guarding one's gaze and protecting one's private parts.

One of our key goals of fasting should be to train ourselves to stop looking at ḥarām. The Prophet ﷺ prescribed fasting for those who did not have the means to marry. He ﷺ said, "Young men! Whosoever is capable of maintaining a marriage, should do so; for indeed it is more conducive to lowering the gaze and protecting one's chastity. And whoever is not able, then he should fast, as it restrains desires" (Bukhārī). There is a strong link between fasting and protecting one's gaze. Fasting properly (by not overeating; controlling one's eyes, tongue etc.) should lead a person to develop a greater level of self-restraint, and be able to control himself the next time he is tempted to look at ḥarām.

Fasting: A Metaphor for Life

Fasting is a metaphor for life. Throughout the day, we experience hunger, thirst and tiredness. We experience difficulties for the sake of Allah. At the end of the day, we gladly eat and say,

ذَهَبَ الْقَطْمَأُ، وَابْتَلَتِ الْعُرُوقُ، وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

"The thirst has gone, the veins have been moistened, and the reward has been secured, if Allah wills" (Abū Dāwūd).

Likewise, throughout our lives we should undergo struggle and difficulties in seeking knowledge, establishing the dīn of Allah on His earth, and staying away from the ḥarām. And at the time of death, we hope that we will also figuratively say: "The thirst has gone, the veins have been moistened, and the reward has been secured, if Allah wills." The difficulties have come to an end, and we hope for a great reward from Allah.

We ask Allah al-Qawiyy (The Strong) to grant us the strength to stay away from sins, and the ability to persevere on the truth.



Fasting & Shukr: The Blessing of Iftar and Suhr

Half of īmān is ḫabr: patience and perseverance. The other half is shukr: gratitude. Just as fasting teaches us ḫabr, it also helps us to cultivate shukr. Both of these are key provisions in our journey to Allah.

Throughout the day, whenever our stomachs growl from hunger, we should consciously remember and thank the One who provides us with every morsel of food, and every drop of water: Allah al-Qayyūm (The All-Sustainer).

We only appreciate the blessing of something when it is taken away from us. As people whose bellies are always full, we rarely experience hunger, and thus we fail to appreciate the magnitude of Allah's blessings in a single slice of bread, let alone a myriad of delicacies! Thus, when we fast, and stay away from food, drink and lawful intimacy, we realise the blessings Allah has bestowed upon us. Not only does He give us these blessings, He has made them ḥalāl for us, and moreover when consumed with the correct intention, He actually rewards us for pleasurable partaking in them. This should fill our hearts with gratitude to Him.

Shukr consists of three elements: (1) To thank Allah by acknowledging His favours and praising Him with our tongues. (2) To thank Him by humbling our hearts to Him. (3) To thank Him with our bodies by using all of our body parts to obey Him.

We should thank Allah for our health, security, wealth, and children. And the greatest blessing we should thank Him for is īmān and guidance. At the end of the verse about fasting, Allah ﷺ says:

وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَيْتُكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“...So that you may complete the prescribed period and proclaim the greatness of Allah for guiding you, and that you may be grateful” (2:185).

Shukr itself is one of Allah's greatest blessings, as shukr leads to even more blessings:

وَإِذْ تَأْذَنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَيْنَ شَكْرُتُمْ لَأَرْزَدَنَّكُمْ

“And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more’ (14:7)”.

If we desire to be blessed with the ability to do more good deeds and stay firm in worshipping Allah, the key to this is shukr.

We should thank Allah, especially, for blessing us with Ramadān: for allowing us to fast, whilst many of His servants do not do so; and for granting us the gift of qiyām and the Qur'ān, whilst many of His creation are deprived of it.

We should thank Allah ﷺ for making Ramadān a month in which deeds are multiplied, sins are forgiven and du'ās are accepted. We should thank Him for chaining the rebellious devils, opening the doors of Paradise and closing the doors of the Hell-fire. And one of the greatest blessings we should thank Him for is that He has exclusively designated fasting for Himself and He will personally reward us for it, as He ﷺ says: “Fasting is for Me and I will (personally) reward it” (Muslim).

The Joys of Iftar

You've had a long day at work, or maybe the kids have been driving you over the bend. It's hot. You're hungry and thirsty. Even the food your co-workers are eating suddenly seems so appetising. A few hours later, and the smell wafting from the kitchen is making your stomach growl.

And then it's time for iftār. Allāhu Akbar! Who doesn't experience happiness at the time of iftār?

Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, “The fasting person will have two moments of joy: one when he opens his fast, and the other when he will meet his Lord” (Muslim).

At the time of iftār, we feel happy and grateful at being given the opportunity and the ability to complete an incredible act of worship (fasting). We feel happy at being able to lawfully eat and drink once again.

The Prophet ﷺ then reminds us that even though iftār fills us with happiness, there is an even greater source of happiness waiting for us in the next world.

It is from the sunnah of our beloved ﷺ to eat iftār early. He ﷺ said, “The people will remain well as long as they hasten the opening of the fast” (Bukhārī).

Iftār, just like fasting, teaches us obedience and taqwā. Throughout the day we give up our desires, in obedience to Allah and to try to become closer to Him. And as the sun sets, we rush to eat in **obedience** to Allah and to try to become closer to Him. **The timing is His, and not ours.** We stop eating for Him, and we start eating for Him. In both cases, it is because He – Majestic and Exalted is He – has commanded us to do so.

We should open our fast with **dates**. Anas ﷺ said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to open his fast with some fresh dates before he prayed. If there were no fresh dates, then with some dry dates. If there were no (dry dates), then he would drink a few sips of water” (Abū Dāwūd).

Once we have opened our fasts, we should say:

ذَهَبَ الْجُنُونُ ، وَابْتَلَى الْعُرُوفُ ، وَتَبَّتِ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

The thirst has gone, the veins have been moistened, and the reward has been secured, if Allah wills.

We should take great care to avoid overeating at iftār time. The Prophet ﷺ said, “**The son of Adam fills no vessel worse than his stomach.** It is sufficient for him to eat what will support his back. But if he must (fill his stomach), then only a third (of its capacity) is for food, a third for drink and a third left (empty) for breathing” (Tirmidhi).

Some of the pious people of the past would eat a very light iftār, and then eat their main meal at suhūr, so that they could stand the night in worshipping Allah. Excessive food makes us sleepy and lethargic, and we are more likely to struggle with standing up in qiyām.

Likewise, we should eat **nutritious** and **ḥalāl** food. Food which has not only been slaughtered in the ḥalāl way, but which has also been earned from a **ḥalāl income**. We should try to eat food which is pure and wholesome, for which animals have not been tortured or kept under oppressive conditions. Fried and fatty foods should also be avoided. Along with harming us, it will increase our thirst. If fasting and Ramadān is a 30-day spiritual detox, then it is also a physical detox. But this will only happen if we carefully observe what we eat and drink.

Once we finish eating, we should **thank** Allah and praise Him with the words of our beloved Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah is pleased with the servant who praises Him when he eats, and praises Him when he drinks” (Muslim).

Suhur: A Blessed Meal

The second meal for the believer in Ramaḍān is suhūr/sehrī.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “There is blessing in eating suhūr; so, do not skip it, even if one of you has a sip of water. For indeed Allah and His angels invoke ‘ṣalāh’ on those who eat suhūr” (Ahmad).

By having suhūr, we become recipients of ‘ṣalāh’ from Allah and His angels. The ṣalāh of Allah refers to Him praising us in the lofty assembly i.e. the elite angels who are close to Allah, and showering us with His mercy. The ‘ṣalāh’ of the angels refers to them seeking forgiveness for us. Allāhu Akbar! Imagine Allah ﷺ remembering you and the angels praying for you simply because you are eating suhūr, whilst many others are sleeping at this blessed time.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Eat suhūr, for indeed there is blessing in it”
(Bukhārī).

Suhūr is blessed because it is a sunnah, and there is blessing in every single sunnah of our beloved ﷺ. Ibn Ḥajar Ḥaṭṭīb explains that through suhūr, we distinguish ourselves from the People of the Book. Suhūr gives us **strength** to worship Allah, increases our energy levels, and protects us from a bad attitude and poor character that may arise from hunger (feeling ‘hangry’).

Likewise, suhūr allows us to give **charity** to anyone who asks for it at that time, and allows us to share our meal at this time with the needy. Suhūr is a fool proof method of **ensuring we stand for Allah ﷺ and supplicate to Him in the last part of the night**. Another advantage of suhūr is that it allows us to make an intention of fasting if we had forgotten to do so before sleeping.

We should try to eat at least one date for suhūr. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “How excellent are dates as the believer’s suhūr” (Abū Dāwūd).

Just like iftār, we should eat nutritious food and drink plenty of water. Slow-release energy foods are also beneficial to keep us going throughout the day.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When Allah grants a blessing to a slave, upon which the slave praises Him, the praise of the slave is better than the blessing itself” (Ibn Mājah).

5 Things to Do When You Wake Up For Suhur

- 1 As soon as you wake up, say the following dhikr, in addition to the adhkār of waking up:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ، وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ،
أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ،
وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا فُوْتَةٌ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ، أَلْهَمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي

There is no god worthy of worship but Allah. He is Alone and He has no partner whatsoever. To Him Alone belong all sovereignty and all praise. He is over all things All-Powerful. All praise be to Allah and Allah is free from imperfection. There is no god but Allah. Allah is the Greatest. There is no power (in averting evil) or strength (in attaining good) except through Allah. O Allah, forgive me.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever gets up at night and says [the dhikr above] and then says: ‘O Allah, forgive me’ or makes du‘ā, it will be accepted. If he performs wuḍū’ and prays, his prayer will be accepted” (Bukhārī).

- 2 Perform wuḍū’ and pray tahajjud ṣalāh, even if it is just 2 rak‘ahs.
- 3 Seek forgiveness from Allah, inside and outside your ṣalāh.
- 4 Make du‘ā, especially in sujūd.
- 5 Eat at least one date for suhūr. Don’t miss suhūr even if it’s just a sip of water.

May Allah al-Shakūr (The Most Appreciative) make us from His grateful servants, and may He bestow upon us the two moments of joy: the joy of iftār, and the joy of meeting Him and beholding His Noble Face.



Fasting and Ikhlas

Allah ﷺ says in the Noble Qur'aan,

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ وَمُحْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي

“Say, ‘It is (only) Allah that I worship, being sincere in my devotion to Him” (39:14).

Ikhlaṣ is the foundation of our dīn, and the cornerstone of our journey to Allah. Ikhlaṣ, often translated as sincerity, refers to **doing everything solely for the sake of Allah**. Ikhlaṣ is when you don't wish for someone other than Allah to see your actions, and you don't wish for someone other than Him to reward you for them.

Fasting teaches us the meaning of ikhlaṣ (sincerity). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Every action of the son of Ādam is multiplied: a good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold rewards. Allah The Mighty and Exalted has said: ‘Except for fasting. It is for Me and I will (personally) reward it; he abandons his desires and food for My sake...’” (Muslim).

How Does Fasting Help Us to Attain Ikhlas?

From all actions, fasting is solely for Allah al-Aḥad (The One). The servant stays away from eating, drinking and fulfilling his desires only for the sake of Allah. He stays away from what he loves in order to gain the pleasure of Allah. Fasting is not something you actively do, but it is what you do **not** do (i.e. no eating, drinking and intimacy). No one else can ever be 100% certain if you are fasting, or if you may have broken your fast in secret. This is something only Allah fully knows. There will be moments in the day in which you could easily eat without another human being knowing. However, you stop yourself from doing so, because you are aware that Allah is watching you.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ quoting Prophet Yaḥyā ﷺ said, “And I command you to fast. Indeed, the similitude of (fasting) is a man carrying a pouch of musk in a crowd of people, all of them marvelling at its fragrance. Indeed, the breath of the fasting person is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of musk” (Tirmidhī).

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains that in this ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ used the image of someone carrying a pouch of musk concealed from view, hidden under his garments, as was the habit of those who carry musk. Fasting is, likewise, hidden from the eyes of men and unperceived by their senses.

Ramadan: Training to Develop Ikhlas in All Aspects of Life

As fasting helps us to develop ikhlāṣ, this should trickle down to other parts of our lives. It should help us to renew sincerity, especially in those deeds where it is more likely for our intentions to become muddled.

“The believer who is sincere to Allah is the happiest, most content, blessed and peaceful of all people. And this is an early paradise before the upcoming Paradise.” – Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

Be Vigilant About Your Intention

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Actions are according to intentions” (Bukhārī). Before we begin our good deeds, we should rectify our intentions and only intend the pleasure of Allah. **The stronger and purer the intention is, the greater the reward will be.** A sincere intention can cause a pound donated in charity to become the equivalent of donating a thousand pounds. ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak ﷺ said, “How many a small act is elevated by an intention, and how many a great act is diminished by an intention.”

Similarly, an intention can transform an ordinary permissible action (e.g eating) into an act of worship. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed you do not spend anything seeking the pleasure of Allah, except that you will be rewarded for it, including what you place in your wife’s mouth” (Bukhārī).

It is very easy to start a deed with sincere intentions, but then find half way through the deed that we are not doing it only for the sake of Allah. Sufyān al-Thawrī ﷺ said, “I have never dealt with anything more difficult than my intention; it keeps changing on me.” Sahl al-Tustarī ﷺ was asked, “What is the most difficult thing for the nafs to attain?” He replied, “Ikhlāṣ, because it (i.e. the nafs) does not get anything out of it.” Thus, we should constantly renew our intentions. We should be conscious of our intentions before we do a good deed, **during** it, and **after** it.

“Indeed your actions are few, so make the few that you have sincere.” – Maymūn b. Mahrān ﷺ

What Is Your Secret Deed?

For years, the poor of Madinah would find food left on their doorsteps. They only found out who the ‘mystery’ donor was the day he passed away. It was none other than the great grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, Zayn al-‘Abidin ‘Ali b. al-Ḥusayn ﷺ. When they

bathed him, they saw marks on his back and shoulders due to him personally carrying the provisions to the home of the poor.

One of the **most effective ways of developing sincerity is to perform good deeds in secret**, and inform nobody about them thereafter, not even in passing. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**Whoever amongst you is able to have hidden good deeds, then let him do so**” (Muṣannaf b. Abī Shaybah). Private worship is one of the best ways to attain sincerity and protect yourself from hypocrisy. Once your heart is purified, you will taste the sweetness of īmān and worship.

Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ wrote, “How few are those who purely dedicate their good deeds to Allah, glory be to Him! Most people like their acts of worship to be known. Sufyān al-Thawrī ﷺ used to say, ‘I have never relied on my public good deeds.’” ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak ﷺ said, “Whoever wishes to see the Face of his Creator (in Paradise), let him do good deeds and not inform anyone about them.”

Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī ﷺ would stand the entire night in prayer. In the morning, he would raise his voice, making it out as though he had just woken up at that moment.

The wife of Ḥassān b. Sinān ﷺ said that her husband would come and lie next to her and then try to fool her as the mother tries to fool her child. When he would see that she had fallen asleep, he would slip out of bed. He would then stand and pray. She says, “I said to him: ‘O Abū ‘Abd-Allah! How much will you torture yourself? Go easy on yourself.’ He replied: ‘Woe to you! Remain silent, for I am about to sleep, from which I will not awaken for a long time (i.e. sleep in the grave).’”

“The one who is sincere to his Lord is like the one who walks on sand. You don’t hear his footsteps, but you see his footprints (i.e. the impact of his deeds).” – ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ﷺ

Dāwūd b. Abī Hind ﷺ fasted for an entire year, without his family knowing. He was a cloth merchant, and he would take his lunch with him to the market. On the way, he would give his lunch to the poor, and when he would return in the evening, he would eat with his family. His fellow merchants would think he ate at home, and his family would think that he ate in the market. Allāhu Akbar! Imagine fasting for an entire year without your own family knowing!

Ramadān is the perfect time to collect these ‘secret deeds’. It may be additional night prayers, or charity, or helping someone. No doubt we will see the effects of such deeds in our lives, and we can’t even imagine the reward in the hereafter.

Imām al-Shāfi‘ī ﷺ said, “(Imām) Mālik ﷺ said to me: ‘Muhammad, fear Allah! When you are alone with Allah and you perform a good deed, then beware that anyone finds out about it. For Allah ﷺ only accepts that which is sincerely for His pleasure, as He said: Everything is going to perish except His Face (28:88) i.e. that which is done seeking His pleasure. Adhere to the station of knowledge, as it is attached to the station of Prophethood. This is what Rabi‘ah b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān ﷺ related to me.’ Then Mālik wept, and caused me to weep. I then realised that Allah did not elevate the status of Mālik, except through a secret which was between him and Allah.”

“Whoever would like to have peace in his heart, and be saved from the agonies of death and the terrors of the Day of Judgement, then let his private deeds be greater than his public ones.” – Imām Mālik ﷺ

Riya

The opposite of ikhlās is riyā’ (showing off/ostentation) and sum’ah (seeking fame), both diseases of the heart. In an era of social media and constant ‘sharing’, we are more susceptible to riyā’, as we focus on impressing the watchful gaze of our followers instead of being watchful of the Gaze of Allah al-Raqib (The Ever-Watchful). This Ramadān, let us carefully guard our intentions. Let us not feel the need to advertise our good deeds to the world. Let us try to keep our hearts focused on Allah. Let us make our Ramadān about Him.

Reflect

Do I sometimes mention my good deeds – which could easily be kept as a secret – casually in passing, in conversation?

Do I yearn for praise from others? Do I curate my social media profiles and status so that people hold a certain image of me?

What ordinary everyday actions can I transform into actions of worship, by consciously changing my intention?

We ask Allah al-Aḥad (The Single) with the supplication of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَمَلَنِي كُلَّهُ صَالِحًا وَاجْعَلْ لَوْجُهَكَ خَالِصًا وَلَا تَجْعَلْ لَأَحَدٍ فِيهِ شَيْئًا

O Allah, make all of my deeds righteous, and make them purely for Your sake; and do not let there be a share for anyone else in them.



Fasting & The Purification of The Soul

The greatest need of our time is for us as believers to return to Allah and focus on purifying our souls (tazkiyat al-nafs). The root of most of the world's problems is diseased hearts. Hearts which do not know Allah, hearts which are full of arrogance, greed and selfishness. Hearts which have become corrupted by sins and no longer taste the sweetness of imān and worship. Hearts torn apart by pride, envy and hatred, resulting in a fractured Ummah.

Whilst we have external enemies – the shayātīn of the jinn and humans – we have a greater enemy lurking within: the nafs (inner self/ego). It is one of the greatest obstacles in our journey to Allah. Our nafs encourages us to disobey Allah ﷺ and to give preference to this worldly life.

In an era where we are bombarded with doubts (shubuhāt) and desires (shahawāt), it is even more important that we learn about the nature of our nafs, what purifies it and what beautifies it. Allah ﷺ says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا، وَقَدْ حَابَ مَنْ دَسَّهَا

“Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul, and doomed is the one who corrupts it!” (91:9-10).

The Three Types of Nafs

There are three types of the nafs (inner self):

- ① **The inciting self (al-nafs al-ammārah bil-sū’):** This is when the nafs commands the person and tells it what to do, and the person willingly obeys. This person is controlled by their nafs, and sins unashamedly.
- ② **The self-reproaching self (al-nafs al-lawwāmah):** This type of person sins, but then feels shame and blames himself for sinning. This leads him to repent. This type of person is in a constant battle with their nafs.
- ③ **The tranquil self (al-nafs al-muṭma’innah):** This person is content with what Allah has ordained, and finds tranquillity in that which pleases Allah. He desires only good and hates evil.

The nafs is not static. It changes between these states. When we reflect on the purpose of fasting and Ramaḍān, we will realise that one of its key aims is to elevate the soul to its intended station: the tranquil soul.

This is perhaps why in Ramaḍān, many of us feel more at peace, as we sin less and focus on pleasing Allah.

“Occupying yourself with purifying your heart is better than an abundance of prayer and fasting whilst your heart is corrupt.”

– Ibn Rajab 

Fasting & Purification

Fasting purifies the body from toxins, revitalizes it, and cleanses the body's inner system. More importantly, if performed properly, fasting purifies the (spiritual) heart of the believer. Desires (of the stomach, private parts, wealth and fame) form a barrier between our hearts and Allah. Our hearts were created to know and worship the One who created them. When we move away from Him, and sin, our hearts become imbalanced and agitated. Thus, fasting takes our hearts back to a state where we are more aligned with our Creator.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Fasting the Month of patience (i.e. Ramaḍān) and three days of every month removes the poison (wahar) of the heart” (Ahmad).

Wahar includes hatred, anger, hypocrisy, hard-heartedness, and the whispers of Shayṭān.

The more we fill our stomachs, the lazier we feel to worship Allah. By fasting, we remove the fuel (food and drink) for our desires, thereby increasing the space within our hearts to remember Allah and worship Him.

One of the best ways to purify the soul is to always remember and think that Allah is with you. A companion asked the Messenger ﷺ, “What is the tazkiyah (purification) of oneself, O Messenger of Allah?” He ﷺ replied, “To know that Allah is with him wherever he may be” (Tabarānī).

Constantly reminding ourselves that Allah is watching us (also known as murāqabah) is an integral component of taqwā (piety). And taqwā is the primary goal of fasting. Whilst taqwā manifests itself in outward forms of obedience, its primary residence is in the heart. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ told us, “Taqwā is here, taqwā is here, taqwā is here,” whilst pointing to his chest (Muslim).

This close connection with Allah, where we are always mindful of Him, makes us aware of what thoughts and feelings we let into our hearts. This helps us to purify our negative thoughts and actions, including the ill-feelings we have towards fellow believers, and the whisperings of shayṭān. In this manner, our hearts are purified from wahār.

Diseases of the Heart

Reading and reflecting on the symptoms and diagnosis of the diseases of the heart – as specified by our beloved Prophet ﷺ and our pious predecessors – will help us to actively work on purifying our hearts throughout this blessed month. The following are some of the key diseases we can focus on inshāAllah.

Pride

Reflect: Do I get angry and feel resentful when someone corrects my mistakes? Am I overly sensitive when given advice? Do I feel that my knowledge, wealth, and status is because of what I have achieved? Do I feel that every blessing in my life is because of my own hard work? Do I become bitter when I do good for someone and they do not appreciate it?

Pride is the **mother of all spiritual diseases**. It is extremely destructive and one of the most difficult diseases to cure. Sometimes we take pride in our wealth, lineage, beauty, power, children, and even our knowledge and worship.

There are degrees of pride. Extreme pride and arrogance lead to outright kufr and the rejection of Allah. The victim thinks he has **no need for his Creator** and attributes all his success to himself.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The person who has the slightest amount of pride in his heart will not enter Paradise...Pride is to reject the truth and belittle people” (Muslim).

To remove pride, we must recognise our worth. Allah created us from broken soil and unclean sperm. We were nothing, and Allah gave us life. We should **contrast this lowly state with the magnificence of Allah**, and this should help us remain humble.

Feeling hunger during our fast should help us **reflect on our weakness and desperate need for Allah**. It should remind us to stay humble and remove the pride from our hearts.

Envy

Envy (hasad) is being resentful of what others have, and wishing that they would lose that blessing. Sometimes this feeling creeps up on us without us realising. **If we fight back against it, inshāAllah we will be rewarded**. However, if we act upon this feeling, and allow it to eat up our insides, then this is ḥarām.

Envy ruins our good deeds. It leads to hatred and tension. It tears down relationships and breaks families.

A remedy for treating envy is to reflect on why we are envious of that person. And then think about who Allah is, and how much He has given us. Allah is Al-'Adl (The Most Just) and we should be content with His decree. Perhaps we envy one thing about that person, but are unaware of ten other problems that this person faces.

“Beware of envy, for it consumes good deeds, just as fire consumes wood or grass” (Abū Dāwūd).

Hatred

There is nothing Shaytān loves more than tearing up relationships and shattering sacred bonds. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “The deeds are presented every Monday and Thursday. On that day, Allah forgives every person who does not associate anything with Him, except the person who holds hatred towards his brother. It is said, ‘Leave them until they have both reconciled, leave them until they have both reconciled’” (Muslim).

Similarly, he ﷺ said, “No one should convey to me anything regarding one of my companions, for I love to meet you with a pure heart” (Ahmad).

When Zayd b. Aslam ﷺ entered upon Abū Dujānah ﷺ in his final illness, his face was glowing. When he was asked for the reason behind this, he said, “There are two deeds which I am depending on: firstly, I only used to speak about matters which concerned me; and secondly, I always maintained a pure heart towards my fellow Muslims.”

“Glad tidings to the one whose own faults occupied him from the faults of others. Woe to the one who forgot his own faults and occupied himself with the faults of others.” – Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

A common cure for treating these diseases (pride, envy and hatred) is to be good to those you have these negative feelings towards. Give them gifts, and do nice things for them, especially when you don't feel like doing so. Praise them when your heart seeks to criticise or backbite about them. Meet them with respect and humility. **Do du'a' for them, especially when your heart does not incline to do so.**

We ask Allah al-Quddūs (The Pure) with the words of His beloved ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ آتِنِي نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا، وَرَكِّبْهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ رَكَّبَهَا، أَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ، وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ، وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ، وَمِنْ دَعَوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا

*O Allah, grant my soul *taqwā* (piety) and purify it, for You are the Best of those who can purify it. You are its Protector and Master. O Allah, I seek Your protection from knowledge which does not benefit, a heart which does not submit, a soul which is not satisfied and a supplication which is not accepted (Muslim).*



“

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,
“Fasting and the Qur’ān will intercede for the
servant on the Day of Judgement. Fasting will
say: ‘My Lord, I prevented him from eating
and his desires during the day, so accept my
intercession on his behalf.’ The Qur’ān will say: ‘I
prevented him from sleeping at night, so accept
my intercession on his behalf.’ Then, both of
their intercession will be accepted”

(Ahmad).



Ramadan: The Month of the Qur'an

It has been said that whilst the primary purpose of fasting is to gain *taqwā*, the purpose of *Ramadān* is to connect with the Qur'an. *Ramadān* is the month of the Qur'an. Allah ﷺ introduces *Ramadān* as:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

"Ramadān is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed – a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion (between right and wrong)..."
(2:185).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The scriptures of Ibrāhīm ﷺ were revealed on the first night of *Ramadān*. The Torah was revealed after six nights of *Ramadān* had passed. The Gospel was revealed after thirteen nights of *Ramadān* had passed. The Qur'an was revealed after twenty-four nights of *Ramadān* had passed" (Ahmad).

The Qur'an is Allah's greatest gift to mankind. It is the eternal book of guidance. It is a cure for every disease, both spiritual or physical. It is a light which illuminates the path of truth amidst the darkness of falsehood. The Qur'an contains legal rulings for humans to abide by on Allah's earth as His servants. It is a book of blessings and eternal wisdom, and a warner and a giver of glad tidings.

Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, "The Qur'an will meet its companion (i.e. the person of the Qur'an) on the Day of Judgement when his grave is opened for him, in the form of a pale man. It will say to him, 'Do you recognise me?' He will say, 'I do not recognise you.' It will say, 'I am your companion, the Qur'an, who kept you thirsty on hot days and kept you awake at night. Every merchant profits from his business, and today you will profit from your hard work.' He will be given 'dominion' in his right hand and 'eternity' in his left. A crown of dignity will be placed on his head, and his parents will be clothed with priceless garments the likes of which have never been seen by the people of the world. They will ask, 'Why have we been clothed with this?' It will be said, 'Because your son used to recite and adhere to the Qur'an'. Then it will be said to him, 'Recite and ascend up the levels and mansions of Paradise,' and he will keep ascending as long as he recites, be it swiftly or slowly" (Ahmad).

A Sacred Meeting

Imagine the scenario. It is the best month of the year: Ramadān. Every night, there is a magnificent union taking place. The best of mankind, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is meeting the best of angels, Jibril ﷺ to review the best of words: the words of the Most Magnificent, Exalted is He.

'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās ﷺ said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of all people; and he was the most generous during the month of Ramadān when Jibril ﷺ would meet him. **Jibril would meet him every night in Ramadān to study the Qur'ān with him.** When Jibril would meet him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be more generous than strong winds (which cause rain and prosperity)" (Bukhārī).

Ibn Rajab ﷺ writes, "This ḥadīth illustrates the desirability of studying the Qur'ān in Ramadān and gathering together for this sake; along with reviewing it with someone who is more well-versed in it. It also proves the desirability of reciting Qur'ān abundantly in the month of Ramadān. Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ studied with Jibril ﷺ at night. This shows the desirability of reciting Qur'ān at night, as **distractions are cut off, one is able to focus solely on the Qur'ān; and the tongue can concur with the heart in reflecting upon the Qur'ān**, as Allah says, 'Indeed, rising by night (for prayer) makes for a stronger impression (on the soul), and is best for the recitation (of Allah's words).' (73:6)"

Therefore, we should dedicate as much time as possible in Ramadān for reciting and learning the Qur'ān. The scholars of the past would stop their ḥadīth lessons in Ramadān to focus on reciting and completing the Qur'ān. It has been reported that Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī would do 12 khatmahs, Aswad b. Yazīd would do 15, Qatādah would do 16, Ibn 'Asākir would 30, Imām Bukhārī would do 40, and Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām al-Shāfi'ī would do 60.

For these special servants of Allah, it was possible to achieve these feats, as they were scholars who recited and reflected on the Qur'ān throughout the year, and due to Allah placing barakah in their time.

However, for the majority of us, it is not possible to recite such large quantities with reflection. Those of us who understand the meanings of the Qur'ān should continue reciting the Qur'ān with tadabbur (reflection) in Ramadān. The goal should not merely be to rush through a large number of completions without tadabbur and without applying the rules of tajwīd and tartīl.

[Note: For Ramadān Qur'ān recitation, some scholars have suggested that a person should have separate sets of completions they read from on a daily basis. Whilst at least one or a few sets should be dedicated to be recited with tadabbur, other completions may

be performed at a slightly faster pace with the purpose of completing as many khatmabs as possible to acquire the maximum reward of many recitations. However, the most perfect form is that which involves recitation with tadabbur and tartil.]

Those who are memorising the Qur'ān or are reviewing their memorisation may recite at a slightly faster speed, keeping in mind that they do not contravene the rules of tajwīd. However, they too should allocate a portion of their time in Ramadān for recitation with reflection, especially during the qiyām prayers.

As for those who do not understand the Arabic language and the meanings of Qur'ān, it may be difficult to reflect and recite simultaneously. However, they should still recite with tartīl (see below) and tajwīd, and they could also interact with some of the āyat e.g. if they come across an āyah about Paradise, then pause and ask Allah for Paradise. Furthermore, they should also allocate time to learn the meanings of the Qur'ān, read the translation and reflect within their limits.

