



Spiritual Reflections on Ramadan

Delivered by
Shaykh Haytham Tamim

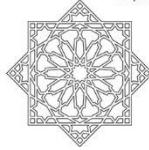


Transcribed and edited by
Ayesha Khan & Asma Hussain

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the final prophet of Allah, and upon his family, his companions, and his followers.





Spiritual Reflections on Ramadan

Delivered by

Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Transcribed and edited

by

Ayesha Khan and Asma Hussain

With thanks to Ridwan Hussain, Yasmine Fathima and Yaqoob Johnson

Utrujj Foundation Registered Charity Number 1099875

First published in Great Britain by Utrujj Foundation 2022.

Copyright © 2022 Utrujj Foundation.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or other electronic or mechanical methods without the prior written permission of the publisher.



Contents

Shaykh Haytham Tamim	viii
WHY DO WE FAST?	1
Ramadan is a call of love.....	1
Respond to the call.....	2
Improve your relationship with Allah.....	2
What is Taqwa?	2
PREPARING FOR RAMADAN	4
Deeds are taken up to Allah.....	4
Sha'ban is a month of training.....	4
Humility and repentance	5
Fasting is a passive form of ibadah	5
Fasting is not just for Ramadan	5
Special treatment	6
Be ready to receive the gifts of Ramadan	6
Getting in the right frame of mind	6
WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT RAMADAN?	8
Glorify what Allah has glorified	8
The intercession of fasting	8
The increased acceptance of du'a.....	8
Temptation is diminished	8
Purification	9
Bonds are strengthened.....	9
Closeness	10
Peace.....	10
Release from hellfire	10
What does it mean that Allah releases souls from Hellfire?	10
When does Allah release the souls from hellfire?	11
How many are released from Hellfire?.....	11
How to be released from hellfire.....	12
RAMADAN – A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE	14
THE MONTH OF THE QURAN	15
The month of the Quran	15
Revealed to the heart.....	15



How to fix the heart	16
Prepare the heart	17
The Unbroken oral Preservation of Allah's Word - The Quran.....	17
Beautify your recitation	18
The sequence for connectivity.....	18
Be the fruit.....	18
The Destruction of the Oral Preservation	18
Feel your salah and interact with the Quran	21
Do not rush your salah	21
THE BLESSINGS OF QIYAM AL LAYL (NIGHT PRAYERS).....	24
Pray tahajjud throughout the year	25
The enormous reward for praying during the dead of night.....	25
How much is 1000 verses?	26
Is it better to recite Quran or pray?.....	26
Do you have to recite the verses during salah or can you recite in the night outside salah?	27
The Last ten nights	28
Laylatul Qadr	28
Better than a thousand months.....	29
Why is this night so honoured?	30
New record	30
Seeking the night.....	30
Share the blessings of Laylatul Qadr with the family	31
Donating on Laylatul Qadr	32
SECLUSION	34
The night for du'a	34
The Opportunity To Reflect And Connect	34
Time to repair	34
Repair your relationship with Allah.....	35
The People of Jannah will remain in Allah's mercy forever.	35
Your record will be presented to Allah so ensure you are happy with it.....	35
Will you be pleased with your record or not?.....	36
Sort out the record - delete what you don't want to be there.....	36
Submit in sujud.....	36
Qunoot.....	36



Repair yourself	37
Repair your relationship with others	37
No Intimacy in the last ten nights in seclusion.....	38
Can women do 'itikaf?	38
Have pure intention	38
SUPPLICATION	40
 What to pray for	40
 Why this du'a?.....	40
 The importance of well-being.....	40
ZAKAT.....	42
 Salah is light. Charity is proof	42
 Why is charity proof?	42
 The link between the pillars	43
1. Growth	43
2. Purification of the soul.....	43
3. Shade of the throne	43
 Who is eligible for zakat?	44
 Who should I give my zakat to?.....	45
 How much do you need to give?	45
 Zakat al Fitr (Fitran).....	45
THE VIRTUES OF EID	46
 Recognise what you achieved.....	46
 The day of reward	46
 The day of happiness.....	46
 The day of acceptance.....	47
 Be aware of your clean slate.....	47
 Takbeer (say Allahu Akbar) is the essence of Eid.....	47
 Inward and outward takbeer	48
 The surahs recited every Eid	48
SHAWWAL	51
 The reward of fasting the 6 days of Shawwal	51
 Should we make up missed fasts before we do the 6 fasts of Shawwal?	51
 Can we make a combined intention to make up missed fasts and the Shawwal fasts?	51
 Can you make the Shawwal fasts up first and then the Ramadan ones later?.....	52



Do the 6 fasts after Ramadan have to be made up in Shawwal?	52
KEEPING MOMENTUM AFTER RAMADAN.....	53
Maintaining taqwa	53
1. Refrain	53
2. Retain.....	53
3. Reflect.....	54

Shaykh Haytham Tamim



Shaykh Haytham Tamim, the founder and main teacher of the Utrujj Foundation, has provided a leading vision for Islamic learning in the UK, which has influenced the way Islamic knowledge is disseminated. He has designed and delivered over 200 unique courses since Utrujj started in 2001.