“I have not seen anything that nourishes the mind and soul, protects the body, and guarantees success more than constantly engaging with the Book of Allah.” – Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ

Recite Slowly

We should recite the Qur'ān with tajwīd and tartīl. Tartīl refers to **reciting slowly and calmly**, making each word distinct, and not exceeding the limits. Reciting like this ensures that the tongue, heart and the rest of the body are in perfect harmony with each other.

Sometimes we recite very fast, just to get to the end of a sūrah or a juz. Similarly, we may witness ‘super high speeds’ in the tarāwīh prayers. However, this is contrary to the sunnah and does not help us attain the objectives of the Qur'ān. **Slow recitation is vital for absorbing the message of the Qur'ān and for reflecting on what Allah ﷺ is saying. Repeating certain āyāt is critical if we want to strengthen our īmān through the Qur'ān.** This, however, is impossible if our aim is just to reach the end of a sūrah, juz or even the whole of the Qur'ān. A man came to 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd ﷺ and said, “I recite all the mufaṣṣal sūrāhs in one rak'ah.” Upon this 'Abdullāh ﷺ said, “(Do you recite it) hastily like the recitation of poetry? Indeed, there are people who recite the Qur'ān, but it does not go down beyond their collar bones. **However, it benefits when it enters the heart and becomes deeply-rooted in it...**” (Muslim).

Cry Whilst Reciting

The purpose of melodious recitation is not merely to ensure that the recitation of the Qur'ān sounds good. Instead, it is to ensure that the recitation is beautiful, with complete focus and khushū'. Such a recitation would inevitably result in the heart being moved. It should increase our fear of Allah ﷺ and provide peace. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**Of those who recite the Qur'ān with the best voice is the one who, when you hear him recite, you think that he fears Allah**” (Ibn Mājah).

When reciting the Qur'ān, we should try to cry, as this was the practice of the pious people of the past. Allah ﷺ says, “**When the āyāt of the Most Merciful were recited before them, they used to fall down in prostration, weeping**” (19:58). The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed, this Qur'ān has descended with sadness. So, when you recite it, cry. If you cannot cry, then try hard to do so. And recite it melodiously, for he who does not recite it melodiously is not one of us” (Ibn Mājah).

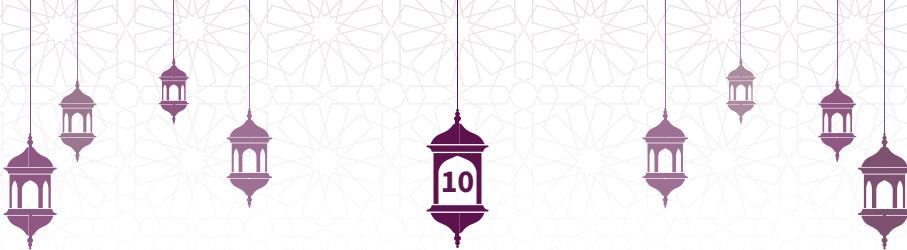
Imām al-Nawawī ﷺ says that crying during the recitation of the Qur'ān is, “A quality of those who have a deep awareness of Allah (ma'rifah) and it is a distinguishing feature of the pious servants of Allah... It has been reported that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ led the congregation in the Morning prayer, and recited Sūrah Yusuf. He wept until his tears flowed over his collarbone. Another narration of the report mentions that this occurred during 'Ishā', indicating that this happened repeatedly. Another narration mentions that he cried until the people in the rows behind him heard his weeping.”

Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ wrote, “It is mustahabb (recommended) to cry whilst reciting the Qur'ān, and when it is being recited. The way to achieve this is to **evoke sadness in the heart by reflecting on the severe threats, warnings and promises; and then reflecting on one's shortcomings regarding them**. And if this does not evoke sadness and crying, as it does to the elite (worshippers), then he should cry over the lack of being able to cry, as this is one of the greatest calamities.”

Allah's Special Chosen People

Ramadān is a bootcamp for the rest of the year. Let us make an intention and plan of continuing our relationship with the Qur'ān after Ramadān, so that we become the people of Allah. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah has His own people among mankind.” The companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah, who are they?” He replied, “**They are the people of the Qur'ān: the people of Allah and His chosen people**” (Ibn Mājah).

May Allah al-Nūr (The Light) fill our hearts, families, and Ummah with the light of His Sacred Words.



Ramadan: The Month of Reflecting on The Qur'an

Reciting the Qur'an or memorising its words is in itself not enough. Although both of these acts are essential, they must be accompanied by reflection (tadabbur) and a deep commitment to 'live' the Qur'an. Allah ﷺ says,

كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ مُّبِّرِّأٌ لِّيَدَبُرُوا أُبَيْتَهُ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

"This is a blessed Book which We revealed to you, so that they reflect upon its verses, and those with understanding may take heed" (38:29).

He also says, "Do they not, then, ponder upon the Qur'an? Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of discrepancy" (4:82).

The recitation of the Qur'an is supposed to **increase our imān and deepen the love and awe of Allah in our hearts**. This will only occur if we recite with reflection and deliberation.

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ wrote, "There is nothing more beneficial for the heart than reading the Qur'an with contemplation and reflection. This is what inspires love and longing for Allah. It generates fear of Him and hope in Him. It makes one turn in repentance to Him and rely on Him. It causes one to fully submit to Him, leave matters in His Hands and be pleased with His Decree. It inspires patience and gratitude, and is a means of acquiring all of the characteristics which give life to and perfect the heart."

If people knew what recitation of the Qur'an with contemplation contains, they would devote themselves to it at the expense of anything else. When one reads with reflection and comes across an āyah that he needs to cure his heart, he repeats it. He may repeat it a hundred times, or even throughout the entire night, as was reported about the Prophet ﷺ and the early predecessors. Hence, reciting a single āyah of the Qur'an with contemplation and reflection is better than reciting the entire Qur'an without any contemplation or reflection.

This is more beneficial for the heart, **more likely to increase one's imān and leads one to taste the sweetness of imān and the Qur'an**. This was the habit of the early predecessors, whereby one of them would repeat the same āyah throughout the night until morning came. Likewise, it has been reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood repeating one āyah till morning came."

But I Am Not a Scholar...?

There is a misconception amongst some people that tadabbur is limited to scholars. This is not true. The disbelievers were condemned in the Qur'aan for not doing tadabbur. Allah ﷺ said, “**Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'aan, or are there locks upon (their) hearts?**” (47:24). Therefore, as believers, we have no excuse for failing to perform tadabbur. Tadabbur is essential to our lives and for building a strong connection with Allah ﷺ.

“**Amongst Shaytān's plots is to deter the slaves of Allah from pondering over the Qur'aan (tadabbur). This is because he knows that guidance is attained through tadabbur.**” – Ibn Hubayrah ﷺ

Tadabbur: The Route to Discovering the Secrets of the Qur'aan

Spending long hours with the book of Allah and reflecting on it will help a person discover amazing meanings and glean new insights. Ibn 'Āshūr ﷺ wrote, “Tadabbur is reflection and pondering, through which a person gains knowledge of the intended meanings. This only occurs in speech which is concise, yet comprehensive in meaning; so that **the more a person reflects, the more he discovers meanings which were previously not apparent to him.**”

“**As for the one who does not reflect, ponder and is not blessed with Allah's help in this regard, he will remain ignorant of the amazing secrets mentioned in this Magnificent Qur'aan.**” – Imām al-Rāzī ﷺ

Tadabbur and ‘Living’ the Qur'aan

Tadabbur is not merely about extracting amazing gems from the Qur'aan. Rather, it should directly lead us to implementing the commandments of Allah and the sunnah of His beloved ﷺ.

Imām al-Ājurri ﷺ describes the Companion of the Qur'aan: “His concern when he begins reciting a sūrah is, ‘When will I take heed of what I recite?’ And his objective is not, ‘When will I complete the sūrah?’ Rather, his objective is, ‘**When will I understand the message from Allah? When will I restrain myself? When will I take a lesson?**’ This is because the recitation of the Qur'aan is an act of worship, and worship cannot be performed heedlessly.”

“O Bearers of the Qur’ān! What has the Qur’ān planted in your hearts?
For indeed the Qur’ān is the spring and irrigation
of the hearts.” – Mālik b. Dīnār ﷺ

Tips for Reflecting Upon the Qur'an

a) Think of Who is talking to you

When you begin reciting the Qur’ān, Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ advises that you should bring the Greatness of the One who is addressing you to the forefront of your mind. The words you are reciting did not originate from a human being; they are the words of the Lord of the worlds.

“I said to my nafs: ‘O nafs, recite the Qur’ān as though you (personally) heard it from Allah when He uttered it.’ I then felt the sweetness (of reciting the Qur’ān).” – Sulaymān b. Maymūn ﷺ

b) Personalise it to your life

Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ said, “One is to assume that he is the one who is being addressed in every statement in the Qur’ān. Hence if he hears a command or prohibition, he assumes that he is the one who is being commanded and prohibited. If he hears a promise or threat, he does the same. If he hears the stories of the past and those of Prophets, he realises that entertainment is not the objective, but rather, it is for him to take lessons, and to extract from its content what he needs.”

Try to personalise the Qur’ān to your situation whilst reciting it. Relate it to your own life and your own experiences. Ask yourself: **what is Allah telling me?** What is Allah asking me to do? How can I apply it to my life?

c) Visualise

Think deeply about the words you are reciting and try to visualise the meaning they are conveying. For instance, when reading about the descriptions of Hell-fire in Juz 'Amma, **make the imagery come alive in your mind**. To achieve this, repeat the āyāt wherever necessary.

d) Feel the emotion and repeat the āyah

The Qur’ān was sent down for us to derive guidance from it and to increase our īmān in Allah, the Prophet ﷺ and the hereafter. Allah says, “And when His āyāt are recited to them, it increases them in īmān” (8:2).

Accordingly, when reciting an āyah about Paradise, **feel your longing** for Paradise increasing. On feeling this effect in your heart, continue to repeat this āyah. Similarly, when reciting an āyah about Hell-fire, **feel fear in your heart**. On feeling this effect, keep repeating the āyah. Let it move you to the point of crying over it. Likewise, when reading an āyah about the greatness of Allah, **feel shyness and awe before Him**. Keep repeating this āyah until you feel the effect of it in your heart.

Try to recall the last time you heard Sūrah Yūsuf in tarāwīh. Did you hear sniffling and people rummaging in their pockets for tissues when the imām recited the latter āyāt of the story? Even though our īmān is weak and we find it easier to cry at the stories which tug at our hearts, the principle is the same.

Whether your recitation includes a touching story or an āyah about the creative power of Allah, let it move you emotionally. **Let it pierce your heart.**

e) **Interact with the āyāt**

Strive to emulate the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by interacting with the āyāt you are reciting during voluntary prayers. When you come across an āyah about mercy, **stop and ask Allah for His mercy**. When you come across an āyah about punishment, **stop and ask Allah's protection**. When you come across an āyah where you can make a du'ā, **stop and ask Allah**.

Imām al-Nawawī رحمه الله mentions that this is mustahabb for everyone reciting Qur'ān, whether it is within ṣalāh or outside of ṣalāh; whether you are leading the congregation, part of the congregation or are praying alone.

f) **Study the Qur'ān**

To achieve the above (points a-e), you will have to make an effort to study and understand the meanings and message of the Qur'ān outside of Ramaḍān and within Ramaḍān.

In Ramaḍān itself, you could listen to lectures explaining the meaning of the Qur'ān, read reliable tafsīr books, and read through the translation of the Qur'ān.

Whenever you are reflecting on the words of the Qur'ān, always take heed **not to fall into the trap of interpreting the book of Allah according to your own whims and desires**, or speaking about His words without knowledge.

Once you have studied the meanings of an āyah and have understood its context and lessons, then you should memorise it, if you have not done so already. Thereafter, **recite those āyāt in your ṣalāh – especially in qiyām al-layl**. InshāAllah, you will feel a huge difference in the sweetness of your ṣalāh. Remember to: (1) **personalise**, (2) **feel the emotion** and (3) **interact with the āyāt!**

“Son of Ādam, how will your heart soften when your only concern is to reach the end of the sūrah?” – al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī 

May Allah al-Fattāḥ (The Supreme Owner) open our hearts to the unique marvels and endless blessings of the Qur’ān.





Ramadan and Qiyam

Allah ﷺ says in the Noble Qur'an:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ فِتْنَتْ آنَاءَ الْيَلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَخْدُرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هُلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَئِكَ الْأَلْبَيْ

"Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night, prostrating and standing, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]?"

Say: 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only those who are endowed with insight will take heed" (39:9).

Once, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ went out on the first night of Ramaḍān. The lamps were shining and the Book of Allah was being recited in the masājid, so he stated, "May Allah illuminate your grave O 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, just as you illuminated the masājid of Allah with the Qur'an."

Qiyām, tahajjud and tarawīh are terms used to describe the night prayer in Ramaḍān. In Ramaḍān, the night prayer is done communally and in private. Along with performing tarawīh in the masjid, we should perform qiyām at home, especially in the last third of the night, in solitude.

Qiyām at night is **one of the greatest acts of worship a servant can perform**. It is one of the most precious provisions a believer can take in his journey to Allah. It brings with it a sweetness which is nearly impossible to experience otherwise. One of life's greatest joys is being able to cry out to one's Maker in the stillness of the night, in qiyam, in sajdah, **when one is closest to Him**.

By developing a habit of the night prayer in Ramaḍān, we should try to make it part of our everyday lives throughout the year.

The wife of Abū Muḥammad Ḥabīb ﷺ used to say to him at night, "The night has gone. Ahead of us lies a long journey, and the provisions are little. The caravans of the righteous have sped ahead of us, whilst we have remained behind."

The Reward of Qiyam

Qiyām leads to one attaining the status of the martyrs and the ṣiddīqīn. A man once came to the Prophet ﷺ, and said, “O Messenger of Allah, do you think if I testify that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah; and I pray the five prayers, I give zakāh, and I fast and perform qiyām in Ramadān, then who am I from?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “From the ṣiddīqīn and martyrs” (Ibn Ḥibbān).

Qiyām is the means to get all of our **previous sins forgiven**. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever stands in prayer at night (qiyām) in the month of Ramadān **with firm belief and hoping for reward**, all his previous sins will be forgiven” (Bukhārī). The key is to perform qiyām with īmān and sincerity.

We often struggle to stand throughout the entire night, and feel sad at not being able to stand for long hours like our pious predecessors used to. There is, however, something we can do to mitigate this: remain in the masjid until the imām finishes. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever performs qiyām (night prayer) **with the imām until he finishes**, Allah will record the qiyām of the (entire) night for him” (Nasā'ī).

Qiyām will intercede for us on the Day of Judgement. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Fasting and the Qur’ān will intercede for the servant on the Day of Judgement. Fasting will say: ‘My Lord, I prevented him from eating and his desires during the day, so accept my intercession on his behalf.’ The Qur’ān will say: ‘I prevented him from sleeping at night, so accept my intercession on his behalf.’ Then, both of their intercession will be accepted” (Ahmad).

Allah Has a Surprise for You!

From His immense kindness, Allah al-Barr (The Kind), has concealed a magnificent everlasting reward for His slaves who hid away from His creation, pushed their cosy duvets away, and turned to Him in the depths of the night. He ﷺ says,

“Their sides shun their beds, praying to their Lord in fear and hope; and they spend (in charity) some of what We have given them. Not a single soul is aware of the blissful delight that has been reserved for them in secret, as a reward of what they used to do”
(32:17).

Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī ﷺ said, “The people concealed their deeds, so Allah reserved for them in secret what no eye has seen and what has not crossed the mind of any human being.”

“I recite the Qur’ān, and I reflect on a verse, and it leaves me mind-boggled. I am astonished at those who have memorised the Qur’ān, how do they enjoy sleep? And how can they occupy themselves with a worldly thing whilst they are reciting the words of Allah? If they had understood what they were reciting, recognised its worth, derived pleasure through it and experienced the sweetness of intimately conversing with Him — then they would not wish to sleep out of happiness from what they have been given.”

— Ahmad b. al-Hawārī ﷺ

Qur’ān at Night

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ used to review the Qur’ān with Jibril ﷺ every Ramaḍān. In the Ramaḍān before he passed away, he reviewed it with him twice. Another ḥadīth mentions that this took place at night. This indicates that it is highly recommended to recite Qur’ān at night in Ramaḍān.

The night time is more conducive to reflecting upon and reciting the words of Allah. Allah ﷺ says, “**Indeed, worship in the night is more impactful and suitable for recitation**” (73:6). Night prayer leaves a deep impression on the soul. In the stillness of the night, the heart is able to steer itself away from the worries and distractions of the day; the tongue and heart can easily concur to absorb the weighty message of the Lord of the worlds. It also protects a slave from *riyā’* (showing off) and is an achievable ‘secret deed’ between him and Allah.

Imām al-Nawawī ﷺ states that one should devote more time to reciting at night, as Allah says, “...There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite Allah’s revelations **throughout the night, prostrating**” (3:113).

Tahajjud was a norm in the earlier generations outside of Ramaḍān. Abū al-Āḥwāṣ al-Ḥabashī ﷺ said, “Indeed a person would go out in the districts at night, and would hear a **buzzing like the buzzing of bees from the residents** (i.e. everyone was reciting Qur’ān). What is wrong with these people; they feel secure from what the (earlier ones) used to fear?”

Wuhayb b. al-Ward ﷺ said, “It was said to a man: do you not sleep? He replied: **Indeed, the marvels of the Qur’ān have made my sleep fly away.**” It has been said that a man accompanied another for two months, and did not see him sleeping. So he asked him, “Why is it that I do not see you sleeping?” He replied, “Indeed the marvels of the Qur’ān have made my sleep fly away. I do not leave one marvel, except that I fall into another!”

“By Allah, if it wasn’t for the night prayer (qiyām al-layl), I would not have loved the world. By Allah, the people of the night (prayer) experience more delight in their night than the people of entertainment experience in their entertainment. Sometimes the hearts experience moments in which they leap out of joy due to the remembrance of Allah, to the extent that I say: ‘If the people of Paradise have anything like this, then how blissful must their lives be!’”

– Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī ﷺ

Choose the Best Masjid for Qiyam

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Of those who recite the Qur’ān with the best voice is the one who, when you hear him recite, you think that he fears Allah” (Ibn Mājah).

The purpose of melodious recitation is not just to sound good, but rather to recite beautifully with proper focus and khushū‘ (humility), so that your heart is moved. It should help us fear Allah and find peace in the recitation.

We should go for ‘Ishā ṣalāh early, and choose a masjid where the imām recites with khushū‘; someone who, when we hear his recitation, we think that he fears Allah. We should choose a masjid where we can sense the sakīnah (tranquillity); somewhere where we are hopeful that mercy is descending, so we too can enjoy a share of this mercy.

Once, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ saw a man carrying his mother in ṭawāf, so he performed ṭawāf behind him. He said, “By Allah, I am doing ṭawāf, even though I had no intention of doing so. This is because when I saw this man carrying his mother, I realised that mercy will descend upon him, and I want some of that to reach me too.”

Don’t Miss Out on the Best Time

The most virtuous part of the night is the last third of the night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Our Lord – Glorified and Exalted is He – descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the night remains and says: ‘Who will call upon Me, that I may answer Him? Who will ask of Me, that I may give him? Who will seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?’” (Bukhārī).

About this time, Allah ﷺ says, “And those who seek forgiveness before dawn,” (3:17) and elsewhere, “And in the hours before dawn they would seek forgiveness” (51:18).

Ibn Rajab ﷺ writes, “The middle of the night is reserved for the lovers who wish to spend time in seclusion with their Beloved (Allah), and the end of the night is

reserved for the sinners to seek forgiveness for their sins. Whoever is unable to join the striving of the lovers in the depth of the night should at least join the sinners pleading forgiveness at the end of the night.”

“I cannot imagine that someone would sleep during the last part of the night!” – Ḥāfiẓ

We should try to not miss out on this special time, even if it means praying two rak‘ahs. Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ used to say, “Pray at night, even if it is for the duration of milking a goat.”

May Allah al-Karīm (The Most Noble) honour us and make us from the people of the night prayer.



“

“When the slave rectifies two of his qualities,
everything else will be rectified:
(1) his ṣalāh and (2) his tongue.”

- Yūnus b. ‘Ubayd 



Ramadan: Salah with Khushū'

After the obligation of attesting to the Oneness of Allah (tawhīd), there is no greater commandment in Islam than salah. Salah is the second pillar of Islam and the **prime connection between a slave and his Master**. It is the first act which he will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgement: if it is good, he will be saved and will succeed; if it is not good, he will be doomed and be amongst the losers.

Salah is the crucial factor that **distinguishes the believers from the disbelievers**. By preserving your salah, you are preserving your dīn. Salah is the **purification of the soul**. It cleanses your sins and protects you from all harm.

Salah is one of the greatest acts of worship. It is an act in which the slave shuts off the world around him to converse directly with Allah ﷺ, displaying his complete servitude ('ubūdiyyah) to Him. It is one of the best ways to remember Him, become close to Him, and erase our many sins. Salah is one of the greatest means to strengthen our īmān.

One of our main Ramaḍān goals should be to **perform the five fard prayers to the best of our abilities**. This includes all the additional sunnah prayers and performing them with full concentration, calmness and tranquillity (i.e. with full khushū'). Sometimes, some people may focus on attending the tarāwīh prayers in congregation, but neglect to perform 'isha' or fajr in congregation. The five daily prayers, however, should be our number one priority.

Khushū': The Essence of Salah

Whilst we often focus on the outer and physical acts of worship, we often neglect the inner dimensions and spiritual elements of these same acts. Salah consists of external physical actions, but its essence is khushū'. Ramaḍān is the perfect time to actively develop khushū' in our salah. Allah ﷺ says in the Qur'añ,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشُونَ.

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble and submissive in their salah"
(23:1-2).

The Prophet ﷺ stated, "The first thing to be lifted from this Ummah will be khushū', until you will not find anyone with khushū'" (Tabarānī).

Khushū‘ is a state in which the heart stands before Allah ﷺ with **complete humility**, lowliness and servitude; **focusing fully on Him Alone**. Then the body also humbles itself and obeys Allah.

Khushū‘ is a state in which you constantly weigh up your **weakness, deficiencies and sins** against the greatness of Allah, leaving you overwhelmed with **humility and a desperate need for Him**.

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ compared khushū‘ in ṣalāh to the soul in the body. When the soul leaves the body, the body dies. Similarly, without khushū‘ the ṣalāh lacks its soul, spirit and essence. Likewise, praying ṣalāh without khushū‘ is like gifting a dead servant to a king. He then writes, “Allah will neither accept it nor reward him for it, even if the obligation (of ṣalāh) has been legally fulfilled.”

The night prayer in Ramadān is the perfect opportunity to work on our khushū‘. We should maximise qiyām to lengthen the various postures, praise Allah extensively, and lengthen our du‘ā’, as our beloved Messenger ﷺ used to do.

Salah With Khushu‘: Pure Joy & Comfort

The Prophet ﷺ would gain extreme pleasure and joy in his ṣalāh. This was a result of his perfection in conversing privately with his Lord, being conscious of His Greatness and basking in His Presence. For him, ṣalāh was not a chore. He ﷺ said to Bilāl ﷺ, “Stand O Bilāl (and announce the call to prayer), and bring us comfort **through ṣalāh**” (Abū Dāwūd).

Experiencing the ‘sweetness’ (ḥalāwah) of ṣalāh is a game changer. Once you have experienced it, your life will change and you will forever crave its pleasure. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains that when you perform ṣalāh with khushū‘, fulfilling all of its rights and conditions and you turn your mind and heart to Allah, you will feel light, as though all of your burdens have been washed away. You will be full of energy but also calm and peaceful. Such feelings will make you wish you could remain in that prayer forever. Ṣalāh is the coolness of the eye, the delight of the soul and the paradise of the heart.

“We are in a garden, where our food is khushū‘, and our drink is the tears that flow.” – Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ

How to Attain Khushū'

- Prepare mentally & physically for your standing in front of The Supreme Creator. Strive to pray in the congregation. Always aim to arrive early, before the opening takbīr (takbīrat al-taḥrīm). Be punctual with the sunnah and nafl prayers, as they awaken your heart and prepare you for attaining greater khushū' in the fard prayers.
- Get rid of distractions. Eat and use the bathroom before praying. Pray in a quiet place and put your phone away to enter a 'peaceful zone'.
- Stop sinning. Protect yourself from all ḥarām, especially your eyes and your tongue. Don't expect yourself to have khushū' if you have just watched something ḥarām.
- Fight Shayṭān and his whispers. Always be on guard as Shayṭān wants to destroy your ṣalāh. Seek Allah's protection and force yourself to reflect on what you are saying.
- Understand what you are saying. Learn the translation of everything you are saying in ṣalāh and be fully mindful when saying it. Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said, "Only that which you were mindful of in your ṣalāh will be accepted from you."
- Vary the adhkār and sūrahs. Carve out time in this blessed month to memorise additional adhkār and sūrahs from the Qur'ān to experience the beauty of ṣalāh.
- Remember death and the hereafter during and outside of your ṣalāh. Imagine you are praying your final prayer. Visualise the stages of the hereafter in your ṣalāh.
- Keep in mind that Allah responds to you. In ṣalāh, you are conversing with your Lord. As you talk to Him, He responds to you. Feel privileged to be in direct conversation with the Lord of the worlds.
- Be calm and lengthen your ṣalāh. The journey through ṣalāh is remarkable. Each part is a unique milestone, bringing its own sweetness and joy. Every action and statement have their own form of servitude ('ubūdiyyah) to Allah. Be calm and do not rush through your ṣalāh just to reach the end.

"Two rak'ahs with contemplation is better than standing for the entire night with an inattentive heart." – 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās ﷺ

It is important to note that khushū' is not exclusive to ṣalāh. Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ described khushū' as the fruit of īmān and the result of a firm conviction in the greatness of Allah. If you are blessed with this, you will enjoy khushū' in **and** outside of ṣalāh, even when alone and away from others. Continuously **remembering that Allah sees you, being in awe of His greatness, and recognising your own deficiencies** will lead to a constant state of khushū'.

The Secret of Salah: Focus Your Heart on Him

The secret of ṣalāh, and what transforms it from being a lifeless body to a real, moving and powerful force is: **turning to Allah ﷺ fully and completely with your heart.**

When placing your heart before Allah ﷺ, do it with utmost humility, as though you are seeing Him. When asked by Jibrīl ﷺ to define ihṣān, the Prophet ﷺ said, “**That you worship Allah as though you are seeing Him; for if you cannot see Him, He truly sees you**” (Muslim).

Go to Allah ﷺ with full presence and concentration. Incline to Him completely. **Focus on Him Alone.** If you turn to Him, He will turn to you. If you turn away from Him, He will turn away from you. Achieve this by removing the world from your heart and purifying your heart from **desires and doubts.**

Think of a cup which is full. To add to it, you must first throw out some of its contents. Likewise, the **treasures of ṣalāh cannot enter a heart that is filled with concerns for the dunyā**, is steeped in desires, and is riddled with doubts. These must first be removed.

Similarly, clear your mind from all evil thoughts and ideas. Instead, steer your mind to think about Allah ﷺ: His majesty, His beauty, His kindness, His love and His generosity.

Never Give Up!

Making the human lose hope is one of Shayṭān's most powerful tricks. You might think: “This khushū' thing is not for me. I've tried it, but I keep getting distracted.” **Do not give in to this trick** and continue to try. On some days your level of khushū' will feel strong, whilst on others, you may not feel it at all. Despite all of this, continue to work on it and do not ever give up.

At the start of your journey to Allah ﷺ, Shayṭān will have a greater ‘share’ of your ṣalāh than you. You will then compete with him, going back and forth, until you secure half of it. You must then continue to fight until you can secure all of your ṣalāh. The Prophet ﷺ said, “A man returns from his prayer and only a tenth, ninth, eighth, seventh, sixth, fifth, fourth, third or half of it, is recorded for him” (Abū Dāwūd).

The process of attaining khushū‘ and enjoying ṣalāh requires time and effort. It won’t happen overnight. Keep coming back to these pointers and work on them in gradual steps.

May Allah al-Wahhāb (The Ever-Giving) bless us with continuous khushū‘ both in and outside of ṣalāh. May He make our ṣalāh a means for us to experience the joy of conversing with Him in this world as though we can see Him, and subsequently see Him in the Abode of Peace.

See the ‘Taste the Sweetness of ṣalāh’ book by Life With Allah for a detailed guide on how to attain khushū‘ in ṣalāh.





Ramadan and Du'a'

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

“And your Lord said: ‘Call upon Me; I will respond to you’” (40:60).

Du'a' is the essence of worship. It is every moment, minute and hour in which we pour our hearts out to Allah ﷺ, praise Him, seek His forgiveness and beg Him. Through du'a', we express our **humility**, **dire state of poverty** and **utmost need** of our Lord. Through du'a', we affirm our **complete submission** to Allah and express our 'ubūdiyyah (servitude) to Him.

Du'a' is a **whispering conversation** with Allah, our Creator, Lord and Sustainer. We ask Him because only He can give. He has power over everything, whilst we have none. His knowledge encompasses everything, whilst we know little. He is the Lord and we are His servants.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “There is nothing more honourable to Allah than du'a.” Whilst our fellow humans tire of our persistent questioning and begging, Allah, our Generous Lord, does not stop giving and is angered when we **don't** ask from Him! Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah is angry with those who do not make du'a' to Him” (Tirmidhī).

Du'a' prevents calamities, removes difficulties and is one of the most beneficial remedies. Du'a' is the weapon of the believer.

‘I Am Near’

Amidst the āyāt about fasting, we find one of the most soothing āyāt. Allah ﷺ says,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ، أُحِبُّ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِي

“When My servants ask you about Me, truly I am Near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me...” (2:186).

This āyah provides a deep sense of comfort and relief for the believer. Any difficulty we may encounter due to fasting fades in comparison with this gentle and warm reassurance.

Elsewhere in the Qurān, when the companions would ask the Prophet ﷺ about a matter, Allah would respond with: “They ask you...SAY (O Muḥammad ﷺ)...” In this āyah, however, we find that Allah did not mention the word ‘SAY’; rather He immediately said: ‘Truly I am Near.’ Thus, there is no one between you and Allah: you can ask Him directly. He is Closer to you than your jugular vein, and He always responds to your du‘ā’. He is always accessible.

We also learn from this āyah that du‘ā’ is an essential component of Ramadān. Ibn ‘Āshūr ﷺ mentions that this āyah indicates that the du‘ā’ of the fasting person is accepted; and that the du‘ās of Ramadān are accepted; and that we should make du‘ā’ at the end of each day in Ramadān.

Key Times to Make Du‘a’ in Ramadan

Ramadān is du‘ā’ prime-time. The beauty of du‘ā’ is that it can be done at any time and in any language. In Ramadān however, there are a few special moments which we should carve out in our daily schedules to make du‘ā’:

a) Throughout the fast. Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, “There are three whose du‘ā’ is not rejected: the fasting person until he opens his fast, the just leader, and the supplication of the oppressed person...” (Tirmidhī).

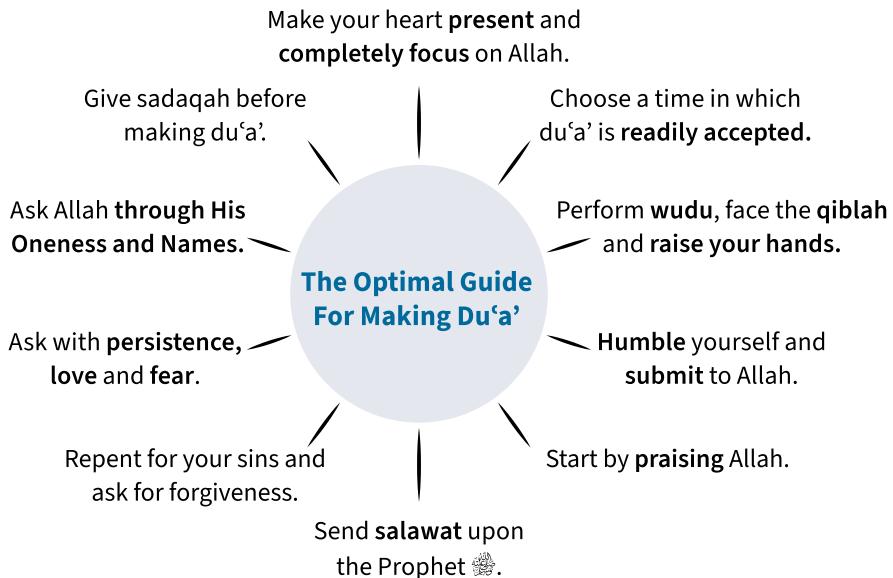
Imām al-Munāwī ﷺ said that this refers to the person who fasts comprehensively, and protects his body parts from disobeying Allah. Thus, **his du‘ā’ is accepted due to the purity of his body, resulting from the person disobeying his own whims and desires.**

Another possible reason for why the du‘ā’ of the fasting person is accepted is because he is in a **state of weakness**. When he feels hunger, he is more likely to humble himself, and feel his need for Allah. Similarly, **spending the day and night in worship, in a season where Allah’s mercy descends** and wherein one sins less, makes it more likely for one’s du‘ā’ to be accepted.

b) At the time of iftār. Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, “Indeed, the fasting person has a supplication at the time of his iftār which is not rejected” (Ibn Mājah).

c) In the last third of the night, especially in sujūd. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Our Lord – Glorified and Exalted is He – descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the night remains and says: ‘Who will call upon Me, that I may answer Him? Who will ask of Me, that I may give him? Who will seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?’” (Bukhārī). He ﷺ also said, “As for sujūd, go to great lengths in making du‘ā’ in it, as it is likely that your du‘ā’ shall be answered” (Muslim).

The Optimal Guide for Making Du'a'



(Adapted from *al-Jawāb al-Kāfī* by Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ)

For a detailed guide to making du'a', please refer to the book 'I Am Near' or the Dhikr & Dua App by Life With Allah.

The Secret of Du'a'

The secret to making du'a' is to display **one's utter need of Allah**, with **utmost humility, desperation and dependence**.

We see a beautiful illustration of this in the life of Prophet Musa ﷺ, whilst he is fleeing one of history's greatest tyrants. He is forced into exile to Madyan where he is left penniless, scared, hungry and alone; a foreigner in a strange land. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, we see his chivalry as he helps two young women to water their animals. He then withdraws into the shade and turns to the One Free of all need and begs: "My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me" (28:24).

Breaking down in **utter desperation** and **begging** Allah ﷺ is how we should make du'a' on a daily basis, as though our lives depended on it and we could not survive

without it. We are weak and in need of Allah ﷺ for everything. We cannot do without Him for the blink of an eye.

Go to Allah ﷺ as a humble beggar, lengthen your du‘ā’ and have firm conviction that Allah will accept it. Persist and beg Allah in your du‘ā’. Persistence and repeated begging indicates your desperate need of Allah, your servitude for Him, and your firm belief that only He can help you and fulfil your needs.

Keep asking and do not tire of repeating the same du‘ā’. Do not lose hope in your du‘ā’ being accepted. Allah may be delaying the fulfilment of your request, as He loves to hear your voice and your sincere pleas. He may delay the fulfilment of your du‘ās for reasons unknown to you at this moment, but which contain much good for you in the future.

Ask Allah ﷺ for everything. Do not limit your supplications to just small matters in difficult times. Nothing is too big for the One being asked and nothing is too small for the one asking Him. If we beg Him whole-heartedly and sincerely, we will witness the gifts from Allah al-Wahhāb (The Ever Giving) shower into our lives.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When one of you asks for something from Allah, then let him be plentiful (in what he asks for), for indeed he is asking his Lord” (Ibn Hibbān).

In the Steps of the Prophets

The secret of worship lies in the du‘ās of the Prophets. Each du‘ā’ is an embodiment of their courtesy (adab), shyness and humility. Each du‘ā’ is a testimony to their awareness of and deep intimacy with their Lord. Rather than rushing to make their requests, they praised Allah, glorified Him, and asked through His Most Perfect Names.

It is this aspect of du‘ā’ which we often skip out and neglect. Praising Allah and intimately conversing with Him (munājāt) is a powerful way to taste the sweetness of worship, especially in the night prayer, in sajdah.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The best servants of Allah on the Day of Judgement will be those who frequently praise Him” (Tirmidhi).

How Can We Praise Allah?

- ① Praise Him as **He has praised Himself**. This is the best way to praise Allah. This can be learnt by reciting the Qur'ān, reflecting upon it and forming a strong bond with it, since it is replete with Allah praising Himself.
- ② Praise Him as **our beloved Messenger ﷺ** praised Him. Of Allah's creation, none surpassed him in knowing Him and appreciating Him as He ought to be.
- ③ Praise Him with words used by the **Companions ﷺ** and the **pious predecessors**.
- ④ Praise Him with your own words emanating from your heart, so long as it does not contradict sound beliefs.
- ⑤ One of the best ways of praising Allah and asking Him is **through His Beautiful Names**.

We ask Allah with His Greatest Names – through which when He is called upon, He responds, and when asked, He gives – to accept our du'ās.

“I do not worry about my du'ā’ being answered. Rather, I worry about making du'ā’ because I know that if I am inspired by Allah to make du'ā’, the answer will follow.” -‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ





Ramadan and Dhikr

Allah ﷺ says in the Holy Qur'an,

أَلَا يَذَّكِّرُ اللَّهُ تَعَظِّمُ الْقُلُوبُ

“...Truly it is in the remembrance (dhikr) of Allah that hearts find peace” (13:28).

Dhikr (the remembrance of Allah) is one of the best deeds of a believer. It **brings life to the heart**, filling it with peace and tranquillity. It is the path to knowing Allah, loving Him and being loved by Him. It also **protects us from the punishment of Allah**. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “There is nothing better a person can do to save himself from Allah's punishment than to remember Him” (Bayhaqī).

Dhikr purifies and polishes the heart. It softens it and makes it humble. Dhikr is a powerful tool to reduce stress and anxiety. It **protects us from illnesses, Shaytān, evil eye and magic.** Dhikr increases our awe and fear of Allah. It removes unhealthy fears and gives us courage to live in the way which pleases Him. It helps us live a life of piety and satisfaction. Dhikr is the perfect antidote to loneliness. In a ḥadīth qudsī, Allah says, “**I am with My servant when he remembers Me**” (Ibn Mājah).

Dhikr is not just limited to human beings. Rather, the entire universe praises and glorifies Allah. Allah ﷺ says, “The seven heavens, the earth, and all those in them glorify Him. There is not a single thing that does not glorify His praises—but you cannot comprehend their glorification. He is indeed Most Forbearing, All-Forgiving” (17:44).

Dhikr wipes away our sins and is the path to unparalleled reward. It cultivates the trees of Paradise, and leads to Allah boasting about us to the Angels. Dhikr gathers around the Throne of Allah, buzzing like bees, mentioning to Allah the person who uttered them. If we want to be successful in this world and the hereafter, we must become people of dhikr. Dhikr will be a *nūr* (light) in the grave, and on the Day of Judgement. This *nūr* will keep us steady on the *ṣirāt* (a bridge which must be passed on the Day of Judgement) that will guide us to Paradise, *inshāAllah*.

“By Allah, the world is only sweet with His remembrance; the Next Life is only sweet with His forgiveness; and Paradise is only sweet with seeing His Noble Face.” – Dhū al-Nūn ﷺ

The Best of Those Who Fast

A man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “Which warriors are the best?” He ﷺ replied, “Those who remember Allah the most.” The man asked, “Which of those who fast are the best?” He ﷺ replied, “Those who remember Allah the most.” Then the man mentioned ṣalāh, zakāh and ḥajj, and each time the Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, “Those who remember Allah the most.” Abū Bakr ؓ said to ‘Umar ؓ, “Those who remember (Allah) have taken all the good,” at which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ remarked, “Yes, indeed!” (Ahmad).

The Prophet ﷺ identified the best of those who fast as those who ‘remember Allah the most’. This is because dhikr is the greater purpose of all good deeds. Allah told Mūsā ؑ, “...Establish ṣalāh for My remembrance” (20:14). Therefore, we should try to constantly engage in dhikr whilst we are fasting.

The Prophet ﷺ would remember Allah ﷺ throughout the entire day. This is reflected in the various adhkār and du‘ās which have been authentically narrated from him.

In Ramaḍān, we should fill our days with both of the following types of dhikr:

① General Dhikr: This is when we remember Allah at any time, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to do. These words can be uttered at any time and in unlimited quantities. This type of dhikr includes the recitation of the Qur’ān, tahlīl, tasbīh, taḥmīd, takbīr, ḥawqalah and the Names of Allah. We should constantly remember Allah in this manner throughout the day.

② Specific Dhikr: These are the supplications (du‘ās) and remembrances (adhkār) which are to be said in specific places & times, in specified quantities, and in their specific wordings. These include the adhkār of the morning and evening, before sleep, after ṣalāh, and the adhkār of other actions (e.g. eating, wearing clothes, entering & leaving the house).

We should allocate time in our daily timetable for the above adhkār, especially the morning and evening adhkār. These two times, along with the last third of the night are crucial times for the servant in his journey to Allah. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Journey to Allah in the morning, the evening and a part of the night...” (Bukhārī). We should aim to make this a habit which spills over to the rest of the months of the year.

“By Allah, if you could hear the sound of the pens of the angels writing your name amongst those who remember Allah, you would die out of joy.” - Ibn al-Qayyim ﴿

The Importance of the Sunnah Adhkar

Reading the Sunnah adhkār prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ at the prescribed times in the day is an easy deed, which does not take much time but can transform our lives. **By uttering a few yet powerful statements, we can amass unimaginable rewards.** We should strive to memorise and understand the meaning of these adhkār. Along with this, we should read their specific virtues to motivate us, and ask Allah ﷺ to grant us these huge rewards.

The **precision of wording** and the **depth of meaning** in the sunnah adhkār is unparalleled. The Prophet ﷺ reached the **pinnacle of perfection in his servitude of Allah**. His knowledge, love, humility and reverence of his Creator was unparalleled. His supplications and remembrances are a reflection of this, and hence comprise the most perfect formulae for du'a' and dhikr.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “The people of Paradise will not regret anything, except for those moments in which they did not remember Allah” (Tabarānī).

Tafakkur: The Secret of Dhikr

All of the aforementioned benefits and virtues of dhikr are not attainable merely by repeating the words on the tongue. Rather, we have to remember Allah with our tongues and hearts. The secret of dhikr is to glorify Allah by **reflecting on His Perfect Names, Attributes and Actions and pondering over His blessings and His creation.**

To do dhikr consciously, we should reflect on ourselves, and the signs of Allah around us. Reflecting on the beauty, harmony and the vastness of the earth, solar system and the heavens will help us appreciate Allah's greatness. Going outside in nature and doing dhikr is a powerful means of doing conscious dhikr. [Tip: Perform your morning and evening adhkār outside, especially on days when the skies are clear and you can appreciate the beauty of Allah's creation.]

Sometimes because we repeat certain phrases of dhikr all the time, we may say it mindlessly. Think of how many times a day we repeat ”لَلَّهُ أَكْبَرُ” (Allah is Greater...!).

How often do we say it with the presence of the heart? Let us always try to think of how great Allah is, and magnify Him with our tongues and our hearts simultaneously.

Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ explains, “The heedless one says ﴿سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ﴾ out of habit. As for the conscious one, he is constantly thinking about the wonders of creation, or the awesome nature of the Creator, and this thinking drives him to say ﴿سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ﴾. Thus, this tasbīh is the fruit of these thoughts, and this is the tasbīh of the conscious...”

Likewise, they think about the ugliness of past sins, and this leads them to ponder, to have anxiety and to have regret. The fruit of this thought is that they say ﴿أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ﴾. This is the true tasbīh and istighfār. As for the heedless, they merely utter these out of habit. And what a difference there is between the two types...”

“The best and most beneficial dhikr is when one remembers Allah with the tongue and the heart, it is from the sunnah adhkār, and one is conscious of its meaning and its purpose.” – Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

How to Do Dhikr

When doing dhikr, keep in mind the following five etiquettes:

- ① Always keep in mind that Allah is with you. In a ḥadīth qudsī, Allah says, “I am with My servant whenever he remembers Me and moves his lips because of Me” (Ibn Mājah).
- ② Reflect on the meaning of the dhikr.
- ③ Reflect on the reward of doing dhikr in general, and the specific reward for specific adhkār.
- ④ Remember the favours of Allah upon you. For your dhikr to be conscious, your heart has to overflow with gratitude and love for The One who is the Source of all blessings.
- ⑤ Try to be in a calm and quiet place, away from all distractions.

Imām al-Nawawī ﷺ writes, “Anyone making dhikr should be in the most perfect state. If he is sitting somewhere, he should face the qiblah with humility and serenity, bowing his head. If one remembers Allah in any other state, it is still permissible, without any disapproval; but if there is no excuse for doing so, one would be missing out on something most excellent.”

We should always remember Allah, and we should always thank Him for allowing us to remember Him. Ibn al-Kātib ﷺ said, “Allah grants the servant the sweetness of His

remembrance. If the servant finds joy in it, and thanks Him for it, Allah draws him near to Himself. However, if he falls short in thanking Him, He makes him remember Him with his tongue; but he removes its sweetness from him.”

Mu‘ādh b. Jabal ﷺ said, “In my last conversation with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I asked him, ‘Which deed is the best and most beloved to Allah?’ He ﷺ replied, ‘That you die whilst your tongue is moist with the remembrance of Allah’” (Ibn Ḥibbān).

May Allah al-Ḥamid (The Most Praiseworthy) grant us tongues and hearts which do not cease to praise Him. May He make us of those who honour Him and revere Him with their words and actions.

To make dhikr an essential component of your life, download the ‘Dhikr & Dua’ app or order a copy of ‘Daily Adhkār’ by Life With Allah.



“

“Know that time is too valuable to waste even a moment of. How many hours does the human waste, missing out on so much reward? Days are like fertile soil, and it's as if the human is being told: plant one seed, and we will sprout from it a thousand plants. Would a smart person ever stop planting, or even take his time in doing so? What helps you take advantage of your time is: (1) Solitude and seclusion whenever possible; (2) Limiting yourself to salām or important matters when you meet others; (3) Eating less, as excessive eating causes excessive sleep, resulting in the night being wasted.”

- Ibn al-Jawzī



Ramadan: A Month of Muhasabah (Self-Evaluation)

Now that we have arrived in the middle of this sacred month, let us reflect on how the first half of this month has passed. Let us ask ourselves:

- Have I lost momentum?
- Have I controlled my tongue?
- How is the state of my heart?
- Am I meeting my Qur'an target?

Allah ﷺ says in the Noble Qur'an,

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُنْظِرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ.

“Believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul carefully consider what it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah: certainly, Allah is All-Aware of what you do” (59:18).

This ayah teaches us that if we are to be worthy of ‘imān, we have to adorn ourselves with taqwā, in private and public. Similarly, we have to hold ourselves accountable for what we do in this world, and what consequences our actions will have in the hereafter. This ayah also teaches us that we should live our lives with a focus on the hereafter. This world is a bridge to the hereafter, our real home. Everything we do in this world should be so that tomorrow, when we stand in front of Allah, He is happy with us. We are happy to meet Him, and He is happy to receive us.

“Hold yourselves to account (in the world) before you are held to account (in the hereafter). Evaluate your actions (today) before you are evaluated (tomorrow), for the Reckoning will be easier upon you tomorrow if you hold yourselves accountable today.”

- ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ

Muhasabah, an action of the heart, is to evaluate one's actions and behaviour of the nafs (inner self); and then rectifying the mistakes, and continuing the good deeds.

When we evaluate our daily, weekly, and monthly actions, we should **identify** our sins and **repent sincerely**. We should ask Allah ﷺ to forgive us, and make a **firm resolve** to stay away from that sin in the future. We should identify the root causes of the sin, and plan how we can stay away from what causes us to fall into that particular sin.

Similarly, we should identify where we are falling short in terms of fulfilling the rights of Allah ﷺ. Doing this will mean we do not become deceived with our 'ibādah. Instead, we will put our hope and trust in Allah, and not on our own paltry actions. This should be followed by asking Allah to help us worship Him with excellence.

Whilst we are reflecting on our shortcomings, we should **contrast** this with the immense blessings of Allah ﷺ upon us. This should fill our hearts with *hayā* (shyness). How much He blesses us, and how little we thank Him! How much He does for us, and yet we disobey Him. **How often we disregard His commands, yet He does not deprive us!**

If we fail to hold ourselves accountable and do not live a life of *taqwā*, we will become like the people who Allah ﷺ describes as:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَسْأَلُوهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَسِيقُونَ

“And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. It is they who are defiantly disobedient” (59:19).

If we are heedless of Allah, and we fail to remember Him and uphold His rights, Allah will cause us to forget that which is actually beneficial for our souls. In effect, it is we who lose out, when we move far away from our Creator, and surrender to the whims and desires of our souls.

The Prophet ﷺ would seek the protection of Allah from ‘the evils’ of the nafs. If our nafs is left to its own devices; and we allow it to lead us, instead of leading it, it will lead us to sin and evil.

How to Treat Your Nafs

It has been said that the nafs is like a treacherous business partner. If you do not hold him accountable, he will run away with your money. Similarly, if we do not hold our nafs accountable, it will run away with our success and land us in the pit of destruction.

“A man cannot be pious (a person of *taqwā*), until he is more stringent in taking his nafs to account, than a business partner is with his partner.” - Maymūn b. Mahrān ﷺ

We often go easy on our nafs, but this is exactly what it wants! **Fasting trains us to gain mastery over it and teaches us not to give in to its every whim.** We should not let our nafs fool us by thinking, ‘This is only a minor sin’ or, ‘There is a difference of opinion anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.’

We should treat our nafs as though it is another person and remain very strict with it. When the nafs slips and errs, we should reprimand it; and when we find it leaning itself to the obedience of Allah, we should push it in that direction.

“A believer holds his nafs (inner self) to account, and he knows that tomorrow he will have to stand in front of Allah. The hypocrite, on the other hand, is ignorant of his nafs. May Allah have mercy upon a slave who tended to his nafs, before the angel of death swoops down to collect it.” – Fuḍāyl b. ‘Iyād ﷺ

‘Āmir b. ‘Abd Qays ﷺ said, “I saw a number of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and I accompanied them. They informed us that those who were the most stringent in taking their inner selves to account in the world, will be the ones with the purest īmān on the Day of Judgement.”

Muḥāsabah is not just for ordinary Muslims. It is actually more important for those involved in seeking and spreading knowledge, and calling others to Allah. Theoretical knowledge alone will not protect the heart and nafs. Actively working on one’s nafs is essential to avoid envy, pride, hatred, and backbiting.

We should allocate time every single day and evaluate our actions on a daily basis. At night before we go to sleep, we should ask Allah to forgive us for our day’s shortcomings and sins. We should free our hearts from hatred and malice, and forgive all those who may have wronged us. We should sincerely repent, as we do not know if we will wake up the next day.

The Order of Accountability

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains that we can evaluate ourselves in the following way:

① **Obligatory (fard) deeds.** Firstly, we should reflect on whether we fulfilled those deeds which are obligatory upon us, and then expiate for them. E.g if ḥaḍāt was missed, then immediately perform qadā or if it was rushed and deficient then make amends by praying additional voluntary (nafl) prayers.

② **Forbidden acts.** Then, we should reflect on our sins. We should sincerely repent by regretting what we did and resolve to not repeat such a sin. Where possible, we should also make amends e.g. if we insulted someone, then we should apologise to them and make du‘ā’ for them.

③ **Heedlessness/moments of distraction.** The next step is to evaluate moments where we are not doing ḥarām, but are indulging in activities which are not conducive to our purpose in life (i.e. worshipping Allah). In an era of distraction, we are bombarded with various forms of entertainment and notifications leading us to wasting precious time. We should make amends for this by increasing our remembrance of Allah (dhikr, ṣalāh, Qur’ān etc.).

④ **Intentions.** This is vital, as we may perform an amazing deed, but ruin it due to *riya'* (showing off) and not doing it for the sake of Allah. Or we may have done something ordinary in the day, but this could become a great act of worship if we intended to do it for the sake of Allah. For example, we may have a mind-numbing job, but we could **intend** every day before we leave the house that we are doing it to earn a ḥalāl living, provide for our families, give charity through it etc. Or we may feel that cooking for our families is a chore, but this could become an act of worship if we **intend** with it to feed nutritious ḥalāl food to our loved ones, so they can become strong believers and serve the dīn of Allah.

May Allah al-Bātīn (The Intimate) make us mindful of our outer and inner deeds, and allow us to prepare for meeting Him.

Self-Reflection Questions



Did I do it sincerely for the sake of Allah alone?



What were my deficiencies in the act of worship I did (e.g. Did I miss out on *khushū'* in ṣalāh? Did I ruin my fast by backbiting?)



Did I perform a good deed which was of lesser importance, and justified it to myself by thinking that I was ‘still doing something good’?



Did I use my intention to transform an ordinary deed into an act of worship?



How much of my ‘screen time’ is spent on what spiritually and mentally nourishes me?

“

“Believers! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, overseen by formidable and severe angels, who never disobey whatever Allah orders, and do whatever they are ordered to do” (66:6).



16

Ramadan & Our Families

The first Ramaḍān after you get married is different. You have additional responsibilities and your routine has changed. Just as you'd thought you had made enough adjustments in your life, Ramaḍān comes along.

Ramaḍān can sometimes challenge a relationship, especially if it involves rituals which are heavily cultural and, perhaps even, contrary to the spirit of the month (e.g elaborate iftārs and fancy iftār parties). Don't make food the focus of your Ramaḍān. **Make it about Allah, and you will witness immense blessings in your home and marriage.**

The long days and hunger can affect your mood and make you feel 'hangry'. This may test your patience and make you snap at your spouse. Ramaḍān is the month of cultivating *şabr* (patience). Be gentle and kind. Walk away when things get tense and control your tongue.

They Are a Garment for You

Within the āyāt about fasting, Allah ﷺ says,

"It has been made permissible for you to be intimate with your wives during the nights preceding the fast. They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them"
(2:187).

Spouses are described in this āyah as a 'garment', a source of comfort and peace. Just as our clothes protect us from harm, we should **protect** each other from harm and ḥarām. Just as we **adorn** oneself with clothes, spouses adorn each other. Just as our clothes are attached to our bodies, likewise in marriage, there is a strong **attachment and closeness** to each other; a unique physical, emotional and spiritual bond which connects both spouses.

Our clothes **cover** us. Similarly, we should cover each other's faults and protect each other's secrets and dignity. Clothes give us **comfort**, and thus spouses should be a source of mutual comfort.

Sometimes our clothes may become tight for us and slightly uncomfortable. Or they may tear and need patching. Similarly, our marriages may go through rough patches. Instead of despairing, we should turn towards Allah and look inwardly as to how we could improve our conduct.

Seek the blessings of Ramaḍān and use them to strengthen your connection to each other by connecting to Allah. **Support each other and encourage each other to increase in ‘ibādah.** Serve each other, share the knowledge that you have attained, and discuss your reflections with each other. Listen to a lecture or read a book together.

Make **du‘ā’** for your marriage and family. As the institution of marriage is under increasing threat, ask Allah ﷺ to protect, strengthen and bless your marriage. Ask Him to make your relationship the means of attaining His pleasure.

Ramadan as Parents

Once you have children, you will probably look back wistfully at Ramaḍān pre-children. Ramaḍān post-children will be different. However, it is important to remember that ‘ibādah is a comprehensive concept, and is not limited to reciting Qur’ān or performing tarāwīh. Looking after your children is indeed a great act of ‘ibādah. **You are raising the next generation of the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, and this is no small feat.**

Ramaḍān in the state of nifās, without fasting, can be overwhelming, and can sometimes leave mums with a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Remember to try your best, and Allah will reward you for your intentions.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “If a servant falls ill or travels, the likes of what he used to do when he was a resident (i.e. not travelling) and healthy will be recorded for him” (Bukhārī).

Even with fasting, Ramaḍān with young children can be challenging. Asking for help from other family members, and reciprocating in return can be helpful. For example, you may find a family member who is menstruating, willing to take care of your young children, whilst you perform tarāwīh in peace!

It is vital to be considerate and give your spouse their own ‘alone time with Allah’ whilst you take care of your children. Your spouse connecting with Allah will result in him/her being a better spouse and parent to your children.

Nurturing Our Children

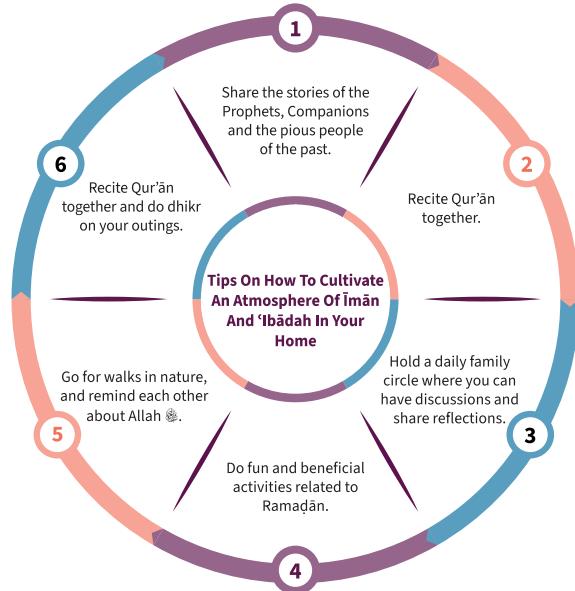
As parents, we should be concerned about instilling moral and spiritual values in our children, and **nurturing them to love Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.** Some parents do not awaken their mature children for Fajr, thinking it will disrupt their sleep. Similarly, some will happily allow their mature children to not fast, under the pretext of ‘too much school work’ or ‘exams’.

On the contrary, we should nurture our children to love and perform ṣalāh and fast even before they reach puberty. Encourage them to fast when they are small, starting with one or two fasts, and build on this each year. Reward them as appropriate and make fasting exciting for them. On the day they manage to complete the fast, cook their favourite meal. When they do not manage to complete it, be gentle with them, and use it as an opportunity to teach them about tawbah (repentance) and not giving up.

Have age-appropriate discussions with them, and explain to them why this month is so special. **Let them see your home transformed in this month to a home of worship and Qur’ān, so that this memory will always stay with them as they grow into adults.**

Al-Rubayyi' b. Mu'awwidh ﷺ said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent a messenger to the settlements of the Anṣār surrounding Madinah, in the morning of ‘Āshūrā’ to announce, ‘Whoever is observing the fast should complete it, and whoever has eaten something should not eat the rest of the day.’ After that, we used to fast on that day regularly and if Allah willed, we would also make our young children fast; and we would go to the Masjid. We used to make toys out of wool for them: if any one of them cried for food, we would give them the toy until it was time to open the fast” (Bukhārī).

This ḥadīth indicates that the Companions ﷺ used creative methods to encourage their young children to fast, even though they were not obligated to fast.



Remember to renew your intention whilst spending time with your family, and you will be rewarded for this great act of ‘ibādah (worship).

The Best House on the Block: Can the Angels Easily Identify Your House?

Make your house shine through reciting the Qur'ān. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The house in which the Qur'ān is recited appears to the inhabitants of heaven as the stars appear to the inhabitants of the earth" (Bayhaqī).

A Family of the Night Prayer: A Blessed Family

The Prophet ﷺ would awaken his wives in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān to perform the night prayer. Similarly, throughout the year, he would finish praying tahajjud and wake 'Aishah ﷺ up to pray tahajjud. **His concern was not restricted to his spouses.** Rather, he was actively involved in the spiritual nourishment of his adult daughter and son-in-law. One night, he ﷺ knocked on the door of Fātimah and 'Alī ﷺ and said, "Will you not get up (and pray)?" (Bukhārī).

Likewise, we should be eager for our spouses and children to not miss out on any good. By becoming a family of the night prayer, we will inshāAllah witness the **blessings and tranquillity in our marriages, families and homes.**

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "May Allah have mercy upon a man who gets up at night, prays, and wakes his wife up. If she refuses, he sprinkles water on her face. And may Allah have mercy upon a woman who gets up at night, prays, and wakes her husband up. If he refuses, she sprinkles water on his face" (Ahmad).

"Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ used to pray for a large portion of the night, and when it would be the middle of the night, he would awaken his family for ṣalāh, saying to them, "Ṣalāh, ṣalāh!" and he would recite the verse, "**Instruct your family to perform ṣalāh, and adhere to it yourself**" (20:132).

Exhorting her husband to stand up for tahajjud, the wife of Abū Muḥammad Ḥabīb ﷺ used to say to him at night, "The night has gone. Ahead of us lies a long journey, and the provisions are little. The caravans of the righteous have sped ahead of us, whilst we have remained behind."

May Allah al-Ra'ūf (The Most Compassionate) fill our homes with love, compassion and imān; and may He fill our hearts with hope, awe and love for Him.