His extensive expertise spans over 30 years across the main Islamic jurisprudence schools of thought and different Islamic denominations through highly advanced classical and religious texts. With 29 links in his chain, Shaykh Haytham's unbroken chain of scholarship goes back to the Prophet (peace be on him). Mashallah he was blessed with the opportunity to study with some of the foremost scholars in their expertise. He holds some of the highest Ijazahs (certificates) in Quran, Hadith (the Prophetic traditions) and Fiqh (Islamic rulings).

His own gift for teaching was evident when he gave his first sermon to a large audience at the age of 17, after which he studied in Damascus and returned to serve as a senior lecturer of Islamic transactions and comparative jurisprudence at the Islamic University of Beirut (Shari'ah College).

His passion is teaching and in 2015, he won the BISCA award (British Imams & Scholars Contributions & Achievements Awards) for Outstanding Contribution to Education and Teaching. In 2019 he was chosen to be in the Emerald 100 List¹ of inspiring Muslims.

Shaykh Haytham Tamim serves on various boards and panels and is the leader of the Lebanese Sunni community in the UK under Dar Al-Fatwa in the UK.

He takes a keen interest in promoting love and tolerance within the Muslim community as well within wider society and voicing the need for social justice.

Often consulted by his students for his wise, compassionate, and balanced stance, he loves spreading knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah in a way that is authentic, relevant, and down to earth

¹ <https://www.emeraldnetwork.co.uk/emerald-100/>



WHY DO WE FAST?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصَّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ ١٨٣

*'O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you, as it has been
prescribed for those before you, that you may be people of taqwa, people of
piety'. (2:183)*

The obligation of siyam (fasting) was prescribed to the Ummah in the second year of Hijrah, in the month of Sha'ban in five verses called the *ayatul siyam* (ayahs related to fasting), which are 183 – 187 of Surah Baqarah.

The reason for fasting is to achieve taqwa of Allah Almighty.

*The simple definition of taqwa is ensuring that you fulfil your religious
obligations and refrain from what is prohibited.*

Ramadan is a call of love

Allah Almighty begins with the call, *Ya ayyuhaladhina amanu* – 'O you who believe.' Whenever we use the word in Arabic 'Ya', it is to call somebody who is distant from you, to draw their attention.

This call is different from other appeals in the Quran which are to people in general; those verses commence with *ya ayyuhan nas*. This appeal is an intimate appeal. It is a special appeal. It is addressed specifically to the community of believers, those who are submissive, those who are close to Allah Almighty, and those who have already responded to Allah's call.

In essence, Allah Almighty is saying 'O my special people, who accepted My call, who believed in Me, in My Messenger. I'm calling upon you. Are you listening?'

The command to fast only came once Allah Almighty had prepared the hearts, the souls and the minds of believers to listen to His call, and through His wording we can see that He is saying that He made fasting obligatory upon us because He loves us.

The call of love also comes when we are called to pray and establish salah. It is out of love and mercy toward His servants, that Allah Almighty made salah obligatory, like fasting; it nurtures us and brings us closer to Him.

Respond to the call

Fortunate are those who can hear Allah's call and even more fortunate are those who respond to His call. Hence, we should all ask ourselves, 'Am I listening to His call?' The moment we hear His call, we should automatically say, '*Labbayk Ya Rabb*' 'I am at your service, O Lord. What do you want from us, Ya Allah?' Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Baqarah that He answers us when we call on Him, so we should answer Him when He calls, and thereby gain right guidance!

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكُ عِبَادِي عَنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الْدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلَيَسْتَحِيُوا لِي وَلَيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ۖ ۱۸۶

When My servants ask you 'O Prophet' about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one's prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond 'with obedience' to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided 'to the Right Way'. (2:186)

Improve your relationship with Allah

The intention of fasting goes far beyond its technical and legal (fiqh) definition of refraining from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from the beginning of dawn until dusk. It is also about self-discipline and closeness to the Lord. He is calling upon those of His servants, who accepted the message, and who accepted belief or iman. Allah is effectively telling believers to 'listen' and to act upon the obligatory commands, and in return they will certainly be rewarded with taqwa². The fruits of their endeavours in obeying His commands and in following His Messenger in praying, fasting, paying zakat and worshipping will bring them taqwa.