Ramadan: A Month of Victory

“And victory comes only from Allah, the Almighty, the All-Wise” (3:126).

Throughout Islam’s history, Ramadān has been the month of victory. A month wherein the religion’s destined heroes were granted victory by Allah al-Naṣir (The Ultimate Helper). Men who were true to Allah, served His dīn and strived to implement His commands. They honoured their covenant and so Allah aided them, vanquished their enemies and granted Islam victory.

These are the heroes of our history: men who feared Allah, loved Allah and lived for Him. In the day, they fasted and fought valiantly; and at night, they worshipped Him and cried to Him. They were the warriors of the day, monks of the night.

Every year, the **17th of Ramadān** reminds us of a turning point in history. After many years of persecution, torture, sanctions and exile, the **Battle of Badr** took place under the blessed leadership of our beloved Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. It ended with a decisive victory for Islam.

Six years later, in Ramadān 8 AH, the door of Islam widened with the Conquest of Makkah. And in Ramadān 15 AH, Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqāṣ رضي الله عنه led the Muslims to victory in the Battle of Qādisiyyah, breaking the back of the indomitable Persian Empire, which has not seen pre-eminence since.

Even after the passing of the Companions رضي الله عنه, Ramadān continued to bring victories for the faithful. In 92 AH, the young and ambitious Ṭāriq b. Ziyād conquered the Iberian Peninsula (Andalus), establishing unbroken Muslim rule over it for nearly 800 years.

Several centuries later, in 582 AH, Ramadān proved the auspicious month in which the Battle of Hittīn occurred, paving the way for the liberation of al-Quds (Jerusalem) under the leadership of Ṣalāhuddīn al-Ayyūbī. This was followed by a crushing defeat of the Mongols in 658 AH under the courageous leadership of Sayfuddīn Quṭuz in the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt.

Then and Now

A lot has changed since those days of glory. Today, the Ummah has become accustomed to living under the jackboot of Islam's enemies who perpetrate relentless tyranny, unchecked crimes and rampant corruption upon it.

And yet still, despite all this physical subjugation, it is another enemy which has today paralysed us. One which has disorientated our minds, killed our spirits, and left us enamoured with our enemies.

It is our mental and cultural defeat. The disbelievers may not occupy our lands anymore, but they occupy our minds and hearts — and this remains our greatest setback.

Enticing 'progressive' ideas, debased sensual entertainment and far-reaching media have blurred our faculties. With time, this has created an inferiority complex towards our dīn and towards our native languages, cultures, and dress. A planned and systemic dissemination of their ideas has eroded our core identity and crushed centuries-long values of morality, family and community.

We foolishly imitate the disbelievers' ways, no matter how absurd, blindly accepting their evil materialism, hedonism and godlessness. Instead of deriving strength and guidance from our revelation and heritage, we seek it from morally degenerate 'influencers': well-manicured human devils who steal the minds and innocence of our youth.

Resisting the occupation of one's land is easier when compared to dajjalic enslavement of our minds. This enslavement cannot be seen, and for many, not even believed. How do you convince the zoo animal, who is well-fed and looked after, that it is still imprisoned?

Only one religion clears the fog.

Islam Offers Another Way

As believers, it is our duty to live for Allah, and establish His dīn on His earth. Rather than blindly following what popular culture feeds us, we should reflect on the damage that materialism, hedonism and liberalism have wreaked on the psychological, social, economic and spiritual states of humanity. We should ask ourselves what values and norms we are imbibing as we zombie scroll through our social media feeds and TV channels.

We should feel and inspire in ourselves and in our youth a sense of honour ('izzah) for the incredible gift of Islam. We should feel privileged at being given īmān, and scared that it could be taken away from us at any time. We should strive hard to serve the dīn of Allah, and remain steadfast on whatever hurdles come in our way.

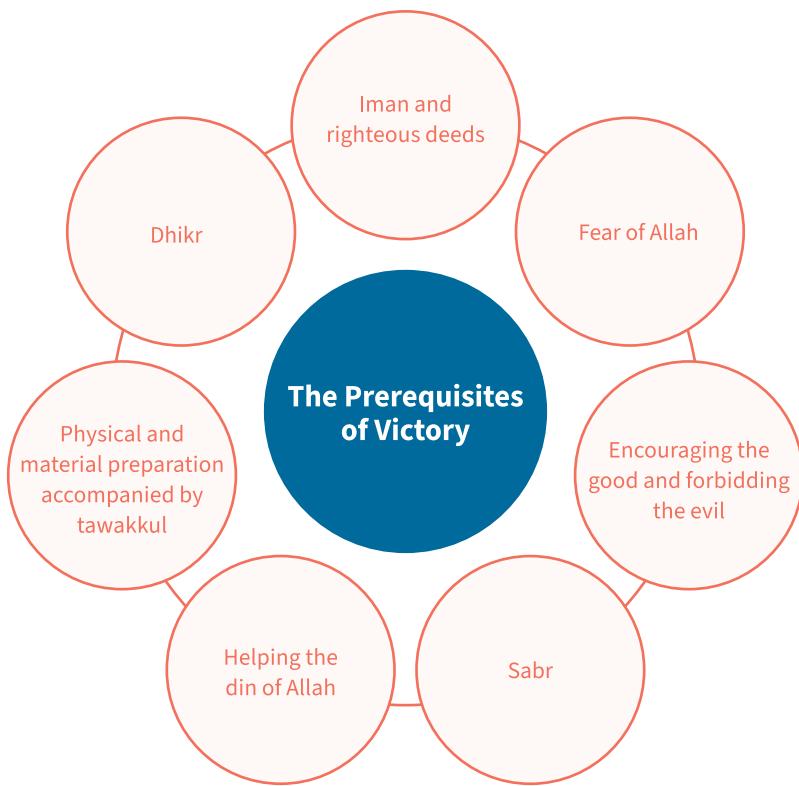
“We were indeed the most disgraced of all people. Allah honoured and elevated us through Islam. If we seek honour from anything besides that with which Allah honoured us, Allah will disgrace us.”

-‘Umar b. al-Khattāb ﷺ

Victory is only from Allah. If He decrees for it to be given and the whole world decides otherwise, we will receive it. If He decrees for it not to be given to us and the whole world decides otherwise, we will not receive it. And victory will come with īmān: a firm and sincere belief in Allah. It will come when the Ummah decides to collectively return back to Allah, strive hard to obey Him, and become beacons of justice, mercy and integrity.

The Prerequisites of Victory

The following are some prerequisites of victory which Allah has mentioned in the Qur’ān:



The Victory-Blockers

There are certain actions which prevent the help of Allah from arriving. These include:

Sins

Allah ﷺ says, “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...” (13:11). Just as collective obedience leads to victory, collective disobedience leads to Allah removing the peace and prosperity of a nation.

While sins are dangerous, the public display of them is lethal. We should be very careful of making our sins public, as Allah will forgive everyone from the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ except for those who made their sins public.

Despair

It is easy to look around the Ummah and feel depressed and hopeless. However, Allah reminds us, “Do not lose heart, and do not grieve, for you will have the upper hand, if you are (true) believers” (3:139).

We are an Ummah of hope. Despite all the odds, we work to bring peace, justice and goodness to the world. We don't give up. If the Prophet ﷺ and his companions had this defeatist mentality in the Battle of Badr, today we would not have Islam and *lā ilāha illā-Allāh*.

We may see victory in our lifetime or we may not. However, we should never give up. Instead, we should try our utmost to pave the way for future generations. We must plant trees knowing that we'll never sit under their shade.

Diseases of the Heart

Many of our predicaments – including the lack of unity – are caused by the diseases of our hearts, including envy, pride, ostentation, cowardice, stinginess, greed, and selfishness. Not only do these form a barrier between us and Allah, but they also prevent us from being productive members of the Ummah.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The goodness of the earlier generations of this Ummah is due to their zuhd and yaqīn; and the latter generation of this Ummah will be ruined because of shuhh (stinginess and greed) and false hopes” (Bayhaqī).

Love of the World and Disliking Death

One of the key blockers of victory and the root cause of our humiliation is the love of the world. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The nations will soon summon one another to attack you just as diners invite one another to share their dish.” Someone asked, “Will it be due to our small number at the time?” He ﷺ replied, “No, there will be many of you at the time, but you will be like the froth and scum of a flood. Allah will remove from your enemies' hearts their fear of you, and He will cast *wahn* into your hearts.”

Someone asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what is *wahn*?” He ﷺ replied, “**Love of the world and a dislike of death**” (Abū Dāwūd).

Infighting

A key victory-blocker is infighting and disunity. Allah ﷺ says, “**Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral courage.** And persevere, for surely Allah is with those who persevere” (8:46).

Ramadān is a **symbol of unity**. Throughout the year, ṣalāh in congregation reminds us of the cohesiveness, brotherhood and unity we are supposed to enjoy as an Ummah. In Ramadān, this is further amplified as we gather together in the masjid for tarāwīh and often partake in iftār and suhūr with our fellow believers.

In Ramadān, we collectively increase our worship of Allah and feel a sense of unity as we all fast in this month. This feeling of love, brotherhood and unity should transcend into the rest of our lives and months of the year.

For unity to occur on a macro-level, we need to focus on what we can individually do on a micro-scale. We all have a circle of influence that we can focus on, starting off with ourselves. The first step is to strive to end disagreements and fighting within one’s immediate family. Then we should focus on reducing friction in our social circles, neighbours, institutions and so on.

Instead of focusing on fitnah, let us increase our īmān in Allah, increase in our ‘ibādah, and let us serve His creation. Let us occupy ourselves with what will bring Allah’s help and victory.

May Allah al-‘Azīz (The Exalted in Might) grant honour and victory to the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ. May Allah al-Mawlā (The Protective Ally) protect us from all harm and make us reliant on Him Alone.

“

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of all people; and he was the most generous during the month of Ramadān when Jibrīl ﷺ would meet him. Jibrīl would meet him every night in Ramadān to study the Qur’ān with him ﷺ. When Jibrīl would meet him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be more generous than strong winds (which cause rain and prosperity)”

(‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās ﷺ, Bukhārī).



Ramadan: Charity & Service

Fasting in Ramaḍān reminds us of our hungry and needy brothers and sisters. It increases our empathy for them, removes arrogance towards them and makes us more eager to give ṣadaqah (charity) to them. It also reminds us to be grateful for all the food and drink Allah al-Razzāq (The Supreme Provider) sustains us with.

On the whole, fasting teaches us to be less self-centred. By experiencing hunger, we learn how to curtail our greed, and this should help us to develop the noble quality of īthār: giving preference to others over oneself.

The Excellence of Sadaqah

Ṣadaqah is a sign of the truthfulness of our imān, as we are preferring Allah's recommendation over our natural urge to hoard wealth. Ṣadaqah extinguishes the anger of Allah, wipes away sins, and prevents evil endings. It wards off calamities, and is a means to cure illnesses. It protects from the punishment of the grave and the Hellfire. On the Day of Judgement, the believer will bask in the shade of his ṣadaqah, and he will be invited to enter Paradise from the Gate of Ṣadaqah.

The angels ask Allah to bless and compensate the person who spends for His sake. What we give as ṣadaqah will always outlive us. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever gives in charity something equivalent (even) to a date from his honestly earned pure income – for only the pure ascends to Allah – then Allah accepts it with His Right Hand, and then nurtures it for the person as one of you nurtures his baby horse, until it becomes like a mountain” (Bukhārī).

Allah ﷺ says,

إِنْ تُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قُرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَعِّفُ لَكُمْ وَيَعْفُرُ لَكُمْ، وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

“If you lend to Allah a good loan, He will multiply it for you and forgive you. For Allah is Most Appreciative, Most Forbearing” (64:17).

How Generous and Great is Allah! It is He who creates us, and then gives us all our provisions. He then asks us to give Him that which is surplus to our needs as a loan. He then repays this loan in multitudes. He appreciates every little we give, and forbears when we are not as grateful to Him as we should be.

Be Generous Like the Prophet ﷺ in Ramadan

‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās ﷺ said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of all people; and he was the **most generous during the month of Ramaḍān when Jibril** ﷺ **would meet him.** Jibril would meet him every night in Ramaḍān to study the Qur’ān with him ﷺ. When Jibril would meet him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be more generous than strong winds (which cause rain and prosperity)” (Bukhārī).

Imām al-Nawawī ﷺ mentions that this ḥadīth teaches us about the immense generosity of the Prophet ﷺ during this blessed month; to be as generous as possible in this month; and that we should increase in our generosity when meeting the pious servants of Allah, and after parting from them.

Ibn Rajab ﷺ wrote, “His generosity ﷺ multiplied in the month of Ramaḍān more than any other month, just as the generosity of his Lord is multiplied in (this month).” As Allah is more Generous to us in Ramaḍān, **we should be more generous to His slaves in order to receive a higher share of His generosity.**

Providing Iftar

One of the most virtuous forms of charity in Ramaḍān is to provide iftār to the fasting person. Our beloved ﷺ said, “Whoever provides iftār for a fasting person, he will have the same reward as him, without anything being diminished from the reward of the fasting person” (Tirmidhī).

Our righteous predecessors were extremely keen on providing iftār to the poor. ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar ﷺ used to open his fast only with the poor; and if his family kept them away from him, he would not open his fast that night. If a beggar came to him whilst he was eating, he would get up and give him his own share of the food. He would return to find that his family had eaten what was left; so, he would fast for another day, without having eaten anything.

While we may not be able to reach these levels of selflessness, we should endeavour to give as much as we can. We can provide iftār to not just our families and friends, but to **poor Muslims in our localities.** We can drop off staples (rice, flour etc) at the start of the month/before the month to help them get through Ramaḍān.

One of the beautiful aspects of our dīn is that the benefits of the devotional acts are not limited to the individual. Though fasting may seem like an intense personal act of devotion to Allah (which it is), its wider benefit is to create a healthy cohesive society. **It leads to a united Ummah,** which feels the pangs of its hungry brothers, and cries at the pain of its distressed sisters.

Ṣadaqah in Islam is an expiation for many things such as breaking one's oath or violating the rules of iḥrām. If anyone is unable to fast, then they are required to pay fidyah. Likewise, charity in Ramaḍān compensates for the deficiencies in our fasts.

“If the one giving charity knew that his charity falls in Allah’s hand before it falls in the poor person’s hand, the joy of the giver would be greater than the joy of the recipient.” – Ibn al-Qayyim 

The Etiquettes of Sadaqah

- 1 Give sincerely, for the sake of Allah alone.
- 2 Give wholeheartedly and willingly.
- 3 Give from the wealth that is most dear to your heart.
- 4 Give secretly (unless there is a greater benefit in giving it publicly).
- 5 Give to your poor family members first.
- 6 Give from wealth that is pure.
- 7 Give graciously. Don't expect thanks or make them feel ashamed about their poverty.
- 8 Don't become arrogant about what you have given.
- 9 Give when you fear poverty, and when you have plenty.
- 10 Ask Allah to accept your giving, and fear that it may not be accepted.

Throughout our life, we should plan for the hereafter, and prepare as much şadaqāh jāriyah (continuous charity) as we can, so that we reap its benefits long after we have left the world. When giving charity, we should also give on behalf of our families, friends, teachers and those who we are indebted to, along with those whom we have wronged. This will atone for our sins.

“Know that your need for the reward of the şadaqah is greater than the need of the one you are giving şadaqah to.” – Ibn al-Qayyim 

The Benefits of Sadaqah

There are many benefits of şadaqāh. These include:

- Şadaqāh **purifies our wealth** and increases the barakah in it.
- Şadaqāh purifies our hearts. As humans, we are predisposed to loving wealth. Giving şadaqāh purifies the soul from stinginess, greed and the love of this world.
- Şadaqāh is a **test of the truthfulness of our īmān**. By giving away money (something we love) we are being tested: who do we love more? Allah or our money?
- Şadaqāh is a means to **thank Allah** for the blessings He has given us.
- Şadaqāh gives the poor **dignity** and honours them, so they don't have to beg.
- Şadaqāh removes the **envy, anger and hatred** the poor may have towards the rich.
- Şadaqāh **reduces** hoarding, unemployment, poverty, and the chances of a recession.
- Şadaqāh leads to a **fairer society**, and reduces crime rates.
- Thus, Şadaqāh **strengthens the Ummah** and increases the brotherhood and sisterhood within it.

Helping People & Tying Kinship

As well as being generous with our money, we should be generous with our time.

The Messenger of Allah  said, “The most beloved people to Allah are those who are the most beneficial to people. The most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim

happy, or to remove one of his troubles, or to pay off his debt, or to remove his hunger. That I walk with a brother (to fulfil) his need is more beloved to me than that I seclude myself (i'tikāf) in this masjid (i.e the Prophet's Masjid in Madīnah) for a month... Whoever walks with his brother to (fulfil his) need, until he secures it for him, Allah will make his feet firm on the *ṣirāṭ*, on the day when feet will shake" (Tabarānī).

Allāhu Akbar! Who wouldn't want to gain the reward of i'tikāf in the masjid of the Prophet ﷺ? This Ramaḍān, let us try to accrue similar rewards. Some ways in which we can serve others include:

- Visiting the sick.
- Smiling at our fellow believers and saying *salām* to them.
- Picking up litter.
- Teaching others.
- Forgiving a debtor to whom we have lent money or extending the repayment time.
- Offering your time, experience, skills and influence for the sake of Allah.

We should partake in and support causes which **champion the rights of the oppressed and deliver justice**. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and release the prisoner" (Bukhārī).

Similarly, we should be good and kind to our family. Ramaḍān is the time to cleanse our hearts, battle the pride and jealousy of our hearts, and reach out to those we have cut off ties with. It is the perfect opportunity to forgive those who have wronged us, to ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged, and to ask Allah to unite our hearts. If we seek to connect with Allah, we have to connect with our relatives. But if we cut them off, Allah will cut us off. **When the Prophet ﷺ was asked about the best form of *ṣadaqah*, he ﷺ replied, "To (give to) a relative, who conceals his enmity for you"** (Ahmad). Giving to such a person combines *ṣilat al-rahīm* (tying kinship), swallowing one's ego and angering Shayṭān. It will also reduce the person's enmity towards us, and increase the love between us.

May Allah al-Wadūd (The Most Loving) unite our hearts and our Ummah.



I'tikaf: The Sweetness of Solitude

Before receiving Prophethood, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would go away from the hustle and bustle of Makkah and isolate himself in the Cave of Hirā'. Āishah ؓ says, "Seclusion was made beloved to him, and there was nothing more beloved to him than being alone" (Tirmidhī). Freeing himself from the mundane day-to-day interaction with his people, he would go up to the mountains, and spend many days there worshipping Allah, in deep reflection. Alone and stationed high up on the mountain, he was able to have a clear perspective on his surroundings: the beautiful sky, the towering mountains, the vastness of Allah's creation — all attesting to the greatness of the One.

The long hours of solitude were essential in preparing the Prophet ﷺ for his great mission. Purifying his heart from attachment to the world, and instead attaching it to the Lord of the world, prepared him for the momentous responsibility of Prophethood.

This gift of solitude with our Creator has been bequeathed to the whole Ummah, Alhamdulillah. It is called 'i'tikāf' and refers to the practice of secluding and confining oneself to the masjid for the worship of Allah. I'tikāf has been mentioned in the Qur'ān and is a great sunnah of our beloved Prophet ﷺ. Āishah ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ used to observe i'tikāf during the last ten days of Ramadān, until his demise. Then, his wives used to observe i'tikāf after him (Bukhāri).

In the year in which he ﷺ passed away, he performed i'tikāf for twenty days. Ibn Hajar ؓ mentions that this may be because he ﷺ knew that his life was coming to an end, and he wanted to teach his Ummah to try their utmost best when they reach the finishing line, in order to meet Allah in the best state. Another reason is that he ﷺ was travelling the year before, so he made up for the missed days.

The above indicates the great importance the Prophet ﷺ placed on i'tikāf. I'tikāf is a great sunnah which we should try to revive in this blessed month. The Prophet ﷺ performed i'tikāf in search for Laylat al-Qadr. Al-Zuhri ؓ said, "I am astonished that the people have abandoned i'tikāf. The Prophet ﷺ would sometimes do certain things, and would sometimes omit them. But he did not omit i'tikāf until he ﷺ passed away."

The Essence of I'tikaf

I'tikāf is one of the most noble acts when performed with sincerity (ikhlāṣ). During i'tikāf, one distances his heart from worldly matters and hands himself over to his Lord. He is in constant service to Him and takes shelter in His fortified House.

“The example of a person doing i’tikāf is like a man who stops at the door of a great person and says, ‘I will not move until you fulfil my need.’ The person doing i’tikāf sits in the house of Allah and says, ‘I will not move until He forgives me.’” - ‘Aṭā’ 

Ibn al-Qayyim  writes, “The soundness of the heart and its ability to stay firm in its journey to Allah – is dependent on its ability to fully focus on Allah. The heart has a restlessness, which can only be removed by devoting oneself to Allah. Excessive food, drink, socialising, sleep and talking increase the restlessness of the heart. They hinder the seeker from the path in his journey to Allah, and weaken him.

Through His mercy, Allah legislated fasting for His servants to purge their desire for excessive eating and drinking, and thereby their impulse for sinning: which is the greatest impediment in their journey to Allah.

And He  legislated i’tikāf for them. The purpose and spirit of i’tikāf is for the heart to become attached to Allah, to fully focus on Him, and to spend time in solitude with Him. It is to cut off from the creation, and occupy oneself with Him so much that His remembrance and love overtake the worries and thoughts of the heart. His sole concern becomes Allah. All his thoughts revolve around how he can please Allah and draw closer to Him. He begins to find comfort in the company of Allah, instead of finding comfort in the company of His creation.

Through this, he prepares himself to find comfort with Allah in the loneliness of the grave — in which nobody will have a companion or source of solace except Him. This is the greater purpose of i’tikāf. And since this purpose can only be attained in conjunction with fasting, i’tikāf was legislated in the best season of fasting i.e. the last ten days of Ramaḍān.”

Ibn Rajab  writes, “The Prophet  would reserve a mat upon which he would seclude himself from people, not mixing with or paying attention to them. This is why Imām Aḥmad  did not recommend for the person doing i’tikāf to mix with anyone; not even to teach them knowledge or make them recite the Qur’ān. Rather, the best thing to do is to be alone and free oneself to converse privately with one’s Lord, remember Him, and ask Him.

The person doing i'tikāf restricts himself to the obedience and remembrance of Allah. He cuts himself off from every distraction, and devotes himself physically and spiritually to his Lord and what will bring him close to Him. He has no concern except Allah, and what will please Allah.

Thus, the meaning and reality of i'tikāf is to **cut off ties from the creation in order to connect to the Creator**. The stronger one's knowledge and love for Allah, the more the individual will be able to cut himself off and focus fully on Allah. One of the righteous used to always be alone in his home, remembering his Lord. It was said to him: "Do you not feel lonely?" He replied: How can I feel lonely when He ﷺ says, 'I am the Companion of the one who remembers Me?'"

During i'tikāf, one is a guest of Allah in His house. If noble people are always generous to their guests and honour them in the best way, then how will the generosity of The Most Generous be with those who humbly perform i'tikāf in His house?

We are bombarded today with diversions and distractions. I'tikāf offers us a way out, providing the perfect retreat in which to refocus on the purpose of life. I'tikāf may seem like a short period, but if performed properly, it is an intense 'ibādah bootcamp wherein one learns to control and discipline the nafs. Done properly, i'tikāf is life-transforming.

"Truly in the heart there is a certain loneliness that cannot be removed except by spending time with Allah in solitude. In the heart there is a sadness that cannot be removed except through the happiness of knowing Allah and being true to Him... In the heart there is a void that cannot be filled except through loving Allah, turning to Him constantly, always remembering Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, it would never fill this void." - Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

The Goals of I'tikaf

- ① To 'live' and 'breathe' 'ibādah. I'tikāf teaches us the essence of worshipping Allah: to attach our hearts completely to Allah, with utmost humility and servitude. The goal is to attain ihsān, which is, "That you worship Allah as though you are seeing Him; for if you cannot see Him, He truly sees you" (Muslim).
- ② Tasting the sweetness of conversing intimately with Allah. I'tikāf is the perfect time to converse intimately with Allah, to talk to Him directly, to cry to Him, and to

plead with Him. Muslim b. Yasār ﷺ said, “Seekers of pleasure find no pleasure like seclusion and intimate conversation with Allah ﷺ.” Muḥammad b. Yusuf ﷺ said, “Whoever wants his blessings to be hastened for him, he should increase in intimate conversation with Allah in seclusion.”

③ Deep thinking (tafakkur) and self-reflection (muḥāsabah). I’tikāf is the perfect time for deep reflection: reflecting on the Qur’ān, on Allah’s creation, and on the purpose of life. It is a time to reflect on one’s personal and spiritual state, and to take oneself to account. Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ writes, “How wonderful is seclusion! If the only thing to be obtained from seclusion was reflection on the provisions for the eternal journey, and safety from the evils of socialising, it would be sufficient!”

④ Detox from the world. Our attachment to the world, and our obsession with acquiring expensive clothing, cars, gadgets and fine dining has made us heedless of Allah ﷺ and of our final abode. I’tikāf is to take time out from all of this and turn back to Him, Alone. I’tikāf is the perfect time to detox from social media and our mobile phones, which has left us unable to focus on our purpose of life.

⑤ Purifying the soul. I’tikāf is the time to nurture a pure heart; to purify it from spiritual diseases and adorn it with actions. It is the perfect time to purify oneself from the five poisons of the heart: excessive eating, excessive sleeping, excessive socialising, excessive talking and gazing at the unlawful. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ said, “Find your heart in three occasions: whilst listening to the Qur’ān, in gatherings of dhikr, and in moments of solitude. If you do not find it in these three occasions, then ask Allah to bless you with a heart, for you have no heart.”

⑥ Attachment to the masjid. Acquiring the ‘sweetness’ of worshipping Allah in the masjid during Ramaḍān will make us more attached to the masjid during the rest of the year. By Allah’s permission, we will begin to come before the adhān and spend time in it after ṣalāh. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “A Muslim is not regular in attending the masājid for ṣalāh and dhikr, except that Allah welcomes him happily just as people welcome their loved ones happily upon their return from a journey” (Ibn Mājah).

⑦ Sabr and maximising the best use of time. I’tikāf cultivates ṣabr (perseverance) in carrying out good deeds, as it is not easy on the nafs to continuously engage in worship. Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ writes, “That I benefit myself by being alone is better than me benefitting others and harming myself. Persevere and remain patient with what solitude entails, for if you were to remain in solitude with your Lord, He will open for you the door of His ma’rifah (deep awareness).” I’tikāf also cultivates the second type of ṣabr: ṣabr on staying away from sins. Similarly, one learns to be patient and practice self-control, as one will not sleep on a bed or enjoy the usual creature comforts.

⑧ Sincerity. I'tikāf should lead to an increase in sincerity. Dhū al-Nūn ﷺ said, “I have not seen anything more conducive to attaining sincerity than solitude, because when one is alone, he only sees Allah. When he only sees Allah, he will only be spurred on by the awe of Allah. And whoever loves seclusion, he has certainly attached himself to the pillar of sincerity, and held on tight to a great pillar of honesty.” Yahyā b. Mu‘adh ﷺ said, “Enduring isolation is a sign of sincerity.”

⑨ Sincere repentance. Sincere repentance should be a key goal and component of i'tikāf. Masrūq ﷺ said, “A man should certainly have moments in which he is alone, remembering his sins and then seeking forgiveness for them.” Amongst the seven categories of people who will be granted shade on the Day of Judgement, one will be “a man who remembered Allah whilst he was alone and he cried” (Bukhārī). Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī ﷺ said, “Cry in moments of solitude — perhaps your Lord will look at you and have mercy on your tears, and you will become of the successful.”

⑩ Finding Laylat al-Qadr. One of the aims of i'tikāf is to find Laylat al-Qadr and derive the most benefit from it by being in a heightened spiritual state of i'tikāf.

“Private worship is the cornerstone of steadfastness.” - Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

How to Optimise Your I'tikaf

Maximise your i'tikāf by constantly renewing your intention for i'tikāf. These can include: seeking the pleasure of Allah, following the sunnah of our beloved Messenger ﷺ, increasing our love for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, seeking Laylat al-Qadr, staying in the company of the righteous and in the house of Allah, ridding our addiction to worldly pleasures, and, ultimately, fulfilling the purpose of our existence: ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude). Use i'tikāf as an opportunity to train yourself in maximising your **niyyah** (intention). Be conscious and mindful of every act that you do and have a clear intention of why you are doing that particular act, even when eating and sleeping (e.g. to gain energy for worship). Mu‘ādh b. Jabal ﷺ said, “Indeed I hope for reward for my sleep just as I hope for reward for standing in prayer.”

Utilise i'tikāf to learn how to manage your time. Be strict with yourself. It is useful to make a plan beforehand. Structure your day and night with varied acts of worship, so you don't get bored or lose focus. If possible, leave your smartphone at home, and if required to do so, take a brick phone.

Think of i'tikāf as freedom from the fetters of this world. Value it as the ultimate spiritual retreat: a time to **immerse yourself in** ṣalāh, Qur'ān, dhikr, du‘ā’ and other acts of worship. Strive to implement every sunnah. Perform the night prayer and ṣalāh

al-ḍuḥā. Perform taḥiyyat al-wudū and taḥiyyat al-masjid. Respond to the words of the adhān and make du‘ā in between the adhān and iqāmah. Sit in the first row behind the imām and wait for ṣalāh. Lengthen your salah and let it be different: no smartphone, no work, no worldly distractions. Focus your heart on Allah. Savour the sweetness of conversing with Him.

Fill your day with the remembrance of Allah. Follow the sunnah of our beloved Prophet ﷺ and recite the adhkār of morning and evening, before sleeping, after ṣalāh, and the adhkār of other daily actions such as the adhkār of the bathroom, dressing, when waking up etc. Perform dhikr with reflection. Open your heart and think deeply about Allah.

Remember to not ruin your worship by hurting your fellow believers. In i‘tikāf, you will be sharing space with others. All of you will have different personalities, backgrounds and preferred lifestyles, and this could sometimes lead to conflict. Stay humble, and focus on why you are there.

If you are unable to perform i‘tikāf for the full ten days, then try to do two days over the weekend, or even one day. Even if you can’t stay for the whole day, spend as much time as possible in the masjid focusing on worshipping Allah, and striving to attain the greater goals of i‘tikāf. For those who are unable to attend the masjid, they should do the same at home.

May Allah al-Wāḥid (The One) give us the tawfīq to perform i‘tikāf just as His beloved Prophet ﷺ did, and may we always find comfort in His company: in this temporary abode, in the grave, and ultimately in the Abode of Peace.



I‘tikāf Do’s and Don’ts

Do’s

Don’ts

Minimise talking with others.

Talk and socialise unnecessarily.

Be gentle and kind.

Backbite and gossip.

Respect the sanctity of the masjid.

Insult or hurt anyone.

Help in keeping the masjid neat and tidy.

Joke and laugh excessively as this hardens the heart.

Become comfortable with silence and the remembrance of Allah.

Raise your voice or look down on anyone.

Reduce your food, drink and sleep.

Disturb others.

Look inwardly and reflect upon your faults.

Respond if someone provokes you.

Cry over your sins and restore your relationship with Allah.

Waste your time on futile activities.

“

In it, Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is truly deprived!”

(The Prophet ﷺ, Nasā'ī).



Laylat al-Qadr & The Last 10 Nights

Dismayed by the evil and immorality around him, he finds himself drifting away from his kinsmen, wishing more and more to be alone. Ascending the mountains around his town, he retreats to a small cave. From here, he is still able to see the House of Allah, built by his grandfather, the imām of tawhīd: Ibrāhīm ﷺ. He takes food along with him, and spends several days in this cave in isolation: reflecting, pondering, and worshipping.

And then one night, everything changes. The stillness and silence of the night is interrupted by one word: “Read!” The greatest of men – unbeknown to him at the time – has just experienced his first encounter with the greatest of all angels. It marks the beginning of Allah’s greatest gift to mankind: His very own words. Words of eternal guidance, instructing man how to live and prosper. A blueprint to attain eternal bliss.

This night will change the entire course of history. The world will never be the same again.

More than a thousand years later, we commemorate this incredible night. It is the mother of all nights, a night of blessings and forgiveness, a night of closeness and intimacy with one’s Creator.

From His deep love and generosity, Allah al-Akram (The Most Generous) named this night for us (‘Laylat al-Qadr’), and revealed a sūrah dedicated to it. This is so that we do not ever forget the greatness of this night, the greatness of this gift (the Qur’ān), the greatness of the angel (Jibril) responsible for its transmission, the greatness of the man (Muhammad ﷺ) upon whose heart the book was revealed, and ultimately the greatness of the Greatest: Allah, Magnificent and Exalted is He!

Step Up In The Last 10 Days

Ā’ishah ﷺ said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would combine both prayer and sleep (at night) during the first 20 (days of Ramaḍān). But when the last ten days arrived, he would exert himself in worship and stay away from his wives” (Ahmad).

The last ten nights of Ramaḍān are for intensive worship. Just as the Messenger ﷺ used to cut himself off from people and perform i’tikāf in the masjid, we too should try to do the same. We should take off as many days as possible from work and use this

time to connect deeply with Allah ﷺ. We should avoid wasting this precious time with Eid preparations, and switch off from social media.

Along with ourselves, we should have a deep concern for the spiritual well-being and upliftment of our families. The atmosphere in the home during these days, and especially the nights, should be different. ‘Aishah ﷺ said, “When the last ten days of Ramaḍān arrived, the Prophet ﷺ would tighten his waist belt (stay away from his wives/strive hard), spend the night in worship, and awaken his family” (Bukhārī).

10 Tips for the Last 10 Nights of Ramadan

- 1 Switch off social media and don't surf the internet.
- 2 Don't waste time with Eid preparations.
- 3 Give sadaqah (charity) every day.
- 4 Push yourself to worship Allah.
- 5 Perform i‘tikaf.
- 6 Perform at least ‘Isha and Fajr (at the minimum) in congregation.
- 7 Perform qiyam in the night.
- 8 Constantly ask Allah for forgiveness and freedom from the Hell-fire.
- 9 Strive in every potential night and recite the sunnah du‘a’.
- 10 Bathe, apply perfume and adorn yourself for this great night.

“When the race horse knows that it is nearing the end of the track it exerts all of its effort to win the race. Do not allow the race horse to be cleverer than you. Indeed, deeds are judged by their conclusions. Thus, if you didn’t do well with welcoming Ramaḍān then perhaps you will do better bidding it farewell.” - Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ

What is Laylat al-Qadr?

There is an entire sūrah in the Qur’ān dedicated to this one night. This shows its great importance and virtue.

Allah al-‘Azīm (The Magnificent) says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ۝ وَمَا أَدْرِنَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ۝
تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مَنْ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ ۝ سَلَامٌ هُنَّ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ۝

“Indeed, We sent this (Qur’ān) down on the Night of Qadr. And what will make you realise what the Night of Qadr is? The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit (Jibril) descend in it, by the permission of their Lord, for every matter. It is Peace — until the rising of the dawn” (97:1-5).

Let us reflect on this sūrah to help us understand the significance of this incredible night:

Ayah 1

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Indeed, We sent this (Qur’ān) down on the Night of Qadr.

This night is special as it marks one of the most magnificent events in history: the first revelation of the Qur’ān. Even if we worshipped Allah for a thousand years, it would not be enough to appreciate and thank Him for this favour.

Ibn ‘Abbās ﷺ said that the Qur’ān was revealed in its entirety from the highest heaven to the lowest heaven, and was subsequently revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ over the span of twenty-three years.

Qadr could refer to:

① Honour and nobility. It is a noble night as the Qur’ān descended in it, Allah’s noble angels descend in it, and the mercy of Allah descends on the entire earth. A noble angel (Jibril ﷺ) was chosen to descend with a Noble Book – the words of the Entirely Noble – upon the heart of the most noble man. Allah ﷺ states, “Indeed, We sent it down on a blessed night...” (44:3). Likewise, the one who worships Allah on this night is noble and honoured by His Lord.

② Decree. The angels descend with the allotted decree of each person for the next year. Allah ﷺ says, “On that night every matter of wisdom is ordained” (44:4).

③ **Constraint and congestion.** This could refer to the earth becoming restricted as angels fill up the earth, and there is no room for any evil. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed there are more angels on the earth on that night than the number of pebbles (on the earth)” (Ibn Khuzaymah). It could also allude to the specific identity of this night being unknown (‘constrained’).

There is a significance of the Qur’ān being revealed at ‘night’, as opposed to the day. Elsewhere in the Qur’ān, Allah says,

- “Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant **by night** from the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah] to the Aqṣā Mosque [in Jerusalem] (17:1);
- And pray during a part of the **night**, offering additional prayers, so your Lord may raise you to a station of praise (17:79);
- Indeed, rising **by night** (for prayer) makes for a stronger impression (on the soul), and is best for the recitation (of Allah’s words) (73:6). ”

These verses indicate a strong connection between worship at night and enjoying a lofty rank in the sight of Allah. At night, when one **sacrifices the comfort** of their sleep and company of their spouse, and instead turns towards his Creator, his heart brimming with His love and trembling from His fear, he is closer to receiving the **exclusive outpourings** of Allah’s mercy and light. In the stillness of the night, the heart is calmer, distractions are limited, and one is able to absorb the weighty message of the Lord of Majesty and Nobility. Allah ﷺ descends to the lowest heaven every night when one-third of the night remains and says, “Who will call upon Me, that I may answer Him? Who will ask of Me, that I may give him? **Who will seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?**” (Bukhārī).

Ayah 2

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقُدرِ

And what will make you realise what the Night of Qadr is?

‘Mā adrāka (what will make you realise)’ is a powerful rhetorical question which draws our attention to the importance of this night. We can never fully appreciate the greatness of this night. It is something which we should not take for granted.

Ayah 3

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months.

Worshipping Allah in this one night is not just equivalent to a thousand months (more than 83 years), but even better than that. Allāhu Akbar! Look at the kindness of Allah! We struggle to worship Him for more than a few hours, let alone spend a major portion of our lives in worshipping Him – and yet, from His **immense generosity**, He gifts us with Laylat al-Qadr. Not once in our lifetime, but once every year throughout our time on this earth.

“The Messenger ﷺ was shown the lifespans of the people before him, or what Allah willed of that; and it was as if he thought that the lifespan of his Ummah was short, and they would be unable to reach the level of deeds as others before them had due to their long lives. Thus, Allah gave him Laylat al-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months”
(Muwatta').

The average lifespan of this Ummah is between 60 and 70 years. Despite such short lives however, Allah blessed us with the ability to **gain the rewards of worshipping Him for many lifetimes**. Just as every deed is potentially multiplied by ten, this one night brings with it immeasurable rewards, blessings and goodness.

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “In it, Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is truly deprived!” (Nasā'i).

Juwaybir ﷺ said: “I asked Dāḥḥāk, ‘Do women experiencing post-natal bleeding and menstruation, those travelling, and those asleep (due to illness) have a share of Laylat al-Qadr?’ He replied, ‘Yes. Whoever’s deeds Allah accepts, He will give them their share of Laylat al-Qadr.’”

Ayah 4

تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا يَأْذِنُ رَبِّهِمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

The angels and the Spirit (Jibril) descend in it, by the permission of their Lord, for every matter.

Ibn Kathīr ﷺ writes, “The angels descend in abundance during this night due to its abundant blessings. The angels descend with blessings and mercy, just as they descend when the Qur’ān is recited and surround the gatherings of dhikr.”

Allah announces the decree of the upcoming year to His angels on this night, as they will be carrying out His commandments. This includes births, deaths, provisions and calamities.

The earth is full of goodness and blessings on this night, as there are a huge number of angels filling up the entire earth.

The ‘spirit’ refers to Jibrīl ﷺ, the greatest of all angels, the link between the heavens and the earth, the angel tasked with the most prestigious job: conveying the message of the Creator to His creation. This is the only time of the year in which he descends to the earth. We can only imagine how blessed this night is.

It is difficult to appreciate the spiritual and physical greatness of Jibrīl. He has 600 wings. If he was to unroll a pair of them, it would fill the space between the sky and the earth. Allah describes him as an angel of ‘mighty power, and great perfection’ (53:5-6).

Ayah 5

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَقٌّ مَظْلَعُ الْفَجْرِ

It is Peace — until the rising of the dawn.

‘Salām’ (Peace) could mean that this night is full of peace. All of it is good and there is safety from all harm and evil until dawn. As the earth is full of angels, there is goodness and peace throughout the earth.

It has also been said that angels greet (say salām to) the believers. They pray for the protection, and the removal of evil and harm, for every slave who is worshipping Allah.

When is Laylat al-Qadr?

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Seek out Laylat al-Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten (days) of Ramaḍān” (Bukhārī).

Abū Bakrah ﷺ said regarding Laylat al-Qadr, “I am not searching for it except in the last ten nights only after something which I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say. He ﷺ said: ‘Search for it (Laylat al-Qadr) in the last ten nights: the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or the last night’” (Ahmad).

There are various opinions as to what date exactly is Laylat al-Qadr, and whether it changes every year.

A wisdom of the date being unspecified is that we strive hard to seek it and worship Allah wholeheartedly in many of the nights, instead of limiting our worship to one night. This is similar to how the hour of acceptance on Jumu'ah has been left unspecified, to encourage us to fill the day with du'a'.

“If (the night before) Friday coincides with one of the odd-numbered nights during the last ten nights, then it is likely than others (to be Laylat al-Qadr).” (Ibn Rajab quoting Ibn Hubayrah in *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif*)

Best Deed for Laylat al-Qadr: Qiyam

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever stands in prayer at night (qiyām) in Laylat al-Qadr with īmān and hoping for reward (iħtisāb), all his previous sins will be forgiven” (Bukhārī).

The best deed a person can perform on Laylat al-Qadr is qiyām. We should perform it with:

- ① īmān i.e. with a firm belief that Allah has asked us to do this, loves this deed and will reward us;
- ② iħtisāb i.e. seek reward only from Allah, perform it sincerely for Him alone, and not for any other motive.

Qiyām (night prayer) is one of the best acts of worship. In ḥalāh, we combine reciting and reflecting on the Qur'ān, praising and remembering Allah, du'a', and turning to Him in repentance. It is an act wherein we **worship Allah with the tongue, body and heart simultaneously**.

The duration of the night is short. However, the blessing of this short time can be multiplied by infusing quality into our 'ibādah. We should renew our intention, and humble our hearts before Allah. We should perform qiyām with full khushū' (humility and full focus), lengthening each posture, and crying to Allah in sujūd.

At the bare minimum, we should perform 'Ishā' and Fajr at the masjid. 'Abdurrahmān b. Abī 'Amrah said: 'Uthmān b. 'Affan ﷺ entered the Masjid after the Maghrib prayer, and sat down by himself. So, I went and sat by him, and he said, “O my nephew, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, ‘Whoever performs 'Ishā' in congregation, then it is as though he has stood half the night (in prayer). And whoever performs Fajr in congregation, then it is as though he has prayed the entire night’” (Muslim).

5 things to do in Laylat al-Qadr

The night begins at sunset. Do not miss out on the time between Maghrib and 'Ishā'.

- 1 Pray Maghrib, 'Isha' and Fajr in congregation, and be there before the first takbir.
- 2 Pray qiyam (night prayer) for as long as you can.
- 3 Recite Qur'an and do dhikr.
- 4 Make abundant du'a, especially in sajdah.
- 5 Make sincere repentance & conclude the night with istighfar.

On this night, we should take time out to reflect on the enormity of what occurred on this night over 1400 years ago. Let us feel humbled that Allah chose us to be amongst the Ummah of Muḥammad ﷺ, and the recipients of His magnificent words; that He granted us the incredible gift of the Qur'an. Let us feel regret for our neglect of the Qur'an: our failure to recite it, understand it, reflect on it and 'live' it. Let us realise the damage we have caused our souls, and our societies, by failing to establish its guidance. Let us ask Allah to help us build a strong relationship with the Qur'an from this night onwards. Let us beg Allah to make us from His chosen people: the People of the Qur'an.

Du'a' for Laylat al-Qadr

Ā'ishah ؓ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "If I know which night is the Night of Qadr, what do you think I should say during it?" He ﷺ replied,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

"O Allah, You are the Ever-Pardoning; You love to pardon so pardon me" (Tirmidhī).

Forgiving us is more beloved to Allah than punishing us. This du'a fits beautifully here, as this night is the night of forgiveness. Moreover, after many days of intense worship, this du'a is a reminder to **not become deceived** with our (few) good deeds. Rather, we are sinful, have many shortcomings, and **desperately need Allah to forgive us**. Yāhŷā b. Mu'âdh ؓ said, "The one whose deepest hope from Allah is not forgiveness, does not truly know Allah."

We ask Allah in this du'a with His Beautiful Name, Al-'Afuww. Al-'Afuww is the one who wipes away sins and forgives our shortcomings. Whilst Allah's Name 'al-Ghafūr' also means The Forgiving, al-'Afuww is more than that. Al-'Afuww is the one who **completely removes all traces** and consequences of our sins. He **wipes them away**.

from the records of the angels: He will not hold us to account for them on the Day of Judgement, nor will He remind us of them to make us feel guilty.

This is why we ask Him in this du‘ā’ with His Name ‘al-‘Afuww’ to forgive us and fully wipe our slates clean.

Laylat al-Qadr is a night of forgiveness. Just as Allah loves to forgive and pardon us, He also loves for us to forgive each other. Sometimes we may think we have forgiven someone, but the negativity in our hearts lingers and resurfaces in a passive-aggressive manner. Allah says, “...Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (24:22).

Beg Allah for Freedom from the Hell-fire

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah has freed slaves (from Hell) every day and night (in Ramadān), and every servant amongst them has a supplication which is answered” (Ahmad).

Throughout these nights, we should pour our hearts out and cry to Allah in sajdah. We should beg Allah to free us from the Hell-fire:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعْذِنِي رِقَابَنَا مِنَ النَّارِ

O Allah, free us from the Hell-fire.

Bathe, Apply Perfume & Wear Nice Clothes for This Great Night

Many of our predecessors went out of their way to adorn and prepare themselves for these amazing nights. Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī رضي الله عنه would bathe in each of the ten nights. In the night in which he'd hoped it was Laylat al-Qadr, Thābit al-Bunānī رضي الله عنه would wear his best clothes, apply perfume and use fragrance in the masjid. Imām Mālik رضي الله عنه used to bathe, apply perfume and would wear a special outfit for this blessed night. In the morning, he would fold them away, and not wear them till the following year.

Just as we should adorn ourselves for Allah externally, we should adorn ourselves internally through repentance. We should keep seeking forgiveness to wipe away the dirt of our sins. Ibn Rajab رضي الله عنه reminds us that on this night, we should adorn ourselves externally through our clothes, and internally through taqwā.

As the best night of the year comes to an end, let us end it in the best way: by humbling ourselves and seeking forgiveness, as Allah describes the pious,

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

“And they would seek forgiveness before dawn” (51:18).



Ramadan: The Month of Forgiveness & Repentance

Ramadān is the month of forgiveness and repentance. The word ‘Ramaḍān’ is derived from *ramad* which refers to the intense burning heat of the sun. Thus, ‘Ramaḍān’ is the month in which the sins of the believer are burned by their righteous deeds. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The five daily prayers, Jumu’ah to Jumu’ah, and Ramadān to Ramadān expiate for (the sins perpetrated) in between them, so long as one stays away from the major sins” (Muslim).

Ramadan: Endless Opportunities to Be Forgiven

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “...May his nose be soiled in dust (i.e. may he be humiliated) — the man upon whom Ramadān enters, and then ends before he is forgiven!” (Tirmidhī).

This *du’ā* – made by the most merciful of men ﷺ – may appear harsh, but we will understand it when we reflect on how many opportunities Allah provides us in this month to be forgiven.

He ﷺ told us that fasting Ramadān with firm belief and hoping for reward leads to one’s previous sins being forgiven. Likewise, standing in prayer at night throughout the month leads to one’s previous sins being forgiven. Similarly, standing in prayer at night in Laylat al-Qadr also leads to one’s previous sins being forgiven (Bukhārī).

If we are not going to be forgiven this month, then when are we going to be forgiven?

Ramadan: The Month of Istighfar

All of us are sinful. We commit sins and don’t even realise how we are suffering from their consequences. Our sins are not just between us and Allah. They directly impact our families, communities and, ultimately, the entire Ummah.

Sins take us far away from Allah and incur His anger and punishment. Sins remove barakah and weaken the heart and the body. Sins deprive us from doing good deeds, prevent our *du’as* from being accepted, result in a horrible death and lead to suffering in the hereafter. Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ said, “Sins are like a chain around the neck of the sinner. One can only be released from it through *istighfār* (seeking forgiveness) and *tawbah* (repentance).”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed, when the servant commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart. When he desists, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he commits a sin again, it increases until it covers his heart. And that is the ‘rān’ (rust) which Allah mentioned: ‘No indeed! Rather what they have been doing has rusted their hearts (83:14)’” (Tirmidhī). Sins can seal the heart to the extent that one’s heart becomes numb and no longer accepts any reminder or any form of good. This can lead to one becoming desensitised and not considering a sin as a sin.

Sins are the biggest obstacles in our journey to Allah. Sins ruin the heart and make it diseased. Just like a sick person cannot enjoy food, the diseased heart cannot enjoy the sweetness of worship and īmān. The reason why our hearts may feel hollow, or our worship may feel ‘empty’ is due to our sins. Thus, istighfār has to be an essential part of our lives, and more so in Ramadān, in which it is far easier to be forgiven.

“Whoever does not feel contentment of the heart and cannot experience the sweetness of īmān and the light of guidance, then he should increase in repenting and seeking forgiveness.” - Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ

Just as we must make istighfār for our sins, we must also ask Allah to forgive the deficiencies in our worship and good deeds. We can never fulfil the rights of Allah and worship Him as He deserves to be worshipped.

We should never let a single night pass by in Ramadān without **crying to Allah and begging Him to forgive us**, especially in sujūd in the last third of the night.

A Sincere Tawbah

Ramadān is the month of tawbah (repentance). A month of **truly turning with one’s heart to Allah, and humbly apologising to Him**. We should dedicate time in Ramadān to reflect on all the sins we have committed throughout our lives. We should feel very bad at having sinned, and we should reflect on our negligence in worshipping Allah. We should think over how Kind and Generous Allah is to us, and how we use these very same blessings to disobey Him. We should think about how Allah al-Sittīr (The Concealer of sins) does not expose us despite the multitude of our sins. This should fill our hearts with a deep sense of shame and remorse.

Allah ﷺ says, “O believers! Turn to Allah in **sincere repentance**, so your Lord may erase your sins and admit you into Gardens, under which rivers flow...” (66:8).

For tawbah to be sincere, we have to:

- ① stop committing the sin;
- ② feel a deep sense of regret and remorse over the sin;
- ③ firmly resolve to never return to that sin;
- ④ make amends if we have wronged another person (e.g. ask their forgiveness or supplicate for them).

Let us make sincere tawbah to Allah in this month. Our sincere tawbah must also include a firm resolve to not return to the sin, especially when Ramaḍān is over. For example, if we give up watching ḥarām in Ramaḍān, but at the back of our minds, we have an intention to return to it once Ramaḍān is over, then this is not a sincere tawbah.

The scholars have mentioned that a sincere tawbah can make a sin the means for a person to enter Paradise. A person may commit a sin, but subsequently makes tawbah. His tawbah is so sincere that he constantly thinks about the sin. This causes him to fear it, regret it, weep over it and feel ashamed in front of his Lord due to it. He stands before Allah, broken-hearted with his head lowered in humility. He constantly begs and cries to Him in du‘ā, and he tries to atone for the sin by doing other good deeds — to the extent that Shaytān says, “I wish I had not made him fall into that sin”. Thus, this one sin becomes the cause for him entering Paradise.

Tawbah is a gift from Allah. We can only make tawbah if Allah allows us to do so (tawfiq). Allah turns towards us first, after which we turn to Him in repentance; and then He accepts our repentance. Allah says,

ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيُشْبِهُوا إِنَّ اللَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ



“...Then He turned towards them, so that they may repent. Surely, Allah is the Acceptor of repentance, the Very Merciful” (9:118).

Sometimes Shaytān may delude us into thinking that we still have time, and that we will make tawbah in the latter part of our lives. However, there is no guarantee for life. **We should make tawbah today**, so that we do not regret it when it is too late. It has been said that if the deceased in the grave were able to communicate with us, they would tell us that their greatest desire would be to be able to return to the world, even for a fraction of a moment, and make sincere tawbah to Allah ﷺ.

“The best day in a servant’s life is undoubtedly the day in which he turns to Allah in repentance, and Allah accepts His repentance” - Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

Allah Loves to Forgive

There is no one who forgives like Allah. No matter what we may have done, Allah is waiting for us to turn to Him with sincerity and humility, and beg Him to forgive us. He is al-Ghafūr (The All-Forgiving) and al-Ghaffār (The Most Forgiving). He ﷺ says, “Say, (O Prophet, that Allah says,): O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah’s mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (39:53).

Allah ﷺ says in a ḥadīth qudsi: “Son of Ādam, as long as you call upon Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you despite what you do, and I do not care. Son of Ādam, even if your sins were to reach to the clouds of the sky, then you seek forgiveness from Me, I will forgive you. Son of Ādam, even if you were to come to Me with nearly an earth full of sins, and then you meet Me, not having associated anything with Me, then I will surely bring you as much as the earth in forgiveness” (Tirmidhī).

Allah ﷺ is Free of all need, and yet we find His messengers telling those who reject Allah: “Can there be any doubt about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?! He is inviting you in order to forgive you your sins...” (14:10).

Not only does Allah forgive, but he loves those who constantly repent and seek His forgiveness. From His immense kindness, He instructs His angels – including the Bearers of the Throne – to supplicate for our forgiveness! The Prophet ﷺ explained that **Allah’s delight** at His servant’s repentance is greater than the delight of a person who was travelling in a desert, lost all his belongings, and then unexpectedly found them.

As humans, we struggle to forgive each other, let alone reciprocate evil with good. Allah, on the other hand, does not only conceal and forgive, but He also “changes their evil deeds into good ones” (25:70). Moreover, He showers us with worldly blessings as a result of us seeking forgiveness, including wealth, children and strength (see 71:12 and 11:52). Allāhu Akbar!

Tawbah & Inabah

Tawbah is an essential ingredient in every stage of a servant’s journey to his Lord, and

it is something we must renew all the time. It is inevitable that we are going to sin; but each time we sin, we should rush to make tawbah, so that the sins do not corrode our hearts. Ibn al-Qayyim رض writes, “The state of tawbah is at the beginning, the middle and the end of the servant’s journey to his Creator. The servant who seeks the pleasure of Allah never abandons tawbah. He remains in the state of tawbah until his death”.

This Ramadān, our goal should be to reach the level of inābah. Inābah is the stage after tawbah and it consists of repeatedly **turning to Allah with love and humility; and to turn away from other than Him**. Ibrāhīm رض was described as ‘*munīb*’ (11:75), a person of inābah. Allah says,

“But Paradise will be brought close to the righteous and will no longer be distant. ‘This is what you were promised — for everyone who turned often to Allah in sincere repentance and preserved (His commands); who were in awe of the All-Merciful without seeing Him; and have come with a heart which is *munīb* (turned in devotion to Him)” (50:31-35).

May Allah al-Tawwāb (The Acceptor of repentance) always turn to us so that we turn to Him. May He always accept our tawbah and grant us the gift of inābah.





Fearing & Hoping in Allah

In our journey to Allah, there are three essential provisions that we must take: love, fear and hope. Allah ﷺ praises the Prophets: "...They used to race towards the good deeds and invoke us with **hope** and **fear**; and they were humbly submissive to us" (21:90).

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله writes, "The heart in its journey to Allah is like a bird. Love is its head, and fear and hope are its two wings. When the head is healthy, then the two wings will fly well. When the head is cut off, the bird will die. When either of the two wings is damaged, the bird becomes vulnerable to every hunter and predator."

This Ramadān, let us strive to **increase our īmān** by increasing our fear, hope and love of Allah.

Fearing Allah

Throughout the month of Ramadān, we should strive to increase our fear of Allah, especially when we recite the Qur'ān inside and outside of ṣalāh. Allah ﷺ says, "Allah has sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of (the mercy of) Allah..." (39:23). Similarly, we should try to increase our fear of Him by reflecting on His greatness and majesty. The fear of Allah should make us tremble in awe of Him and fully humble ourselves to Him.

Allah is The All-Powerful (al-Qadīr), and there is none stronger than Him. He is The Compeller (al-Jabbār): when He intends something to be, He only says to it, 'Be' and it is. He is The All-Dominant (al-Qahhār): if He wished, He could destroy the heavens and the earth in an instant. He is The Mighty (al-'Azīz): nothing can overcome Him. He is The Supreme (al-'Azīm): His magnificence is beyond our comprehension. He is The Perfect Master (al-Ṣamad): He needs none, yet all of His creation is in need of Him. He has no rival, no partner and no helper. He is The Highest (al-A'lā) and there is none greater than Him.

He is the King of all kings. On the Day of Judgement, the whole earth will be enclosed in a single grip of His Hand, and all the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand. Then He will shake them and say, 'I am the King, I am the King. It is I who created the world out of nothingness, and I who will return it to how it was.' On that Day, none

will escape His justice. He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

How can we, then, **not** fear Him?

Similarly, we can increase our fear of Allah in this month by reflecting on the terrors of the grave, the horrors of the Day of Judgement, the gravity of standing before Allah, the sharpness of the *ṣirāṭ* and the torment of the Hell-fire. A practical means to do this is to **visit the graveyard** and ponder on all of the above.

Fearing Allah: A Unique Fear

The fear of Allah is unique to other types of fears. In life, you tend to run away from things you fear. For example, anyone who is scared of spiders or rodents will freeze or run upon seeing them. However, fearing Allah ﷺ is unique and beautiful. It makes you run to Him, and not away from Him. The more you fear Him, the more you turn to Him.

A fear of worldly matters is usually accompanied with a dislike of it. However, the fear of Allah is coupled with love and respect for Him, since you are in **awe** of Him. This type of fear is known as *khashyah*, a reverential type of fear.

The fear of Allah ﷺ is not an irrational fear. It is a fear built on knowledge. **The more you get to know Him, the more you fear Him.** You are in constant awe of His majesty, greatness and power. Those who recognise Allah and appreciate His greatness and majesty, will always fear that their deeds will not be accepted due to their deficiencies.

The fear of Allah should be a deterrent, which leads us to stop sinning. Fear should make us obey Him. A person who fears Allah in the world will have no fear in the hereafter: he will be shaded on the Day of Judgement, freed from Hell-fire, admitted into Paradise and Allah will be happy with him.

Fear is not an end, but it is the means to an end. When the residents of Paradise will enter Paradise, their love for Allah will multiply, but their fear will come to an end, and they will be told,

أُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَخْرُنُونَ

“Enter Paradise! There will be no fear for you, nor will you grieve” (7:49).

Hoping in Allah

Just as we should increase in our fear of Allah throughout this month, we should combine this with increasing our hope in Him. We should hope that He forgives us, frees us from the Hell-fire and accepts us from the People of Paradise.

When we recognise **who Allah is**, our hearts will be overwhelmed with hope. There is no one kinder, more loving or more generous than Him. Allah is The Fashioner (al-Muṣawwir): He has created us in the most beautiful form. Allah is The Extremely Merciful (al-Rāḥmān): His mercy encompasses all of His creation. Allah is The Concealer of sins (al-Sittir): He does not expose us despite the multitude of our sins. Allah is The Gentle (al-Rafīq): He loves gentleness. Allah is The Most Compassionate (al-Rā'ūf); His compassion knows no ends. Allah is The Most Modest (al-Hayiyy): He feels shy to turn us back, empty-handed. He is the One True God, and there is no one like Him.

Hope in Allah, known as *rajā'* in Arabic, is to **behold the vastness of Allah's mercy and have full confidence in His generosity**. Hoping in Allah motivates us to worship Him with joy. It allows us to manifest our 'ubūdiyyah (servitude) to Him and propels us to make *du'a*. It makes our heart attached to Him and love Him. Hope makes our journey to Him beautiful.

"Hope (in Allah) is a necessity for the seeker, on his journey to Allah.

The seeker would nearly perish if he lost hope even for a moment, for he moves between: (1) sins which he **hopes will be forgiven; (2) shortcomings which he **hopes** will be rectified; (3) righteous deeds which he **hopes** will be accepted; 4) steadfastness which he **hopes** to attain and sustain; (5) closeness to Allah and a high rank with Him which he **hopes** to attain; — and no seeker can ever afford to lose sight of these."**

- Ibn al-Qayyim 

Husn al-Zann Billah

Hope (*rajā'*) springs from thinking good of Allah, and expecting the best from Him (*husn al-zann billah*). Allah loves for His servant to have good thoughts about Him, think the best of Him, and have hope in Him. Allah says in a ḥadīth qudsī: "I am as My servant thinks of Me..." (Bukhārī).