What is Taqwa?

Taqwa is having the self-control to do what is right and to avoid doing what is wrong. Fasting is a means of regaining control over ourselves and through this we attain a higher level of taqwa. Ramadan helps us rein in our desires. We also practice increased restraint over our tongues, whether it is refraining from bad language or avoiding backbiting. We also have to be careful what

² <https://www.utrujj.org/dissecting-taqwa/>



we see and hear. When we are able to control our desire, this leads to our being able to connect more closely with Allah Almighty. These ayahs point to the importance of fasting as the path to taqwa for the more we control our desire the closer we are to Allah (2:183 and 2:187).

The ayahs reflect upon the start ‘input’ and the end ‘output’ in fasting. One starts fasting in Ramadan, because one has taqwa and at the end of it, one gains more taqwa.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ ١٨٣

‘O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous’ (2:183)

﴿كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ ءَايَتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ﴾

‘Thus does Allah make clear His ordinances to the people that they may become righteous’ (2:187)

Taqwa is not limited to fasting or Ramadan. It is not like a suit you wear in Ramadan and take off when it is over, rather it is consolidated, maximised, and strengthened in Ramadan. It enhances the character of the believer, throughout the year, and in Ramadan it enables us to achieve the best and the highest level of closeness to Allah.

PREPARING FOR RAMADAN

We should start to prepare for Ramadan during Sha'ban. In a famous hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked by Usama bin Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him):

'O Messenger of Allah, I do not see you fasting any month as much as in Sha'ban.'

The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied:

'That is a month to which people do not pay much attention, between Rajab and Ramadan. It is a month in which the deeds are taken up to the Lord of the worlds, and I like that my deeds be taken up when I am fasting.' (Nasa'i)

Deeds are taken up to Allah

In his answer, the Prophet (peace be upon him) opened a window for us into the Unknown. He said: '**Our deeds are lifted to Allah Almighty.**' How could we have known that? Had he not mentioned this fact, we would have not known about it. We cannot penetrate the Unseen with our own minds. The Prophet (peace be upon him) knew the Unseen, and he informed us about it. This is the beauty of learning from the primary sources i.e. Quran and Sunnah. Moreover, he said that as deeds are lifted to Allah Almighty in this month, he wanted his fasts to be included in those deeds.

Sha'ban is a month of training

In the narrations of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) mentioned several times that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to fast a great deal in Sha'ban, to the extent that she felt he would fast the whole month.

'The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to fast until we would say, 'he never breaks his fast (i.e. he never stops fasting)', and he would abandon fasting (at other times) until we would say that he never fasts. I never saw the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) fast for a complete month except for the month of Ramadan, and I never saw him fast in a month more than he did in the month of Sha'ban.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith shows us that he did not fast the whole month, but he used to fast sometimes. It is like training for a marathon. Ramadan is a marathon for the Ummah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is teaching us that we need to prepare for Ramadan.

Preparation starts by changing our mindset from ghafla mode to dhikr mode.

Humility and repentance

The Prophet (peace be on him) wanted his deeds to be lifted while he was fasting, and had the humility to feel shy of his deeds being lifted without their being the best that he could offer. In comparison to him, we have plenty of shortcomings, so let us prepare ourselves by increasing istighfar³ (repentance). Let us replace our bad deeds with good deeds. If we want our bad deeds to be deleted, we can cancel them out by following them up by a good deed.

Follow the bad deed with a good one to erase it, and engage others with beautiful character. (Tirmidhi)

Fasting is a passive form of ibadah

There are different forms of ibadah (worship)- active and passive. Salah is active, and we do this daily along with dhikr. However, fasting is a passive form of worship - it is not about the actions you do, rather, it is about what you abstain from doing. It is about abstention, which is the linguistic definition of siyam. When you do salah, you do wudu, you do takbir, you do ruku. In siyam you do not eat, you do not drink, and you do not use foul language.

Fasting is not just for Ramadan

One of the outcomes of fasting is boosting your sabr (patience). As you control your desires, your habits, and your tongue, it enables you to develop and improve your good qualities. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) fasted all year round, and not just in Sha'ban and Ramadan. He used to fast every Monday and Thursday and in addition, on the three white days of every month, (the middle of the month, when the moon is full): the 13th, 14th and 15th day.