All of us will face difficulties in our lives. Sometimes, these difficulties may feel overwhelming. But instead of thinking 'Why me O Allah?', we should have good thoughts about Allah. We should expect good from Him in times of ease and difficulty, and we should believe that Allah wants good for us in all situations. We should always think the best of Him, and remember that He is al-Ḥakīm: The Wisest. Maybe there is a hidden wisdom in the difficulty. He is al-‘Alīm: The All-Knowing. Maybe He knows something which we do not. He is al-Latīf: The Most Subtle. Perhaps this trial we're enduring will be the key to our eternal success.

No matter what we are going through, we should never lose hope. In his deep pain and sorrow, Ya'qub ﷺ complained to Allah and cried excessively, but he never lost hope in Allah. He said to his sons, “O my sons! Go and search (diligently) for Yusuf and his brother. And do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah, for only disbelievers lose hope in Allah's mercy” (12:87).

Balancing Hope and Fear

The believer is always in a state of both hope and fear. We have to balance the extremes of hope and fear. Too much hope can make us complacent and neglectful of our duties. And too much fear can cripple us with despair.

The pious people of the past would advise that during good times, when we are more likely to forget Allah ﷺ, we should increase our fear of Him. And during difficult times, we should increase our hope in Him. Other scholars stated that throughout one's life, fear should be dominant over hope; but towards the end of one's life, hope should become dominant. Jâbir ﷺ said, “I heard the Prophet ﷺ say three days before his demise: 'None of you should die, except with thinking good of Allah (ḥusn al-żann)'” (Muslim).

The Greatest Hope

The best and loftiest type of hope is the hope of meeting Allah ﷺ Himself. The best thing a person can hope for is the pleasure of Allah, Paradise, and to see Allah ﷺ Himself. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ describes this type of hope as the “essence of īmān”. Allah ﷺ says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةَ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

“So whoever hopes for the meeting with their Lord, let them do good deeds and associate none in the worship of their Lord” (18:110).

“The most precious gift in my heart is hope in You; the sweetest words on my tongue are Your praise, and the most beloved moment to me is the moment in which I will meet You.” – Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh ﷺ

May Allah Dhul Jalāl wal-Ikrām (The Lord of Majesty and Honour) make us of those who hope in Him, fear Him and love Him.

How to Cultivate the Fear of Allah in Your Heart

- 1 Reflect on Allah's greatness and might
- 2 Reflect on the Qur'an (tadabbur)
- 3 Reflect on the hereafter and its various stages
- 4 Reflect on your sins and their consequences
- 5 Ask Allah to grant you awe of Him

How Do You Attain Hope in Allah?

- 1 Reflect on the blessings of Allah
- 2 Reflect on the amazing rewards He has promised
- 3 Reflect on the mercy and kindness of Allah
- 4 Reflect on the Names of Allah which invoke hope
- 5 Reflect on the Qur'an (tadabbur)

“

Undoubtedly, the greatest pleasure of this world is the pleasure of knowing and loving Allah. This is the highest level of bliss one can experience in this world. In contrast, other temporary pleasures of this life are like a drop in the ocean – for indeed, the soul, heart and body were created (to know and love Allah). The most joyous aspect of the world is to know and love Allah, and the greatest pleasure in Paradise will be to see Allah.”

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ



Loving Allah

Ramadān is a manifestation of Allah's love for us. From His love, He opens the doors of Paradise in this sacred month and closes the doors of Hell-fire. From His love, He blesses us with the gift of fasting and the night prayer. From His love, He overlooks our transgressions in the year and offers abundant opportunities of forgiveness in this month. From His love, in this month, He gives us the most blessed night of the year: Laylat al-Qadr.

Ramadān is the best time to attain the love of Allah, as we increase in conversing with Allah and reciting His words. We have multiple opportunities in this month to experience the joy of His love, and delight in being close to Him. It is a month in which we try to tame our nafs, and become humble in our interactions with our fellow believers — one of the foremost qualities of those whom Allah loves.

Ramadān is the best time to attain the love of Allah, because we reduce our love for those things which compete with His love. We love food, but we give it up when we fast because **our love for Allah is greater**. We love sleep, but we give it up when we stand for the night prayer because **our love for Allah is greater**. We love to socialise and be entertained, but we give it up when we perform i'tikāf because **our love for Allah is greater**.

Love: The Key to Success

Love is the greatest station the seeker on the journey to Allah ﷺ can attain. The love of Allah is the purest and greatest of all loves. It gives life to the heart, it is sustenance for the soul, and is the roadway to eternal success.

Love is the road to Paradise. It is the main reason why we worship Allah, and it is the only way to live a true meaningful life on earth.

Without the love of Allah, life is bleak. This is because there is a void in every person's heart which can only be filled with the love of Allah. Without love, a person's life will be full of sadness, anxiety, pains and regrets. **On the other hand, when the heart overflows with His love, a person will experience bliss and contentment.**

“Undoubtedly, the greatest pleasure of this world is the pleasure of knowing and loving Allah. This is the highest level of bliss one can experience in this world. In contrast, other temporary pleasures of this life are like a drop in the ocean — for indeed, the soul, heart and body were created (to know and love Allah). The most joyous aspect of the world is to know and love Allah, and the greatest pleasure in Paradise will be to see Allah.” - Ibn al-Qayyim 

Love is the essence of ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude) and the secret of *lā ilāha illā-Allāh*. Loving Allah is the basis of our īmān. Allah says, “Still there are some who take others as Allah’s equal—they love them as they should love Allah—but the believers love Allah even more” (2:165).

There is a vast difference between someone who obeys Allah out of love for Him, and someone who obeys Him without love. When a lover obeys his beloved, the obedience is done willingly and sincerely. Without love, however, a servant obeys out of a weary compulsion. **The former experiences happiness and joy in willingly complying to the orders**, whereas the latter feels burdened, and even resentful. Love, therefore, is the driving force and the impetus of ‘ibādah.

How Can You Not Love Him?

As humans, we adore perfection, and Allah is the epitome of perfection. Similarly, we love beauty and our hearts are naturally inclined to it. Allah is al-Jamil, **The Most Beautiful**. Although we cannot comprehend the beauty of Allah, it is enough to know that every beautiful thing we see on this earth is from Him.

Likewise, our hearts have been created with a natural disposition to love those who do good to us. **How can we not love Allah when every single blessing and good that we have is from Him?** There is no one kinder, more appreciative and more generous than Him: He is al-Wahhāb, **The Ever-Giving**.

Allah is al-Wadūd, **The Most Loving**. Anyone we love – from the creation – loves us for their sake. Allah, on the other hand, loves us for our own benefit. People interact with us because they hope to attain something from this relationship. Allah however calls us to love Him so that we can benefit. Not only does He benefit us, but He gives us compound benefit: the reward of a good deed is multiplied from 10-700 times, whereas a sin is recorded as one single bad deed; and even that can be swiftly erased. Allah does not need us, yet He feeds us, honours us, and guides us.

Allah is al-Ghaffār, **The Most Forgiving**. He loves to forgive and will forgive us even if we go to Him with mountains of sins. He is al-Sittīr, the **Concealer of sins**. He does not expose us, nor humiliate us. Instead, He offers us endless opportunities to repent, and is delighted when we turn to Him in repentance.

Allah is al-Qarīb, **The Ever-Near**, and al-Ḥayiyy, **The Shy**, who feels shy to reject our du'ās. Whilst our fellow humans tire of our persistent questioning and begging, **Allah, our Generous Lord, does not stop giving** and is angered when we **don't** ask from Him! In fact, He gives us even before we ask Him.

Do We Truly Love Allah?

How do we know if we truly love Allah? Are our claims of loving him genuine? Allah says,

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّوْنَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِي يُحِبِّبُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْفُرُ لَكُمْ دُنْوَبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفْوُرٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“Say: If you (sincerely) love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (3:31).

Thus, the litmus test of loving Allah is whether one follows and obeys the Messenger ﷺ.

“Whosoever claims to love Allah - Mighty and Majestic is He - but doesn't comply with Allah's commands, his claim is false. For every lover that does not fear Allah, is deluded.” - Abū Ya‘qūb al-Nahrujūrī ﷺ

Loving Allah ﷺ can only be achieved when you prefer Him over everything else. You must love Him more than you love your parents, children, spouse, friends and wealth.

Attaining the love of Allah is a journey. It may be that at the beginning, you are unable to fully love what Allah loves as your heart is imprisoned by your desires. However, as your love for Allah increases through worship, you liberate yourself from your own desires. The love of anyone other than Allah slowly fizzles away, and Allah's preferences become your own preferences.

The pursuit of Allah's love requires effort and persistence. There will be times when you will relapse, but the main thing is to not give up. Keep trying no matter how many times you fall down. It will definitely be worth it.

Becoming Allah's Beloved

Loving Allah is extremely special. But imagine being loved by Allah! Imagine being from the “People He loves and who love Him” (5:54).

This Ramadān, make it your goal that in addition to the fard acts, you will worship Allah with the nafl acts so that you become from those He loves.

Allah ﷺ says in a ḥadīth qudsī: “My servant does not draw closer to Me with anything more beloved to Me than that which I have made obligatory upon him. My servant continues to draw closer to Me with voluntary acts until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will certainly give him, and if he seeks My protection, I will certainly give him My protection. And I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about (seizing) the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him” (Bukhārī).

We learn from this ḥadīth that when the love of Allah saturates the heart, the lovers' sole concern becomes Allah. Every encounter reminds them of Allah. Everything they now do, hear, see, and say is only for Allah, and in accordance with what pleases Allah. They move from the level of īmān to ihsān: they now worship Allah as though they can see Him.

Similarly, Allah now gives them everything they ask for. Allah does not say no to them, as they do not say no to Him. He protects them, as they protect their senses and protect the dīn of Allah.

We ask Allah al-Wadūd (The Most Loving) with the words of His beloved ﷺ:

(اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسأَلُكَ حُبَّكَ، وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ، وَحُبَّ عَمَلٍ يُقْرِبُنِي إِلَيْكَ حِلْمَ)

O Allah, I ask You for Your love, the love of those whom You love, and the love of deeds which will bring me closer to Your love (Tirmidhi).



Loving Allah's Beloved ﷺ

Journeying to Allah is impossible without taking His beloved ﷺ as a guide on this journey. Loving him is the key to loving Allah.

Ramadān is a month in which we increase our love for him ﷺ. Every act of worship we perform in this month is an attempt to follow in his footsteps. Everything that we know about Ramadān is through him. He ﷺ nurtured the Companions on how to optimise this blessed month, encouraging them, giving them good news and demonstrating to them with his own actions.

Sometimes we may claim to love the Prophet ﷺ, but our actions speak otherwise. Loving him ﷺ entails obeying him, honouring him, and embodying his Sunnah in every aspect of our lives. Loving him ﷺ means he is always in your thoughts, always in your conscience: his words mould your actions and his life shapes your life. There is no better time than this sacred month in which we can attempt to emulate the impeccable character and lifestyle of the greatest human to have walked on this earth.

His Iman & Love for Allah

He ﷺ was the most God-fearing, obedient and humble servant of Allah. None knew Allah like he ﷺ did. His īmān and yaqīn in Allah was unshakeable. His sincerity, his hope and trust in Allah never wavered. His worship, dhikr, and du‘ā’ were legendary. In the Night Journey, he ascended where no other – not even Jibrīl – had the privilege to ascend, witnessing some of the marvels of his Lord.

In this journey, he was gifted with ṣalāh: his source of deep joy. Nothing pleased him more than intimate conversation with Allah, his Beloved. His recitation was beautiful. He would stand throughout the night, reciting, bowing and prostrating for so long that his companion, who once joined him, thought of leaving the prayer. And yet, from his compassion, when he ﷺ would hear the crying of the infant in congregational prayer, he would shorten the prayer.

He revolutionised society. He lifted the people out of darkness and showed them the truth, the light of īmān. He personified servitude. He breathed gratitude. He was shy, not just of creation, but from his Lord. He loved Allah, and Allah loved him.

His Sublime Character

“And you are truly (a man) of outstanding character” (68:4).

His character was exemplary. He epitomised **kindness, compassion and love**. He was genuine and **selfless**. He was honest and trustworthy, a man of principle and integrity. He was gentle yet strong. He was modest yet confident and dignified. He was wise in his words and actions, and he epitomised balance.

There was an aura around him. If you saw him from afar, you would be in awe of him. Once you got to know him, you would fall in love with him.

He ﷺ would never degrade or abuse people. He wasn't foul-mouthed. He would not engage in useless chatter, let alone backbite or gossip. He didn't shout, nor scream. He spoke little, and when he would speak, he captured hearts. He was a magnificent orator. He would turn fully to the person he was addressing, and he would give them his full attention.

He forgave easily, and when he got angry it was only for Allah. His anger was composed and harnessed to achieve a higher objective. He would not hold grudges, and did not like to hear negative things about others. “Let no one convey to me anything (negative) regarding one of my companions, for I love to meet you with a **pure heart**,” he ﷺ said.

His emotional intelligence was complete. Everyone loved to be in his company. He valued every individual, to the extent that he made every single person feel like they were the most beloved to him. He removed people's insecurities and replaced it with confidence.

He was **selfless** and always helped those in need. He was a pillar for the oppressed and the downtrodden. He championed the rights of women, children, orphans, the poor and slaves. He was sensitive to the pain and hunger of others. He was the torchbearer of justice. He laid down piety as the criterion of superiority, not colour, lineage, or wealth.

His **humility** was unsurpassed. He was the best of men, and yet there was no one humbler than him. He would not allow his companions to stand for him, or to walk behind him. He would milk the goat, patch his clothes and help with the housework. He would accept gifts, but then always give something back in return. He did not criticise food. If he didn't like it, he would leave it.

He lived a simple life. He owned very little of the world, and yet he was the most generous. He would never hoard, and he would give everything away. His heart was attached to his Lord, not to this world. Once, 'Umar ﷺ went to see him ﷺ and saw marks on his blessed back due to the bed he was sleeping on, which was made from leather and stuffed with palm fibre. He began to cry and compared the basic furnishings of the Prophet ﷺ with the worldly riches the Emperors of Rome and Persia were enjoying. The Prophet ﷺ told him, "For them is this world and for us is the Hereafter!"

He was the bravest of men. He fought and led many battles. When the battles would get fierce, his companions would seek shelter with him; and he ﷺ would be the closest one to the enemy lines.

The Grateful Servant

He suffered immense difficulties throughout his life, yet he always smiled. As a young child, he never met his father. At the tender age of six, he lost his mother, and soon after, his grandfather. When he was chosen to be Allah's Messenger, his own people turned against him. He was defamed, mocked, strangled, and stoned. He witnessed his own companions being tortured. He lost his beloved Khadījah and staunch supporter, Abū Tālib, within the space of a year. Eventually, he was forced to leave his beloved birthplace.

His beloved companions were slain in battle. In Uhud, his beloved uncle Hamzah was killed and then mutilated. He ﷺ himself was wounded. Till the end of his life, enemies lurked outside and within. Plots were hatched to kill him. He was poisoned. Heinous accusations were made against his beloved wife, 'Āishah.

He buried six of his seven children in his lifetime.

Yet, none of this made him bitter. Instead, he was the most empathetic, sensitive, and humble of all men. He remained steadfast and didn't waver from the mission entrusted to him by the Lord of the worlds. Instead of complaining "Why me?" he would worship his Beloved throughout the night. When reminded of being already forgiven by Allah, he remarked: "Should I not be a grateful servant?"

The Loving Prophet

He ﷺ was a loving father, an easy-going husband, and a doting grandfather. He would kiss and hug his grandchildren. He would let them ride on his shoulders and sit on his back whilst he prostrated. He once prolonged a sajdah – unusually – and when asked why he did this, he said, "My son (i.e. one of his grandsons) climbed on my back, and I disliked hurrying him, so he could fulfil his wish."

There was no one more loving and kinder to children than him. This testimony was from none other than Anas b. Mâlik ﷺ who served him for ten years from when he was a young boy. Throughout this time, he would recall, the Prophet never cursed him, nor spoke to him harshly, nor asked him “Why did you do so and so?” nor “Why didn’t you do so-and-so?” Many years later, he would say, “Not a single night passes except that I see my beloved ﷺ in my dream.” Anas would say this and then cry. He would say, “I hope I will get to meet him on the Day of Judgement — I will say to him: “O Messenger of Allah, your little servant!”

He was the **best teacher**. He was sent as a *rahmah* (mercy) for the world, an ocean of love and compassion. He won the hearts of his Companions, young and old. He raised a whole generation of young *ṣahābah*. He developed their confidence, entrusting them with tasks usually reserved for the elderly, paving their way to raise the banner of *lā ilāha illā-Allāh* in lands far beyond Madinah.

His Love for Us

He would always smile, and yet, he was constantly worrying and sad for his Ummah. His Ummah was everything. Me and you. He loved us and cried for us.

On one occasion he ﷺ lifted his hands and while weeping, invoked, “O Allah! My Ummah, my Ummah!” Allah sent Jibril ﷺ down with the glad tidings: “Muhammad, surely we will please you in regards to your Ummah and we will not cause you grief.” In every *ṣalāh*, he ﷺ would make *du’ā* for us, and ask Allah to forgive us.

He made immense sacrifices so that *lā ilāha illā-Allāh* would reach us today. He ﷺ missed us and yearned to see us. He ﷺ once said, “I wish to see my brothers!” The companions ﷺ asked him, “O Messenger of Allah, are we not your brothers?” He ﷺ replied, “You are my companions, but my brothers are those who have not yet come in the world. I will welcome them at the *ḥawd* (blessed fountain).” Unlike the other messengers who had their exclusive *du’ā* accepted in this world, he ﷺ reserved his *du’ā* for us on the Day of Judgement where he will intercede on our behalf.

He ﷺ has left the world, but he left us the **Qur’ān** – which he embodied – and his **Sunnah**. Let us cling on to them and carry forward his **legacy**. Let us remember him and invoke abundant *ṣalawāt* upon him, for each time we invoke *ṣalawāt* upon him, he responds to us. Even though we were not blessed to meet him in this world, we still have an opportunity to attain his *du’ā*.

O Allah, make our love for Your beloved ﷺ genuine. Let our love for him translate to obeying him. Let his sunnah illuminate our hearts, lives, homes and the entire world. Grant us his intercession, make us drink from his blessed hands at the *ḥawd*, and unite us with him in al-Firdaws.



Ramadan: In the Company of Angels

Ramadān - and these last ten nights in particular - is the perfect time to increase our īmān in Allah's angels. We often forget, and usually don't think at all, about the close bonds the believers share with the angels. As they belong to the world of the unseen, it's easy to forget about their presence.

Ramadān, however, is a month in which angels descend like no other, (especially during Laylat al-Qadr, see p. 123). Ramadān is the perfect time to push the soul from an earthly one to a heavenly one: a soul in perfect harmony with the angels. Fasting frees the human from the clutches of his base desires, and allows his soul to circle the Upper Realms. Imām al-Ghazālī ﷺ explains that fasting resembles imitating angels. When we fast, we resist our desires, and angels do not have any of these desires. Humans are in between animals who completely give in to their desires, and angels who do not have any desires. When the human falls prey to his desires, he joins the rank of the animals; but if he strives and controls his desires, he reaches the rank of the angels. Angels are close to Allah, and whoever imitates them, will also draw closer to Allah. This is one of the secrets of fasting.

Angels: A Magnificent Creation of Allah

Angels are honoured and pious servants of Allah. They are a sign of His majesty and power. Created from light, there are colossal numbers of them. When the Prophet ﷺ was taken up to the heavens, he was shown al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr. He was told that 70,000 angels pray in it every day, and when they leave, they do not get another chance to return. Imagine how many angels there are in total!

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed I see what you do not see. The sky is creaking, and it has every right to creak: there is not even the space of four fingers (in the sky), except that there is an angel who has lowered his head in prostration to Allah" (Tirmidhī).

Some angels have two wings, some have three, some have four and some have many more. The Prophet ﷺ saw Jibrīl ﷺ in the Night of Mi'rāj by the Lote Tree in the heavens: he had 600 wings, from which multi-coloured pearls and rubies were falling. His wings are so huge that if he was to unroll a pair of them, it would fill the space between the sky and the earth. Likewise, the Prophet ﷺ was given permission to inform us about an angel who is so great that his feet are in the lowest earth and his neck is under the Throne of Allah. Realising the greatness of Allah, he constantly repeats, "How Perfect are You! How Magnificent are You, our Lord!" (Tabarānī).

Despite being huge and having immense strength, angels never stop praising Allah ﷺ and worshipping Him. Allah ﷺ says, “And those nearest to Him are never too proud to worship Him, nor do they tire. They glorify Him day and night, never wavering” (21:19-20). And yet, on the Day of Judgement, they will look at Allah and say, “How Perfect are You! We did not worship You as You deserved to be worshipped.”

Reflecting on the greatness of the angels, should increase our awe of their Creator: Allah, and make us appreciate and revere Him as He deserves to be revered.

Orderly and organised in straight rows, angels have different tasks assigned to them. They are Allah's messengers to human beings. Jibril - the best of them – was assigned the task of bringing down Allah's words and conveying them to our beloved Prophet ﷺ. He was the bearer of the eternal guidance, without which, we would be completely lost. Reflecting on this, especially in Ramadān (the month of the Qur'ān) should increase our gratitude for Allah.

Angels: Our Companions

We all have two angels who accompany us and record all our deeds, good and bad. We also have angels who are assigned to protect our bodies and souls from harm. Allah ﷺ says, “For each one there are successive angels in front of him and behind him, protecting them by Allah's command” (13:11).

The less the servant sins, the further Shayṭān retreats from him; and the closer his guardian angel draws to him, until it takes responsibility for him, and takes him under its wings. Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله describes this angel as “the servant's companion, the one who brings him the most benefit amongst the creation, and the one who is the sincerest to him, and the one in whose closeness lies his happiness.”

He goes on to say, “There is nothing which brings greater benefit to the servant than the company of his angel. The angel is his guardian when he is awake and asleep, in his life and at the time of his death, and in his grave. He is his source of comfort in his loneliness, his companion in his isolation, and the one who shares his secrets. The angel defends him and repels his enemy. He promises him good, gives him glad tidings, and encourages him to believe in the truth...”

Angels & Gatherings of Righteousness

The angels love the pious because they love to be surrounded by the words of Allah and His remembrance. There are special angels who roam the earth looking for gatherings of dhikr. When they find them, they sit in these gatherings, to the extent that some of their wings overlap the wings of the other angels, until they fill the distance between the earth and the first sky. Similarly, there are angels who travel around the

earth conveying the Ummah's salām to our beloved Prophet ﷺ. And on Jumu'ah, at each door of the masjid there are angels who record the names of those who come to the masjid first. Then when the imām sits down, they close their books and come to listen to the sermon. Similarly, the masājid have 'pillars': congregants whose hearts are attached to the houses of Allah. These congregants have special companions from the angels. If they are absent, the angels ask about them; if they are ill, they visit them; and if they are in need, they help them.

In this month of the Qur'ān, let us remember that the angels love to hear the recitation of the Qur'ān and they descend when the Qur'ān is recited. They stand behind us to listen to the recitation of the Qur'ān when we pray salah.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "When the servant uses the siwāk and then stands to pray, an angel stands behind him and listens to his recitation. The angel draws near until he puts his mouth on (the reciter's) mouth. Nothing of the Qur'ān comes out of his mouth except that it enters the heart of the angel. Thus, purify your mouths for the Qur'ān" (Bazzār).

Will the Angels Make Du'a for You?

In this month, as we strive to draw closer to Allah and increase our īmān, let us be more conscious of the angels around us. Let us fill our homes with the recitation of the Qur'ān, and other good deeds, so that our homes are packed with the angels of mercy, and we can enjoy the tranquillity (sakīnah) that they descend with. Here are some deeds which result in the angels making du'a for us:

Make du'a for your brothers and sisters in their absence.

Seek knowledge and teach it.

Sleep in a state of wudu.

Visit the sick.

Give charity.

Pray in the 1st row of the congregation.

Pray on the right side of the row.

Remain seated in the place of prayer.

Invoke salawat on our beloved Prophet ﷺ.

Eat suhur.

What Should Iman in Angels Lead To?

İmān in angels should increase our awe and fear of Allah. We should always think twice before sinning, since they are ever present and recording our deeds. Their presence should humble us, and make us recognise how negligent we are of Allah's rights. If the angels, who are in perpetual servitude to Allah, think they aren't doing enough, then what is our state?

İmān in Angels should increase our appreciation and love for Allah. Allah ﷺ has tasked so many angels with caring for us. From protecting us to supplicating for us, they address our every need, and all for free!

Just thinking about the Bearers of the Throne of Allah, a special category of angels, always seeking forgiveness for us and praying for our success, should overwhelm our hearts with love for Allah. Our lives are so intertwined with theirs. This should comfort us on one hand, while motivating us on the other hand, to stop sinning and pursue righteous deeds. In this way, we will take the angels as our best friends and gain the maximum benefits of their companionship.

A Never-Ending Companionship

Just as angels accompany us throughout our lives, they also accompany us in our journey to the hereafter. They will comfort the believers who remained steadfast and say to them, "Do not fear, nor grieve. Rather, rejoice in the good news of Paradise, which you have been promised. **We are your close friends in this worldly life and in the hereafter.** There you will have whatever your souls desire, and there you will have whatever you ask for: as a welcoming gift from the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful" (41:30-2).

May Allah al-Karīm (The Most Generous) grant us the friendship of His angels, grant us Paradise, and make us of those whom "...the angels will enter upon them from every gate (of Paradise, saying,) 'Peace be upon you for your perseverance. How excellent is the ultimate abode!'" (13:23-4).



“

“The month of Ramadān has come to you, **a blessed month** in which Allah – Exalted and Majestic is He – has obligated (its) fasting upon you. In it the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell-fire are closed, and the rebellious devils are chained. In it, Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is truly deprived!”

(The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Nasā'ī).



The Journey to The Hereafter

This world is a temporary station on our ultimate journey towards Allah: **the hereafter is our true end goal.**

As we recite the Qur'ān during this blessed month, Allah ﷺ describes to us in vivid details the moment of death, the terrors of the Day of Judgement, the horrors of Jahannam and the eternal bliss of Jannah. In a world where mention of death or the hereafter is labelled as 'morbid' and deemed unnecessary, every other page in the Qur'ān reminds us of our ultimate end. Ramaḍān is the perfect time to increase our īmān in the hereafter and to not get distracted by the mirage of the world.

The Throes of Death

At your appointed time, the Angel of Death will come to you. He will extract your soul from your body: at this point, **there will be no going back**, no chance to repent, no opportunity to make amends with your Creator. As your body is being prepared for its burial, your soul will ascend upwards on its own unique journey, depending on how you lived your life.

As you hear the footsteps of your loved ones walking away from your grave, you will be approached by two terrifying angels, Munkar and Nakīr, who will begin their interrogation. If you answer correctly, the grave will become a peaceful garden of Paradise. But if you don't know the answer, the grave will become a pit from the Hellfire; dark, narrow and suffocating.

The only thing that will come to rescue you at this time will be your good deeds.

Your ḥalāt will be positioned by your head, **fasting** on your right, zakāh on your left, and your other good deeds (including charity, tying kinship, kindness to people) by your feet. Punishment will approach you from each of these directions, but each of your deeds will block the punishment, and intercede on your behalf by saying, "You have no means of access here."

Accumulate all of these good deeds today, especially in this month, so that tomorrow you will rest peacefully in your grave.

The Trumpet is Blown

It will be a Friday. The deafening sound of Isrāfil ﷺ blowing the Trumpet will fill the air, and the entire earth will shake violently and be reduced to rubble. The mountains will be crushed into dust and will become like fluffed up wool. The oceans will burst forth and overflow. The sky will be shaken violently and it will tear open. The sun will be folded up, the stars will fall down; and they will all lose their light. The world will come to an end. Everyone and everything will be destroyed. It will be a **terrifying day**.

The trumpet will be blown again. The earth will crack open and everyone will be brought back to life: they will be **resurrected** from their graves and will be gathered on a vast, empty land.

The Day of Judgement

You will be naked and barefooted. The sun will be right above you, blazing. Its heat will be unbearable, causing everyone to sweat profusely, with some fully drowning in their sweat. However, the special believers will be shaded under the shade of Allah's Throne.

The Day will feel never-ending and gruelling: the worldly life will feel like a fleeting moment in comparison to this Day. It will be equivalent to 50,000 years.

The angels will be lined up in straight rows. You will be gathered with everyone in one plain: animals, humans, believers, disbelievers, from the beginning of the creation to its end.

Imagine the sheer number of people all gathered together in one space!

Your regrets will consume you: everything will be revealed and everyone will be humbled. The sinners will stare in horror, the hearts of the tyrants will leap into their throats, and the oppressors will be terrified. “Allah will hold the whole earth, and roll up the heavens in His Right Hand. Then He will say, **‘I am the King! Where are the kings of the earth?’**” (Bukhārī). On that Day, all authority will solely belong to Allah — The One, The All-Dominant.

You will **run away** from your brother, spouse, parents, children and they will run away from you too. The sinner will wish that he could **ransom** himself with his own children, spouse and family to be spared from punishment. People will disown each other. As for the righteous believers, the angels will meet them and calm their souls.

Even the noble Messengers will be **gripped with fear**, and the mighty angels will **tremble**. The people will search desperately for someone to intercede for them. They will go to each Prophet asking them to plead to Allah to at least start the Judgement. Each Prophet will refuse, except for our beloved Prophet ﷺ who will prostrate and

beg Allah to relieve the people's suffering. His plea will be accepted. This honour is known as the *maqām mahmūd*, the praiseworthy station, a status unique to the best of mankind ﷺ. With the entire creation beholding this spectacle, the true status of Allah's most beloved servant will be revealed to all.

The Reckoning, The Book of Deeds & The Scales of Justice

On this Day, the creation will stand in front of the Lord of the worlds and will be held accountable for all the good and evil they perpetrated in the world. Some will enter Paradise without any reckoning, some will have an easy reckoning, whilst others will have to endure a stringent reckoning.

The perfect justice of Allah will be implemented on this Day. Rights will be restored to their respective owners. You will not bear the burden of another. **Nothing will be hidden from Allah.** The angels, the earth and even your own body parts will testify against you. Every Messenger will be asked to testify over his nation.

You will be asked about the blessings Allah gave you in the world: how did you spend your life and your wealth? How did you use your knowledge and your body? The first thing you will be held accountable for will be your *salāh*.

You will be given your book of deeds which contains everything you did or said in the world. Nothing will be omitted. If it is given to you in your left hand, you will wish for death and destruction, and will be eternally doomed. And if it is given to you in your right hand, you will be overcome with joy and your face will beam with radiance.

The Scales of Justice will be set up. Whoever's scales weigh heavy with good deeds will enter Paradise. And whoever's scales are light will be dragged on their faces into the Hell-fire: humiliated, deaf, dumb and blind.

Finding Relief

Amidst the chaos of the Day, the believers will find solace in the Prophet ﷺ who will intercede on behalf of his Ummah. The angels, Prophets and righteous believers (e.g. martyrs) will also be granted permission to intercede.

Similarly, your good deeds will advocate on your behalf. He ﷺ said, "Fasting and the Qur'an will intercede for the servant on the Day of Judgement. Fasting will say: **My Lord, I prevented him from eating and his desires during the day, so accept my intercession on his behalf.** The Qur'an will say: **I prevented him from sleeping at night, so accept my intercession on his behalf.** Then, both of their intercession will be accepted" (Ahmad).

Prepare today, especially in this month,
so that tomorrow you will be saved.

The Day will be intense, scorching hot and very long. Thirst will intensify and people will crave for a drink of water. Allah, from His mercy, will allow the righteous believers to drink from the ḥawḍ (Pool). Each Prophet will have his own ḥawḍ from which his Ummah will drink. **The Prophet ﷺ will be waiting for his Ummah** at his special ḥawḍ: its water will be whiter than milk, sweeter than honey and its scent will be more fragrant than musk. Its drinking vessels and jugs will be of gold and silver and will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. It will be huge. If you drink from it, you will never feel thirsty again.

The Final Hurdle

The şirāṭ is a bridge that extends over Hell-fire. It is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword. Everyone will have to pass it. You will be given light (nūr) according to your good deeds: the more intense your light, the quicker you will cross over the şirāṭ. Some believers will pass over it within the twinkling of an eye, some like the speed of lightning. Others will struggle and have to crawl; each one according to their deeds.

Many, however, will not make it through. The huge spikes and hooks of the şirāṭ will snatch people, and they will tumble headlong into the Hell-fire. **The Prophet ﷺ will be standing on the şirāṭ** saying, ‘O Allah grant safety! O Allah grant safety!’ Imagine the **sheer terror** of being on this thin bridge: you can see Hell-fire with its blazing flames right under you; you can hear it roaring and raging, and you can see people ahead of you falling right in.

Once you have crossed the şirāṭ, you will have to pass another final bridge known as the qanṭarah. Here, you will settle your issues with other believers, as Paradise can only be entered with a clean heart. Once you are cleansed, you will be ready to step into your eternal home of Paradise.

May Allah al-Ḥakam (The Judge) admit us into Paradise without any reckoning, grant us the intercession of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, and protect us from the humiliation and agonies of the Day of Judgement.



Jahannam

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “The month of Ramadān has come to you, a blessed month...In it the gates of Hell-fire are closed...” (Nasā’ī).

As we approach the end of Ramadān, let us ask ourselves: how has our fasting been throughout this month? Did we protect our fasts from backbiting, lying and looking at ḥarām? The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Fasting is a shield from the Hell-fire” (Tirmidhī). By fasting as we truly should (abstaining from sins and following our desires), fasting becomes a means of protection from the Hell-fire.

Let us ask ourselves: have our names been added to the list of those whom Allah has freed from the Hell-fire? The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah has freed slaves (from Hell) every day and night (in Ramadān)...” (Ahmad).

Similarly, as we have increased in our recitation of the Qur’ān throughout this month, has reciting the verses of Jahannam increased our *yaqīn* (conviction) in it? Let us increase our fear of Jahannam and become determined to stay away from what leads to it by reviewing and reflecting on the descriptions of Jahannam mentioned by Allah and His beloved ﷺ.

A Terrifying Entrance

As the evildoers will be dragged on their faces towards Jahannam, they will hear it fuming and roaring. They will be roughly shoved through the gates of Jahannam. Unlike the people of Jannah, who will enter it happily and with radiant faces, the people of Jahannam will be **utterly miserable**, with dark hearts and glum faces.

As they enter and witness their punishment, they will forget all the joy they enjoyed in the world. It will be as though they had never experienced any happiness in the world.

Even the keepers of Jahannam will be **terrifying**. They will be harsh and stern, with tough physiques. The leader of the keepers is an angel named Mālik who has the most repulsive appearance.

Jahannam's doors will be tightly locked — those who enter will not be able to come out, unless Allah wills otherwise.

Burning Blazes

Jahannam will be **roaring with gigantic and fierce flames**. The heat of Jahannam will be so intense, such that different parts of it will crush one another, and will crush its inhabitants.

The fire of Jahannam is **sixty-nine times hotter than the fire of this world**. If you have ever experienced a burn, you will know how painful it is. Imagine your whole body being roasted in a fire sixty-nine times hotter. With the passage of time, the fire of Jahannam will not diminish or be extinguished.

Jahannam is monstrously huge. Allah ﷺ says, “(**Remind them of**) the Day We will ask Hell, ‘Are you filled up?’ And it will respond, ‘Are there any more?’” (50:30). On the Day of Judgement, Jahannam will be brought with seventy thousand reins: every rein will be steered by seventy thousand angels who will drag it.

Jahannam is **extremely steep**: if a stone was to be thrown into it, it would take seventy years for it to reach the bottom. Allahu Akbar! Can you imagine how big it is?

The inhabitants of Jahannam will be fully enveloped in layers of fire. There will be no opening or window, no possible chance to escape or to catch a moment of relief. In Jahannam, there is no cool breeze which offers a moment of respite. Instead, there is a “scorching wind” and the “shade” will be black smoke, which will be “neither cool nor refreshing” (56:44). The types of punishment and torment in Jahannam will vary. There will also be parts of Jahannam which will be freezing cold.

Eternal Misery

Jahannam will be dark, bleak and miserable. Full of scorpions and snakes, it will have nothing good to offer. Its inhabitants will be **constantly wailing** and screaming for help. They will scream, “Our Lord, take us out (from here), and we will act righteously, not in the way we have been doing before” (35:37). But it will be too late. They will even try to seek the intercession of the keepers of Jahannam. They will beg them: “Pray to your Lord to lighten the torment for us for one day!” (40:49).

When their request won't be fulfilled, and they will lose hope of having their punishment reduced, **they will seek death**. They will call out to Mālik, the Keeper of Hell: “O Mālik! Let your Lord do away with us” (43:77). But even that request will not be fulfilled.

Jahannam is eternal. When the people of Jahannam will have entered it, death will be brought in the form of a ram and slaughtered in between Jannah and Jahannam. Then a caller will announce, “People of Jannah, no more death! People of the Fire, no more death!” Whilst this will only increase the happiness of the people of Jannah, it will only increase the sorrow of the inhabitants of Jahannam.

A Petrifying Prison

Jahannam is the worst prison you can think of. With shackles around their necks and chains on their legs, the people of Jahannam “will be dragged into the scalding water after which they will be thrown into the Fire as fuel” (40: 71-2). They will be humiliated and their faces will be gloomy, dull and disfigured. The least punished inhabitant of Jahannam will wear a pair of shoes made of fire which will cause his brain to boil.

Allah ﷺ says, “It is Allah’s kindled Fire, that will peep into the hearts” (104:6-7). This means that when people are put into the Hell-fire, it will devour every limb and organ of the body until it reaches their heart, but the person will not die. In this world, fire kills the person even before reaching the heart. In Jahannam, however, the person will experience the torture of the burning of the heart while alive.

Just like Jannah, Jahannam too has levels. The deepest and most horrific level is reserved for the hypocrites: those who openly professed Islam, but caused much damage to the Ummah with their disbelief and deeply-entrenched hatred for the dīn.

The people of Jahannam will be repulsive. Their bodies will grow in size, so that they feel more of the punishment. Just the molar tooth of the disbeliever will be similar in size to the Mount Uhud.

Allah ﷺ says, “The Fire will scorch their faces and their lips will be twisted in pain” (23:104).

Every time the skins of the disbelievers will burn off, Allah will replace them with new skins, so that they can continuously feel the punishment of the burning fire.

Their garments will be of melted copper and their faces will be covered with fire. The clothes, beds and blankets of the people of Jahannam will be made of fire. Allah says, “...As for the disbelievers, garments of Fire will be tailored for them and **boiling water will be poured over their heads, whereby everything in their bellies, as well as the skins, will be melted.** And awaiting them are hooked rods of iron. Whenever they

try to escape from Hell—out of anguish—they will be forced back into it, (and will be told), ‘Taste the torment of burning!’” (22:19-22).

Food & Drink

Under intense torment, the people of Jahannam will beg and scream for help. They will experience excruciating pangs of hunger and thirst, and will beg to be fed and given drink. But what they will receive will only compound their suffering.

The food they will be given will be bitter, **smell foul** and will **choke** them. They will be fed poisonous thorny plants which will not satisfy their hunger.

They will eat from *Zaqqūm*, a terrifying tree which springs out of the bottom of Jahannam. Its fruits will be like molten metal and will burn their insides. It is revolting and truly horrendous.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “If a single drop of *Zaqqūm* was to be dropped into this world, it would ruin the food of its inhabitants. So how will it be for the person who has no other food except it (i.e. *Zaqqūm*)?” (Ibn Mājah).

Once they’ve eaten, they will start to feel thirsty. They will then be given scalding water to drink. They won’t just have a sip, stand back and stop because it is burning their insides. Rather, they will drink and drink like “camels suffering from the disease of over-thirst” (56:55). Not only will it burn their insides, but it will also disfigure their faces.

The people of Jahannam will also drink the discharges of dirty wounds, blood and pus. They will drink it with much difficulty and won’t be able to swallow it down their throats. It will taste and smell foul. The Prophet ﷺ told us that Allah will make the one who consumed intoxicants in this world drink from the sweat of the people of Jahannam (Muslim).

Too Late

The people of Jahannam will be gripped with regret. They will beg Allah to be given one more chance: to be sent back to the world so that they can do righteous deeds. Allah ﷺ says, “The day their faces will be rolled on the fire, they will say, ‘Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger!’” (33:66).

But it will be too late.

For us, however, whilst we are still breathing, it is not too late. **We still have a chance.**

Let us strive to become the true servants of al-Rahmān (The All-Merciful), in Ramaḍān and outside of Ramaḍān. And let us always beg Him as they begged Him:

رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ عَرَاماً ، إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَاماً

“Our Lord, turn away from us the punishment of Hell-fire. Indeed, its punishment is endless. Indeed, it is an evil residence and abode” (25:65-6).





Jannah

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said about Ramaḍān: “The doors of Jannah are opened, and none of its doors are closed” (Tirmidhī).

As we approach the end of this month, let us ask ourselves: has our longing for our eternal home increased? As we've recited and reflected on the verses of the Qur'ān, has it increased our *yaqīn* (conviction) in Jannah? Has it made us more determined to enter it?

Similarly, he ﷺ said, “Whoever believes in Allah and His Messenger, establishes *salāh*, and fasts (the month of) Ramaḍān — then it is incumbent upon Allah to admit him into Paradise, whether he emigrates in the path of Allah or stays in the land where he was born.” (The Companions) asked, “O Messenger of Allah, should we not inform the people of that?” He replied, “There are a hundred levels in Paradise which Allah has prepared for those who strive in His path. The distance between every two degrees is like the distance between the sky and the earth. Thus, when you ask Allah, ask Him for al-Firdaws, for it is the best and the highest (level) of Paradise. Above it is the Throne of The All-Merciful, and from it the rivers of Paradise gush forth” (Bukhārī).

Jannah is the ultimate prize and reward Allah ﷺ **has prepared for His obedient servants.** Jannah is a surprise: what no eye has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard and what no mind could ever imagine. When you think of a feature of Jannah, the only thing it shares with its worldly counterpart is the name: for instance a pomegranate of Jannah is nothing like the pomegranate of the world.

Jannah is beyond imagination. However, we can attempt to catch a glimpse of its beauty by reflecting on its descriptions mentioned by Allah and His Beloved ﷺ.

A Glimpse of Paradise

You have survived the terrors of the Day of the Judgement. The feeling of relief is indescribable. You've been given the Book of Deeds in your right hand, you've passed the *Širāṭ*, and now you're walking towards Jannah. You can't see it yet, but you can smell its incredible fragrance.

As you walk on, your eyes are captivated by the grandeur in front of you: the humongous doors of Jannah are towering above you. Just the distance between the two panels of a door is the distance of 40 years' worth of travel.

The doors are wide open, welcoming you in. As you enter, the greeting of the angels reverberates through the air as they congratulate you: “Peace be upon you! You have done well, so come in, to stay forever” (39:73). **Imagine finally seeing the angels and hearing them speak!**

As soon as you enter you instinctively know your residence, as our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “He will know his way to his home in Jannah better than he knew his way to his home in the world” (Bukhārī).

Everywhere you go, the **doors of Jannah are opened for you**. Like royalty, you do not need to open them yourself. There is no need to keep doors closed, as it is completely safe. You roam around and wander freely, without any restrictions. No visas, no expensive flights, no border controls. You have your own horse; made of gleaming rubies, it has two wings, and you fly on it wherever you wish.

Luxury and Comfort

As you leisurely stroll around, you realise that **Jannah is huge**. There are exquisite palaces of gold and lofty pavilions of pearls. Its bricks are of gold and silver, and its cement is musk. Its pebbles are of pearl and sapphire, and its soil is of saffron. Jannah is full of rivers meandering through its markets, palaces and pavilions. The river banks are of pearls and coral. Their soil is pure musk.

Inside are **jewelled thrones** for you to rest on, offering panoramic views. There are thick plush couches, rows of emerald cushions, and fine carpets. You **relax and socialise** here with your loved ones; eating, drinking, facing each other and having fun. And when you wish for some privacy, you have your own luxurious secluded spaces with their soft furnishings and cosy beds, which you enjoy with your spouses.

At your beck and call are **servants** with cups and pitchers, ready to serve you. They have their own charm and splendour, like “scattered pearls” (76:9) and they will remain in this state forever.

Jannah does not only look perfect, but it also **smells** perfect. **The weather in Jannah is perfect**: neither too hot, nor too cold.

Gardens, Food & Drink

As you walk around, each view is more breath-taking than the one you just saw.

Magnificent landscapes and lush greenery fill your view. **The gardens and orchards are full of majestic trees whose trunks are of gold.** The trees are laden with fruits: pomegranates, grapes and dates. There are clusters of mouth-watering fruits, softer than butter and sweeter than honey, hanging — just ready for you to eat. Neither too ripe, nor unripe: just perfect. The fruits are always in season, always available. There is an endless supply of platters of juicy meat, each one more delicious than what you just previously ate.

Now that you've eaten, you feel like drinking. You do not need to stand up. Instead, a drinking vessel comes and drops itself in your hand. Once you've had your fill of drink, it returns to its place.

Jannah is **full of fresh springs** of assorted sweet drinks, which gush forth from the ground. There are **rivers** of fresh flowing water; rivers of pure glistening honey; rivers of fresh milk; and rivers of opulent wine. Unlike its worldly counterpart, the wine of Jannah does not have a bad smell: it is pure and it is sealed with musk. It doesn't give you a headache, make you vomit or make you lose your senses and dignity. The vessels of Jannah are of gold and crystal-clear silver.

Allah ﷺ says, “Platters and cups of gold will be passed around them. There will be whatever the souls desire and the eyes delight in. And you will be there forever” (43:71).

In Jannah, you never feel hunger or thirst. Whatever you eat is merely for pleasure. All the foods and beverages are complimentary. You don't have to cook or wash up after your meal. Whatever you wish for just appears in front of you.

There are lavish buffets and endless arrays of delicious dining possibilities. With spectacular views, charming company, and every form of comfort and luxury imaginable, every meal is an exquisite experience.

Eternal Peace

In Jannah, there is no stress. **There is no pain, no hatred and no negative feelings.** There is no backbiting, no gossip, no evil talk, and no useless chatter. In Jannah, there is peace. Eternal peace.

In Jannah you never feel tired: neither physically nor emotionally. You are secure — in every sense. There is no pain. You never experience illness. You never feel angry, or a sense of despair. Jannah is perpetual hope. There is no sadness, no fear and no anxiety.

Jannah is everlasting happiness.

In Jannah, you don't run out of anything. Allah's gifts upon gifts to you are uninterrupted, constantly flowing. **Jannah is eternal.** You never get bored of Jannah. In the world, you may go on a luxurious holiday, but by the end of two weeks, you start missing home. In Jannah you never feel like that. Jannah is your home. Your real home.

Beauty and Company

Your garments are of the finest and softest silk: glistening emerald gowns. Your hands glisten with the finest jewellery: bracelets of gold and pearls. Your clothes never wear out. Even your comb is of gold.

Everyone you see is beautiful, radiant and hair free. Nobody spits, blows their noses or needs to go to the bathroom. Even their sweat is musk. Nobody grows old: no creaking bones, wrinkles or weakening memories. The ability to derive pleasure does not ever diminish.

In Jannah, your heart bursts with love and gratitude to The One who created you. You constantly glorify and praise Him “as easily as you breathe” (Muslim).

Jannah is pure beauty and eternal bliss, which you enjoy with your spouses. Allah ﷺ says, “The people of Paradise will be busy enjoying themselves. They and their spouses are in pleasant shade, reclining on couches” (36:55-6).

If you are from the men of Jannah, Allah marries you to the ḥūr. They have striking eyes, radiant skin, and they wear dazzling dresses. They are loving, faithful and of exemplary character. The Prophet ﷺ said, “If one of the women of Jannah were to appear to the people of the earth, she would fill up what is between the heavens and the earth with her light and her fragrance. And the scarf on her head is better than the world and what is in it” (Bukhārī).

And if you are from the women of the world, you are even more beautiful and stunning than the ḥūr and have a superior status due to your worship of Allah in the world.

In Jannah, there is no loneliness. In Jannah you are reunited with your loved ones: your spouses, your children, your parents, your grandparents; even the great-grandparents you always dreamed of meeting. You are able to meet the special friends of Allah, and the heroes and heroines of our Ummah. You are able to converse with the Companions

and the Prophets. You are able to enjoy the blessed company of the Chosen One ﷺ!

And after all of these blessings, you are finally gifted with the best blessing, the joy of which surpasses all joy: the pleasure of seeing Allah, The Most Exalted and Majestic.

Let us always ask Allah al-Wahhāb (The Ever Giving) with the special du‘ā’ of ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ إِيمَانًا لَا يَرْتَدُ، وَنَعِيْمًا لَا يَنْقُدُ، وَمُرَاقَّةً تَبَيَّنَتْ مُحَمَّدٌ فِي أَعْلَى جَنَّةِ الْخَلْدِ.

O Allah, I beg you for faith which does not waver, blessings which do not cease, and the company of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the loftiest abode of the Eternal Garden (Ibn Ḥibbān).





Longing to Meet Allah

As we have been reciting and hearing the words of our Lord throughout this month, has this increased our **longing** for Him? Has our time spent alone with Him made our hearts **yearn to meet Him**? Has reciting the verses where Allah ﷺ describes Himself made us eager to see His Majestic Face and hear from Him directly?

Throughout this month we have sacrificed our desires and fasted; we have left the comforts of our beds, given up on sleep for the sake of Allah and performed qiyām. In return, Allah, al-Shakūr – the One who is Extremely Appreciative of our tiny efforts – has prepared for us a magnificent reward. A reward which will make all the sacrifices worthwhile. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The fasting person will have two moments of joy: one when he opens his fast, and the other when he will meet his Lord” (Muslim).

Ultimate Happiness

The greatest joy a believer will enjoy in the hereafter will be the joy of seeing Allah and meeting Him. There are no words which can describe how phenomenal this experience will be. When the people of Jannah will see Allah ﷺ with their very own eyes, they will forget all the previous blessings given to them in Paradise. The Prophet ﷺ said, “When the people of Paradise enter it, Allah – Blessed and Exalted is He – will say, ‘Would you like anything more?’ They will say, ‘Have You not brightened our faces? Have You not admitted us into Paradise and saved us from Hell-fire?’ Then, He ﷺ will lift the Veil. **Nothing they are given will be more beloved to them than looking at their Lord** – Majestic and Exalted is He.” Then, he ﷺ recited the verse, “Those who do good will have the finest reward and **more!**” (10:26). The ‘more’ refers to the gift of seeing Allah.

The believers will see Allah as clearly as the moon can be seen on a cloudless night. Allah ﷺ says,

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِنَ نَاضِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ.

“On that Day there will be radiant faces, looking towards their Lord” (75:22-3).

“They will look at their Lord and their faces will become radiant with His Light.” - al-Hasan ﷺ

Imagine Meeting Allah

Meeting Allah and seeing His Magnificent Face will be **the** ultimate meeting. No words can describe the bliss and joy a servant will feel when he finally gets to see Allah.

Imagine finally meeting the One whom we loved and worshipped in the world! The One who we always talked to, the One who loved us more than we loved ourselves. Imagine how phenomenal it will be to see Allah as He receives us with forgiveness, immense grace and love.

In the world, we read about Allah, al-Jamīl, The Most Beautiful. We may have gasped at a beautiful sight or were left speechless by a stunning scene. Imagine finally seeing **The Source of all that beauty!**

In the world, we experienced the deep love of Allah, al-Wadūd, The Most Loving. We enjoyed the endless gifts bestowed upon us by Allah, al-Wahhāb, The Ever-Giving. Imagine being able to finally see **The Source of all goodness!**

In the world we always called out to Allah, al-Šamad, The Perfect Master. We craved perfection and pursued it relentlessly. But we never found it, as Allah is The Only One who is Completely Perfect. Imagine now finally seeing **The Most Perfect** – Exalted and Majestic is He!

Longing to Meet Allah

Eagerness to meet Allah, longing for Him (known as *shawq* in Arabic) and to be close to Him has always remained a hallmark of His special servants. When our beloved Prophet ﷺ was given a choice to either remain in the world or meet Allah, he chose the latter.

Similarly, we see the enthusiasm to meet Allah in the example of Mūsā ﷺ who left his people and rushed to meet Allah. Allah ﷺ asked him,

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمٍ يَمْوَسِي

“Why have you come with such haste ahead of your people, O Mūsā?” (20:83)

قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءِ عَلَىٰ أَثْرِيْ وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضِي

He replied: "They are following in my footsteps. And I have hastened to You, my Lord, so You will be pleased" (20:84).

We see a similar expression of love and longing to meet Allah in the du‘ā’ of Āsiyā ﷺ, the wife of Pharaoh. She asked Allah ﷺ:

رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ

My Lord, build for me, near You, a house in Paradise (66:11).

The scholars mentioned that by mentioning ‘near You’ before ‘a house’, she chose her neighbour before the house: what was more important to her was that she enjoys the proximity and closeness to Allah ﷺ than the house itself. This brief, yet powerful du‘ā’ speaks volumes of her deep awareness, love and longing for Him.

“The longing for meeting Allah is a breeze that blows across the heart, removing from it the glittering illusions of the worldly life.”

- Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

Allah is Eager to See You

Just as believers are eager to meet and see Allah, Allah is also looking forward to meeting them. In the world, Allah ﷺ eagerly welcomes the believer who is regular in attending the masājid for ṣalāh and dhikr, just as people welcome their loved ones happily upon their return from a journey” (Ibn Mājah). Imagine then how happy He will be to meet these same servants in Paradise! Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him. Whoever dislikes to meet with Allah, Allah also dislikes to meet Him” (Bukhārī).

How Can We Increase Our Longing for Allah?

To increase our longing for Allah, we have to recognise who Allah is (ma‘rifah). Once we realise who He is (the Magnificent Lord), and who we are (i.e. His weak servants), this should lead us to increase in worshipping Him. The more we worship Him, the more acquainted we will become with Him. Our love for Him will then increase, and subsequently, this will increase our longing for Him. The more you love someone, the more eager you are to meet them.

Reciting His words, talking to Him intimately in du‘ā’, crying to Him with desperation in sajdah, remembering Him and praising Him with a heart full of love and gratitude — all of these should increase our longing for Him.

“The greatest blessing and joy of the hereafter is seeing the Face of Allah – Exalted is He –, hearing His speech and being close to Him...The best means to achieve this is by attaining the greatest joy of the world i.e. the joy of knowing Him and loving Him.” - Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ

The Best Day

Once the People of Paradise settle into it and begin to enjoy its unlimited blessings, they will be summoned for a special meeting. A caller will announce, “O People of Paradise! Your Lord – Blessed and Exalted is He – requests you to visit Him, so come to visit Him!” So, they will reply, “We hear and we obey!”

They will eagerly rush to visit Him until they will reach a wide valley. They will all gather there and none of them will turn down the request of the caller. Allah will order His Kursī to be placed there. Then, pulpits of light, pearls, gemstones, gold, and silver will be brought for them. The lowest of them in rank (whose status will be glorious in his own right) will sit on heaps of musk; and they will not see what will be given to those who are superior to them in ranks i.e. they will not feel inferior to them.

When they settle into their seats and become comfortable, the caller will call out, “O People of Paradise! You have an appointment with Allah in which He wishes to reward you!” So they will say, “And what is that reward? Has He not already made our faces bright, made our scales heavy, entered us into Paradise, and saved us from the Fire?”

Suddenly, a light will shine which will encompass all of Paradise. So, they will raise their heads, and, behold: the Compeller – Exalted is He, and Pure are His Names – will appear from above them. He will proclaim, “O People of Paradise! Peace be upon you!” And they will respond to this greeting with the best response: “O Allah, You are The Source of Peace, and from You comes peace. Blessed are You, full of Majesty and Honour.” So, the Lord – Blessed and Exalted is He – will manifest Himself, laugh, and say, “O People of Paradise! Where are My servants who obeyed Me without having ever seen Me? **This is the Day of Increase!**”

So, they will all give the same response: “We are pleased, so be pleased with us!” So, He will say, “O People of Paradise! If I was not pleased with you, I would not have made you inhabitants of My Paradise! **This is the Day of Increase**, So, ask Me!” So, they will all give the same response: “**Show us your Face** so that we may look at it!” So, the Lord - Mighty and Majestic - will remove His Veil and will reveal Himself to them. He will cover them with His Light, which would have burned them, if Allah had not willed otherwise.

Upon seeing Allah, they will forget every blessing they had previously seen.

And there will not remain a single person in this gathering except that his Lord – the Exalted – will speak to him directly. Allah ﷺ will say, “O so and so! Do you remember the day that you did this and that?” He will remind him of some of his bad deeds in the world. The person will say, “O Lord! Did you not forgive me?” So, He will say, “Of course! It is only through My forgiveness that you obtained this position of yours.”

(Adapted from *Hādī al-Arwāh ilā Bilād al-Afrāh*, wherein Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله combined the *hadiths* about seeing Allah.)

“By Allah, the world is only sweet with His remembrance; the Next Life is only sweet with His forgiveness; and Paradise is only sweet with seeing His Noble Face.”

- Dhū al-Nūn رضي الله عنه

In Paradise, the believers will get to see Allah ﷺ once a week, on Jumu’ah. As for the elite of Paradise, they will get to see Allah twice daily: once in the morning and once in the evening. These are the people who especially preserved the two prayers of these times in the world (i.e. Fajr and ‘Aṣr) and journeyed to Allah by remembering Him, supplicating to Him and reciting His words in these two times.

O Allah, we beg you as Your beloved ﷺ used to beg you:

وَأَسْأَلُكَ لَذَّةَ الظَّرِيرَ إِلَى وَجْهِكَ ، وَالشَّوْقَ إِلَى لِقَائِكَ

“...I ask You for the pleasure of seeing Your face, and for the longing to meet You....”
(*Nasa’ī*)



“

“How can the believer not shed tears at the
departure of Ramaḍān, when he does not know
if he will live to the next Ramaḍān?”

- (Ibn Rajab رحمه الله)



Bidding Farewell to Ramadan

Our hearts feel sad. Our cheeks are damp with tears. As we bid farewell to our beloved friend (i.e. Ramaḍān), we reflect on the shortness of its visit. Is this a metaphor for life? Will it pass by like the blink of an eye?

I should have done more. I shouldn't have wasted my time. These are regrets we are all familiar with. However, we still have precious hours remaining. Let us make the most of them. The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Indeed, deeds are only judged by their endings”** (Bukhārī).

Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ writes, “When the race horse knows that it is nearing the end of the track, it exerts all of its effort to win the race. Do not allow the race horse to be cleverer than you. Indeed, deeds are judged by their conclusions. Thus, if you didn’t do well with welcoming Ramaḍān then perhaps you will do better bidding it farewell.”

Ibn Rajab ﷺ reminds us, “O Servants of Allah! Ramaḍān is ending, and very little of it remains: **whoever from you spent it well should finish it the same way; and whoever is falling behind should finish it in the best manner**, for the reward of actions are determined by their ending.”

Let us not waste these last precious moments doing Eid preparations. Let us not become complacent about attending the tarāwīh prayers, just because the imām has finished the recitation (khatm) of the Qur’ān.

“What matters the most are excellent endings, not faulty beginnings.” - Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ

As we come to the end of this great month, let us end it keeping the following five pointers in mind:

One: Fear Your Actions Not Being Accepted

Along with all the acts of worship we have been carrying out this month, we must add another: the fear that our deeds may not be accepted.

The righteous predecessors would strive to perfect their deeds and then would worry about whether their deeds would be accepted.

‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ said, “Be more concerned with Allah’s acceptance of a good deed than with doing the good deed itself. Have you not heard Allah say:

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ.

“Allah only accepts from the people of *taqwā*” (5:27)?”

Similarly, Allah ﷺ says,

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتُوا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ

“And those who give that which they give with their hearts full of fear...” (23:60).

Āishah ﷺ said, “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah: Does ‘And those who give that which they give with their hearts full of fear... (23:60)’ refer to the person who commits adultery, steals and drinks alcohol?’ He ﷺ replied, ‘No, O daughter of Abū Bakr! Rather it is the one who fasts, gives charity, performs *salāh*, whilst he fears that it will not be accepted from him’” (Ibn Mājah).

“I witnessed the predecessors exerting their utmost efforts in performing righteous deeds, but upon performing them, anxiety would befall them as to whether their deeds would be accepted or not.” - ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Abī Rawwād ﷺ

Two: Ask Allah to Accept Your Good Deeds

Our pious predecessors would ask Allah for six months to allow them to reach Ramaḍān. And then they would spend the next six months asking Allah to accept it from them.

The purpose of fasting is to attain *taqwā* (piety). As this momentous month comes to an end, let us ask ourselves: have we attained *taqwā*? Have we attained the purpose of fasting? Allah has informed us in the Qur’ān that *taqwā* is the basis of the acceptance of deeds.

Our predecessors used to cry from the fear that their deeds would not be accepted. ‘Āmir b. ‘Abdillāh b. Zubayr was seen crying profusely during his final illness. He was asked, “What makes you cry?” He replied, “An āyah in the Book of Allah, the Exalted:

Allah only accepts from the people of *taqwā*” (5:27).

Wuhayb b. al-Ward ﷺ recited,

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

“And (remember) when Ibrāhīm raised the foundation of the House with Ismā’īl, (supplicating), ‘Our Lord! Accept (this) from us. You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing’” (2:127);

He then cried saying, “O Friend of The All-Merciful (Khalil al-Rahmān)! You were raising the foundations of the House of The All-Merciful, and you were scared that it would not be accepted from you!”

“That I was to know that Allah has accepted from me the weight of a mustard seed — is more beloved to me than the world and everything it contains, because Allah says, ‘Allah only accepts from the people of *taqwā*’ (5:27)” - Fuḍālah b. ‘Ubayd ﷺ

Three: Thank Allah & Seek Forgiveness

The servant of Allah is always in between a blessing of Allah which requires him to be grateful, and between a sin which requires him to seek forgiveness. Thus, we should end Ramaḍān by **thanking Allah for giving us the *tawfiq* to worship Him**. And at the same time, we should seek His forgiveness for all our deficiencies in this month.

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes, “Know that you are deficient, and everything that comes from a deficient person is going to be deficient. This undoubtedly requires the servant’s apology. Thus, the servant should apologise to his Lord in regard to all the good and evil he perpetrates. As for the evil, this is apparent. **As for the good, he should apologise for its deficiencies**; and he should not consider it to be worthy to present to his Lord. So, despite his good deeds, he is apologetic. This is why Allah praised His friends, saying ‘And those who give that which they give with their hearts full of fear... (23:60)’”.

“*Istighfār* (seeking forgiveness) is the seal of all righteous acts: *salāh*, *hajj*, and *qiyām al-layl* (night prayers) are concluded with it, and gatherings are concluded with it...Likewise it is necessary that the fasting of Ramaḍān is concluded with *istighfār*.” - Ibn Rajab ﷺ

Four: Be Wary of Pride & 'Ujb

As we increase in worshipping Allah in this blessed month, we should never look down on others who may not be worshipping Allah as much. We should never think we are better than them. Likewise, we should be careful of falling into the trap of 'ujb. 'Ujb refers to feeling pleased with one's own accomplishments. This stems from **thinking too highly of oneself**, being ignorant of one's own nature and faults; whilst **failing to recognise who Allah is**, and the rights He has over His servants. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ writes that when this occurs, "It gives rise to conceit ('ujb), pride, and such afflictions that are worse than the major external sins such as zinā, drinking alcohol, and fleeing from the battlefield etc."

He further writes, "**A sin that causes you to humble yourself to Him is dearer to Him than a righteous act accompanied by boastful self-righteousness.** If you sleep all night then wake up feeling regret (for not having prayed qiyām al-layl), that may be better for you than if you were to pray all night and wake up in the morning filled with self-admiration. For the deeds of the one who admires himself are not accepted...The crying of the sinners is dearer to Him than the self-satisfied tasbīh of the conceited. Perhaps Allah made (the sinner) fall into this sin as a cure that brings out a lethal illness, but your illness still resides within undetected."

Were we to realise how Powerful, Magnificent, and Independent Allah is, and then contrast this with how sinful, weak and ungrateful we are, we could never feel pleased at our own insignificant deeds.

Were we to internalise the essence of Allah's Lordship (rubūbiyyah), and contrast this with the essence of servitude ('ubūdiyyah), we would feel ashamed and realise that the good deeds we have done are not worthy to be presented to the Lords of the heavens and the earth. Instead, **it is only from His sheer generosity and grace that He accepts and rewards us for our paltry actions.**

Instead of feeling 'ujb due to our worship in this month, we should always remember that whatever good we have done is only due to the tawfiq and blessings of Allah; and hence we should always be grateful to Allah.

"When you are pleased with your nafs (inner self) and your deeds for Allah, then know that He is not pleased with you. How can anyone who knows that his nafs is the abode of every defect and evil, and his deeds open to every deficiency and damage — be pleased with his nafs and his deeds for Allah?" (A Pious Predecessor, Madārij al-Sālikīn)

Five: Give Sadaqat al-Fitr

We should give şadaqat al-fitr as we conclude Ramaḍān and welcome the Day of Eid. Ibn Rajab ﷺ writes, “Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ﷺ wrote to the various provinces under his rule, commanding them to conclude the month of Ramaḍān with istighfār, şadaqah and şadaqat al-fitr.

Istighfār restores the fast from the damage done to it by idle talk and vulgarity. And şadaqat al-fitr is a purification for the fasting person from idle talk and vulgarity. This is why one of the earlier scholars said, ‘Indeed, şadaqat al-fitr for the fasting person is like the prostration of forgetfulness for şalāh (sajdat al-sahw).’”

As we end this blessed month, let us make a firm intention of continuing to worship Allah and staying away from sin, starting off with the blessed night of Eid. Let us recite the takbīrāt in abundance and let us continue with the habit of qiyām al-layl, even if it is just two rak’ahs.

May Allah al-Shakūr (The Most Appreciative) accept our worship, forgive our sins and make us from His chosen servants.

‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ﷺ would say in the last night of Ramaḍān,
“Who amongst us has been accepted, so that we might congratulate
them? And who among us has been deprived of acceptance,
so that we might console them?”





Eid Mubarak

The Sunan of Eid

The celebration of Eid is the best celebration for a believer. To spend this blessed day in the best way, we should implement the following sunnah acts:

- ➊ Recite the takbīr in abundance until the imām proceeds for Eid ḥalāt (Ibn Abī Shaybah).
- ➋ Bathe before going for Eid ḥalāt (Muwaṭṭā').
- ➌ Use siwāk, wear your best clothes and apply perfume (Bukhārī).
- ➍ Eat an odd number of dates or anything else prior to Eid ḥalāt (Bukhārī).
- ➎ Give ṣadaqat al-fiṭr before the Eid ḥalāt (Bukhārī).
- ➏ Go for ḥalāt from one route and return from another (Bukhārī).
- ➐ Arrive early for Eid ḥalāt (Bukhārī).
- ➑ Walk to Eid ḥalāt (Tirmidhī).
- ➒ Pray Eid ḥalāt in an open area (Muslim).
- ➓ Express joy and happiness by congratulating others, saying: 'May Allah accept from us and you' or 'Eid Mubārak' or something similar (Fatḥ al-Bārī).



Eid: A Day of Gratitude & Glory

After a month of effort, sleeplessness and fatigue, Allah ﷺ has rewarded us with the Day of Eid. Allāhu Akbar!

Anas ﷺ said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to Madinah, and the people (of Madinah) had two days in which they would play and have fun. He ﷺ asked, “What are these two days?” They replied, “We used to play and have fun in them during the pre-Islamic period.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah has substituted for you something better than these two days: the Day of al-Adhā and the Day of al-Fitr” (Abū Dāwūd).

Eid al-Fitr is a day of celebration for the whole Ummah. We, the sinners, have inshāAllah been forgiven throughout this month. It is a day of joy and happiness. We should be happy that Allah ﷺ allowed us to fast and perform qiyām throughout Ramaḍān. And we should be grateful that He granted us a month of immense blessings, forgiveness and goodness, and blessed us with Laylat al-Qadr. Allah ﷺ says,

قُلْ بِقَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَلِلَّهِ فَلِيَقْرَهُوا، هُوَ خَيْرٌ مَمَّا يَجْمِعُونَ

“Say: In Allah’s grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever (wealth) they accumulate” (10:58).

Eid is a joyous day: a day when we wear our best clothes, attend the Eid ṣalāh, and spend the day spreading love and joy in our families and communities. We congratulate each other and ask Allah to accept each other’s deeds in Ramaḍān. We strengthen family bonds by inviting and visiting our relatives. We share food with our neighbours and the poor.

Eid is the greatest gathering of Muslims. It is a symbol of strength, unity, brotherhood and love. It is a day full of blessings and opportunities to be forgiven. Umm ‘Atiyyah ﷺ said, “We used to be ordered to come out on the day of Eid, even the young girls and menstruating women from their houses. They would stand behind the men and declare the greatness of Allah along with them, and supplicate to Allah along with them, hoping for the blessings of that day and its purification (from sin)” (Bukhāri).

Eid is a day of takbīr. Allah ﷺ says,

وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعَدَةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَنَكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ.

“...He wants you to complete the prescribed period (the month of Ramaḍān) and to glorify Allah for having guided you; so that you may be thankful” (2:185).

Allāhu Akbar is the declaration of Allah’s absolute greatness, perfection and might. As He is greater than everyone and everything, He is the only One who deserves to be worshipped and glorified. On this day of happiness and joy, we glorify and thank Allah for allowing us to complete a month of obedience and good deeds. We thank Him for bestowing us with the greatest blessing: the blessing of īmān.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

The Day of Eid is a day of joy and happiness, not a day of sin and disobedience to Allah. Islam is a religion of balance. We can have fun — so long as it is ḥalāl, in moderation, and we don’t make it our sole purpose.

Don’t ruin your efforts of Ramaḍān by engaging in ḥarām on this blessed day. Don’t switch from listening to the Qur’ān to listening to music. Pray all five ṣalāhs with the congregation in the masjid. Preserve your modesty and don’t flaunt your beauty in public or online. Waki’ ﷺ said, “We went out with Sufyān al-Thawrī ﷺ on Eid and he said, ‘The first thing that we will begin this day of ours with is the lowering of the gaze.’”

On this great day, we remember those who are suffering and oppressed, the orphans and the widows, the unjustly imprisoned and those who are sick. May Allah bring the happiness of Eid to the entire Ummah and restore its honour and glory. May your Eid be blessed!

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

“

“The believer has five Eids:

- 1 Every day that passes from his life without a sin being written down against him is a day of Eid.
- 2 The day that he will exit from this world with *īmān* is a day of Eid.
- 3 The day he will cross the *ṣirāṭ* (the bridge over Hell) and is saved from the horrors of the Day of Judgement is a day of Eid.
- 4 The day that he will walk into Jannah is a day of Eid.
- 5 The day he sees His Lord is a day of Eid.”

- Imām Mālik رض



Post-Ramadān: The Journey Continues

Throughout Ramadān, by Allah's favour, we tasted the sweetness of fasting and the night prayer. We revived our dead hearts with the recitation of the Qur'ān and the dhikr of Allah. We basked in the serenity of talking to Allah and felt the peace of seeking His forgiveness in the last parts of the night.

Now that Ramadān is over, let us ask ourselves: what next? What did we gain from Ramadān? How did it change us? Did it transform our lives? Will our life post-Ramadān look exactly the same as life pre-Ramadān?

Just a short while ago, we were planning for the 'dream project' of Ramadān. Now that Ramadān has ended, we should spend time in Shawwāl to evaluate our Ramadān.

Evaluate Your Ramadan

We can evaluate our Ramadān by asking ourselves the following questions:

- 1 Did my īmān in Allah increase? What do I know about Allah that I didn't prior to Ramadān? Do I feel closer to Him?
- 2 Did I go to Allah with a broken heart in utter desperation? Did I humble myself as a true servant of His?
- 3 Were there times in the month where my heart felt overwhelmed with love and gratitude for Allah?
- 4 Did my love for Allah's Messenger ﷺ increase? Which sunnah am I going to start implementing in my life that I previously didn't used to do?
- 5 Did my worship in Ramadān purify and soften my heart?
- 6 Did my fasting cause me to give up my bad habits?
- 7 Which sins of the eyes and the tongue did I give up? What steps am I going to take to maintain this?
- 8 Did I improve my akhlāq in this month?
- 9 Did I become a more gentle and loving family member?

- 10 Did I taste the sweetness of spending in the path of Allah? Did I give charity in secret?
- 11 Has Ramaḍān made me more determined to continue serving the dīn of Allah and His Ummah?
- 12 Did I taste the sweetness of solitude with Allah at night in qiyām? Has it made me determined to continue with this good deed?
- 13 Did I feel a difference in the quality of my ṣalāh?
- 14 Did I feel emotionally connected to the Qur’ān?
- 15 Did I feel the closeness of Allah when making du‘ā’ to Him?
- 16 Did I do dhikr with the presence of my heart?
- 17 Which one act of worship am I going to hold on to from Ramaḍān, something which I previously did not used to do?
- 18 What do I not want to lose of Ramaḍān?
- 19 Do I feel a greater level of self-control now that Ramaḍān is over?
- 20 If Allah gives me life, what two things will I do differently next Ramaḍān?

Fasting in Shawwāl

One of the things we can do to keep our momentum going is fast six days of Shawwāl. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Fasting Ramaḍān is like fasting ten months, and fasting six days thereafter (in Shawwāl) is like fasting two months. That is like fasting a whole year” (Ahmad).

Ibn Rajab رحمه الله explains the benefits of keeping the 6 Shawwāl fasts:

- 1 The reward of fasting the entire year. As Allah ﷺ rewards tenfold for a good deed, a servant will be rewarded for ten months of fasting due to fasting for the month of Ramaḍān; and the 6 days of fasting will be equivalent to fasting two further months, making it a total of a year.
- 2 Fasting in Sha‘bān and Shawwāl is like performing the sunan mu’akkadah (rawātib) prayers before and after the fard ṣalāhs. They make up for and atone for the deficiencies of the fard acts.

③ Continuing to fast after Ramaḍān is a sign that one's Ramaḍān was accepted. If Allah ﷺ accepts a good deed, he gives his servant the tawfiq to follow this up with another good deed, as a pious predecessor said: 'The reward of a good deed is another good deed.'

④ Fasting in Ramaḍān leads to one's sins being forgiven, and those who fasted in Ramaḍān are given their reward in full on the Day of Eid i.e. the Day of Prizes. Fasting after Eid is a means of thanking Allah ﷺ for this blessing.

Fasting is a blessing, which requires one to be grateful for it by fasting even more; for there is no blessing greater than the forgiveness of one's sins. Allah ﷺ has commanded His servants to thank Him for the blessing of fasting in Ramaḍān. This includes thanking Allah by fasting after Ramaḍān.

Some of the pious predecessors would fast the day in order to thank Allah for granting them tawfiq to stand the previous night in prayer.

⑤ The actions through which one seeks to attain Allah's closeness in Ramaḍān do not come to an end with the end of Ramaḍān. Rather one must continue with them throughout the year.

(Adapted from Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif)

Stay Steadfast After Ramadan

After a month of intense worship, we may experience 'post-Ramaḍān blues' or a 'post-Ramaḍān dip'.

Naturally, we cannot do the same amount of worship in Shawwāl that we did in Ramaḍān. However, we should maintain a strong desire to continue worshipping Allah and progressing in our journey to Him. A sign of our Ramaḍān being accepted is that Allah ﷺ grants us tawfiq to continue worshipping Him. Thus, we should ensure that, even though Ramaḍān has ended, our daily Qur'ān recitation, dhikr, du'ā, fasting, and night prayer does not end, even if it is little. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ told us that that the most beloved deeds to Allah are those which are constant, even if they are a few (Muslim).

We sometimes surprise ourselves how much self-restraint we are capable of in Ramaḍān (only by the grace of the Almighty). We should try to bring a percentage of this self-discipline over to post-Ramaḍān. Don't let a day go by without reciting Qur'ān. Add an additional sunnah/nafl prayer to your routine which you previously did not used to perform prior to Ramaḍān. Set yourself realistic expectations. There may be days or even some weeks where you experience a dip, but keep going. Don't

give up and ask Allah to help you. Don't be paralysed by an 'all-or-nothing' attitude. Each time you do good, thank Him. Realise that none of it is because of you. It is only because He allowed you to do it.

Stay Away from Sins

One of the major goals of Ramaḍān was taqwā. Fasting should have trained us to control our nafs and stay away from sins. Yahyā b. Mu'ādh ﷺ said, "Whoever seeks forgiveness with his tongue but his heart is still insistent upon sin, and his intention is to return back to the sin after Ramaḍān, then his fasting has been rejected and the door of acceptance has been closed in his face."

Even if our additional voluntary deeds sometimes slip, we should not compromise on two things: (1) the obligatory deeds (2) staying away from sins. And if we do commit sins, we should be quick to repent.

We should identify specific sins and beg Allah to protect us from them. E.g. O Allah, just as you protected my tongue from backbiting in Ramaḍān, protect me from it throughout the year. O Allah, just as you protected me from watching ḥarām in Ramaḍān, protect me from it throughout the year.

"O the one who completed Ramaḍān in the best manner!
Don't change thereafter in Shawwāl!" - Ibn al-Jawzī ﷺ

The Journey Continues

Our journey to Allah does not end with Ramaḍān. Our journey of knowing Him, of tasting the sweetness of worshipping Him, of living a life of 'ubūdiyyah (servitude) does not end with Ramaḍān. It was said to Bishr al-Hāfi ﷺ, "There are some people who strive hard in Ramaḍān but when it ends, they stop." He replied, "How evil are these people! They only know the rights of Allah in Ramaḍān. Indeed, the pious person is the one who worships and strives hard throughout the entire year."

As we journey on the Straight Path to Allah ﷺ, we should always ask Him for *istiqāmah* (steadfastness and staying firm). The Prophet ﷺ was asked, "Advise me with something that I could hold on to". He ﷺ replied, "Say, 'My Lord is Allah', then remain steadfast on it" (Tirmidhī). The Prophet ﷺ also said, "Abdullāh! Do not be like so-and-so! He used to pray at night, and he then stopped the night prayer" (Bukhārī).

To stay firm, we should continuously seek knowledge (even if it is one class a week), and keep good company. We should fill our schedules with various good deeds, so

that Shayṭān does not lead us to veer off the Straight Path. Every minute in our journey to Allah is extremely precious.

“O son of Ādām! You are nothing but a number of days: and whenever a day passes, a part of you passes away.” - Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ﷺ

Istiqaṁah on the journey to Allah is attained through rectifying and nourishing **the heart**. Ibn Rajab ﷺ writes, “The foundation of istiqāmah is the istiqāmah of the heart upon tawhīd (the Oneness of Allah)...When the heart becomes steadfast on the ma’rifah (knowledge) of Allah, being in awe of Him, honouring Him, loving Him, seeking Him, hoping in Him, supplicating to Him, relying on Him and turning away from other than Him — then all the limbs and body parts will become steadfast on obeying Him. For the heart is the king of the limbs, and the limbs are its troops. When the king stands firm, his troops and subjects follow suit.”

May Allah al-Qawiyy (The Most Powerful) make us from the people of istiqāmah, about whom He says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِسْتَقْمُوا تَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلِكَةُ أَلَا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزُنُوا وَأَيْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ
الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ. نَحْنُ أُولَئِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشَهِّدُنَّ أَنفُسُكُمْ
وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَعُونَ. نُزُلًا مِنْ عَفْوٍ رَّحِيمٍ.

“Surely those who say, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, (saying,) “Do not fear, nor grieve. Rather, rejoice in the good news of Paradise, which you have been promised. We are your friends in this worldly life and in the hereafter. There you will have whatever your souls desire, and there you will have whatever you ask for: as a welcoming gift from the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (41:30-2).





Appendix 1: Ramadan and Menstruation

Some sisters can feel upset when they get their period in Ramaḍān (especially during the last ten days). Something similar happened to our mother ‘Āishah ﷺ. She says, “We set forth with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with the sole intention of ḥajj till we came (to the place known as) Sarif; and there I started menstruating. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to me and I was crying, so he asked, “What is making you cry?” I replied, “By Allah, I wish I had not come (for ḥajj) this year.” He ﷺ said, “What’s the matter? Perhaps you have started menstruating?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “This is what Allah has ordained for the daughters of Ādām. Do what the pilgrim does, except that do not do ḥawāf of the House (of Allah)” (Bukhārī).

Allah The All-Wise has decreed for women to undergo menstruation every month. During this period, women do not fast or pray ṣalāh. This is the command of Allah, which women should submit to and should not feel ashamed of. If it wasn’t for menstruation, humanity and the Ummah wouldn’t continue. It is in fact from the mercy and kindness of Allah that women are given a break from some physical acts of worship during a time when they feel weaker and may experience severe pain.

It can be easy, however, to fall into a ‘break’ mode when your period occurs. Mentally, you may think you are ‘off duty’ for a few days and subsequently neglect your relationship with Allah ﷺ. But having this approach will actually leave you feeling worse by the end of it.

A mindset shift is therefore critical. Even when you’re on period, you can and **should** still worship Allah. Instead of thinking what you can’t do or feeling limited, feel like you can give **more** time to other acts of worship. Thus, you can’t fast during the day, but you can still fill it up with worship. You can’t recite the Qur’ān (according to many scholars), but you can still listen to the Qur’ān.

‘Āishah ﷺ says, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would rest his head in my lap whilst I was menstruating, and he would recite the Qur’ān” (Bukhārī).

Likewise, this is the perfect time to dedicate yourself to **learning** and **reflecting** on the meaning of the Qur'ān. Similarly, you can't stand for the night prayer, but you can sit with a translation of the Qur'ān and follow the imām's recitation. You can't pray tahajjud in the last third of the night, but you can still wake up and sit in your place of prayer and make **earnest du'ā'** and **istighfār**.

For the first few days, you might be unable to worship as much due to being in pain. You will be rewarded for this, as our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, "If a servant falls ill or travels, the likes of what he used to do when he was a resident (i.e. not travelling) and healthy will be recorded for him" (Bukhārī). Similarly, about Laylat al-Qadr, our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, "In it, Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is truly deprived!" (Nasā'ī). Juwaybir said: "I asked Dāḥlāk, 'Do women experiencing post-natal bleeding and menstruation, those travelling, and those asleep (due to illness) have a share of Laylat al-Qadr?' He replied, 'Yes. Whoever's deeds Allah accepts, He will give them their share of Laylat al-Qadr.'"

However, as for the days when you are not in pain, try to have a spirit of striving in 'ibādah. This will prevent you experiencing a dip in your spirituality, and then having to motivate yourself once you have finished your menstruation.

Here are some specific actions you can fill your days and nights with inshāAllah:

1. Dive into the Qur'ān

- **Read the translation and tafsīr.**
- **Listen to the Qur'ān.**
- **Learn the meanings of a specific sūrah/sūrahs.**
- **Reflect on the Qur'ān (tadabbur).**

[Useful resource: QuranReflect App]

2. Dhikr & Du'ā'

- Perform all the daily sunnah adhkār.
- Fill your day with general dhikr and du'ā'.
- Even if you are cooking or lying in bed due to pain, you can still do dhikr and du'ā'.

3. Tahajjud Time

- Wake up, do wuḍū and miswāk (very helpful to make you feel awake). Then sit and spend as much time as you can doing dhikr, making du'ā' and istighfār.
- Make a plan and rotate between acts of worship, so you don't fall asleep and lose focus, especially during the last nights (in which it is hoped that it will be Laylat al-Qadr).

- 4. Reflect
 - Reflect on the Names of Allah.
 - Reflect on the creation of Allah.
 - Reflect on your life, on your actions and on your journey to Allah.
 - Reflect on your shortcomings to Allah and sincerely repent.
- 5. Seek Knowledge
 - Read beneficial books and strengthen your connection to Allah and His words.
 - Listen to beneficial lectures.
 - Take notes and reflect on what you have learnt and how you can make it a part of your life.
- 6. Teach and Inspire Your Children
 - Teach your children/nephews and nieces etc.
 - Relate stories from the Qur'ān and sīrah. Use storytelling techniques to leave a lasting imprint in their minds (E.g. the story of the beginning of the revelation and its link to Laylat al-Qadr).
- 7. Help Others
 - Cook iftār for those who are fasting.
 - Offer to babysit for a sister so she can pray tarāwīh in peace.
 - Volunteer for a worthy cause.
- 8. Optimise Your Intention
 - Intention is everything.
 - Intend to seek the pleasure of Allah for everything you do.
 - Have a good intention even for your rest.

Don't think of menstruation in Ramaḍān as a time to switch off and waste your time. **Don't waste these blessed hours in mindlessly scrolling through social media.** Sometimes sisters might think, 'Oh I can't pray so let me prepare a lavish feast' or they may start menstruating in the last ten days and think 'Oh perfect, let me bake lots of goodies for Eid'. It would be a shame to waste such precious moments (the optimum time of the year) on baking or cooking for hours on end, instead of worshipping Allah.

May Allah al-Ḥakīm (The All-Wise) fill our hearts with contentment with His decree. May al-Karīm (The Most Generous) allow us to taste the sweetness of worship during our days of sickness and good health.



Appendix 2: Ramadan and Illness

Suffering from an illness – especially a chronic one – can be difficult and painful. This pain can be compounded by the arrival of Ramaḍān, where perhaps you are unable to fast, or you are unable to worship Allah ﷺ as you used to when you were healthy.

Hidden Blessings

Like every other test we face in life, illnesses can be a source of blessings: they cleanse your sins, result in huge rewards, and increase your ranks. Illnesses cause you to become humble, realise your weakness and express your need and servitude to Allah — all of which is the essence of ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude). They make you appreciate your health, increase your empathy, and help you gain closeness to Allah.

Allah ﷺ is **al-Latīf: The Most Kind, and the Most Subtle**. There are many things which happen to us, which we find difficult, but only see their blessings manifest themselves in later years. Sometimes, we may not even live to see these. But the reward of it will be far greater and better than we ever imagined, in Jannah inshāAllah.

Sometimes it is in intense pain and sickness that we fully detach ourselves from the world, and attach our hearts to Him. The du‘ā’ we make in this extremely testing time is much more heartfelt. Just like the fasting person’s du‘ā’ is accepted, the du‘ā’ of the sick person and the traveller is also accepted. Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ explains that the secret to why the du‘ā’ of these categories of people is accepted is because they **turn to Allah broken-hearted and with desperation**. It is a moment in which you express your dire need, humility and ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude) to Him. Likewise, illnesses can increase our īmān in Allah as we are certain that He Alone can cure us.

Perhaps Allah ﷺ loves to hear the desperation and pleading in your voice. Perhaps your heart has remained unmoved, and your eyes have remained dry over the past years of your life. This may be the year that you shed many tears. This may be the Ramaḍān, where you cannot fast or perform much qiyām, but your tongue is continuously moving with His remembrance. Your heart feels more attuned to His presence, His companionship and His constant kindness to you.

Perhaps the way to pass this Ramaḍān with flying colours is through **şabr** (patience). The reward of **şabr** is unique. Allah ﷺ informs us,

“Certainly, those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure” (39:10).

Attain this by only complaining about your pain to Allah, cry to Him and ask Him to grant you relief.

The Generosity of Allah

Allah ﷺ is al-Barr: The Most Kind, and He does not burden anybody beyond what they can bear. Thus, He gave the Ummah the dispensation to not fast due to a valid reason, and subsequently to make up for it after recovery. Allah ﷺ says, “...But whoever of you is ill or on a journey, then (he should fast) a number of other days (equal to the missed ones)...” (2:184).

There were some companions ﷺ who did not have the means to join the Prophet ﷺ in the Battle of Tabūk. They did not feel happy at being ‘saved’ from participating in such a difficult and testing time. Rather they were deeply upset. Allah ﷺ praised them saying:

“But there is no blame attached to the weak, the sick, and those who have no means to spend, provided they are true to Allah and His Messenger – there is no reason to reproach those who do good: Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And there is no blame attached to those who came to you [Prophet] for riding animals and to whom you said, ‘I cannot find a mount for you’: they turned away with their eyes overflowing with tears of grief that they had nothing they could contribute” (9:92).

It was their deep sincerity and strong conviction in Allah ﷺ which gained them this accolade. When the Prophet ﷺ was returning from Tabūk, he told his companions, “Certainly there are a group of people in Madinah who, each time you crossed a valley or travelled a path, they shared the reward with you. A legitimate excuse held them back” (Ibn Mājah). Allah al-Shakūr (The Most Appreciative) rewarded them handsomely for their genuine intention, and He recorded their truthfulness with Him, to be read till the end of times.

Similarly, your sadness about missing out on a good deed is an indicator of your īmān

inshāAllah. Allah ﷺ will see your sincerity and reward you for that action. Our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, “If a servant falls ill or travels, the likes of what he used to do when he was a resident (i.e. not travelling) and healthy will be recorded for him” (Bukhārī).

If you are not sick – by the grace of Allah – and you are reading this, then take advantage of your health to accumulate good deeds, so that one day when you are not physically able to perform them, you will still be rewarded for them.

Focus on What You Can Do

Throughout this month, don’t let Shayṭān cripple you from doing the good that you can do, just because you are not able to do certain good deeds (e.g. fast/pray qiyām standing). There are some acts of worship which are easier to do than others. For example, you may not be able to stand for long in the night prayer but you can lie on your bed and do dhikr. Perhaps you cannot fast but you can spend the day reciting the Qur’ān. Perhaps you are too exhausted to recite the amount of Qur’ān that you usually would have, but you can still listen to the Qur’ān.

Don’t let guilt stop you from doing the ‘ibādah that you can do. This is your Ramaḍān and Allah knows your innermost secrets and thoughts.

There is no shame in not fasting if you are medically unable to do so. Illnesses come in many forms. If you are in doubt, please speak to a qualified Muslim professional and a scholar who can advise you whether to fast or not. This also includes mental illnesses. Sometimes, a dramatic adjustment to dosages can have a very harmful effect, and it is best to check with a Muslim professional about whether you should fast or not.

To those who are fasting, please treat those who are not fasting (due to a valid reason) with compassion, and do not make them feel worse than they are already feeling.

May Allah al-Shāfi (The Healer) make our illnesses a means of attaining His love and forgiveness. May He cure our bodies and hearts.





Life With Allah

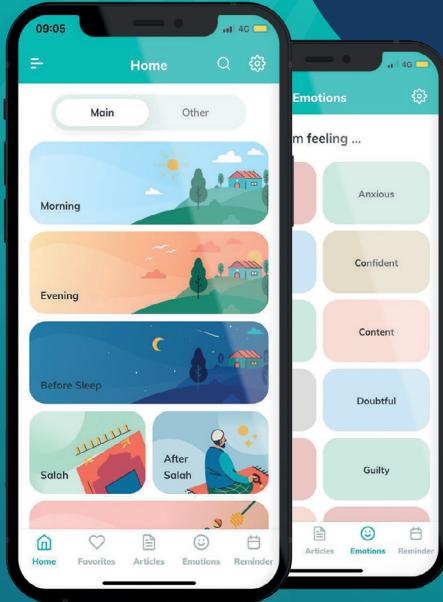
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