It is interesting to note that Allah Almighty has given us diverse forms of ibadah, because as humans we become bored and distracted easily. Therefore we have a variety of forms of worship, from the daily salah, which is the highest form of ibadah and connection with Allah Almighty to fasting which we can do on a weekly and monthly basis throughout the year, as well as in the month of Ramadan.

³ <https://www.utrujj.org/essentials-of-repentance/>

Special treatment

When you are fasting, you earn special treatment from Allah Almighty. If your deeds are lifted while you are fasting, Allah Almighty gives you extra reward and extra rahmah (mercy) out of His Mercy. We cannot thank Allah Almighty enough for the favours He continually bestows on all of us.

As Abu Bakr Al Balkhi (may Allah be pleased with him) stated, ‘Rajab is the month of planting seeds, Sha’ban is the month of irrigation, and Ramadan is the month of harvesting.’ However, if you did not plant a seed or water it, how can you get a good harvest?

Be ready to receive the gifts of Ramadan

During Sha’ban we need to work on our heart as this is the main receptor of divine light, mercy and forgiveness from Allah. We need to declutter and clean our heart, so it receives grace from Allah Almighty.

Ramadan is the month of forgiveness, elevation, connection, communication, and transformation.

The Prophet (peace be on him) knew some of the secrets of the Unseen, and therefore he encouraged believers to be ready, as the Gates of Jannah (heaven) are flung wide open and the Gates of Jahannam (Hell) are locked. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

‘On the first night of the month of Ramadan, the Shayateen and the rebellious jinns are shackled, the Gates of the Fires are shut such that no gate among them would be opened. The Gates of Paradise are opened such that no gate among them would be closed, and a caller calls: ‘O seeker of the good; come near!’ and ‘O seeker of evil; stop! Allah has people freed from the Fire every night.’ (Tirmidhi)

Getting in the right frame of mind

Sha’ban is our opportunity to prepare for the akhirah. In Sha’ban, scholars dedicate more time to fasting and recitation, and they focus on gaining more self-control over their desires, ears, and tongue etc. It is the time to prepare ourselves because in this month our deeds are lifted to Allah Almighty. We should feel shy of our shortcomings and try to boost our score and rectify our bad deeds before it is too late.

We should prepare ourselves in advance for the month of Ramadan rather than waiting until it begins and seek tawbah with earnestness and sincerity. May Allah Almighty bless us, and bless Sha'ban for us, and bring all of us to Ramadan.



WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT RAMADAN?

Glorify what Allah has glorified

One of the great tabi'een, Qatada bin Di'ama as-Sadusi, (61-118 AH) said that Allah Almighty glorified certain things within His creation and made them special. He selected messengers from among humans and raised them above others and allocated them specific tasks. Archangel Jibreel was sent with the task of bringing revelation to the prophets and messengers, and Mika'eel was assigned with bringing rain. Allah Almighty selected messengers from among people, and from His words, He selected His dhikr, which is the Quran. From all the land, He selected al masajid, (mosques) and made them special, and from the months, He selected Ramadan, and the sacred months, Rajab, Dhul Qi'ddah, Dhul Hijjah and Muharram. From the days, He selected Jumu'ah and from the nights, He selected Laylatul Qadr. We should glorify what Allah Almighty has glorified.

The intercession of fasting

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Fasting and the Quran will intercede for a person on the Day of Resurrection.
Fasting will say: O Lord, I kept him from his food and desires during the day; let me intercede for him. And the Quran will say: I kept him from sleeping during the night; let me intercede for him. And they will be allowed to intercede.*

(Musnad Ahmad and Bayhaqi)

The increased acceptance of du'a

Acceptance of du'a is granted to those who do not overstep the limits, nor do they ask for something haram. The acceptance increases in certain cases, including fasting:

'Three supplications will not be rejected, the supplication of the parent for his child, the supplication of the one who is fasting, and the supplication of the traveller. (Imam Bayhaqi)

Temptation is diminished

From the famous hadith we all know, the devils are chained up in Ramadan, as Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"When Ramadan begins, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are put in chains." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Therefore, we have no excuse for bad behaviour. Of course, in the authentic narration it is *maradatul shayateen* ‘the giant, rebellious shayateen’ the ones with big influence, not the minor ones, who are chained up. The question is why? The answer is because Allah Almighty wants us to seize the opportunity and maximise our chance to gain closeness to Him. He will not do it on our behalf, we need to take the first step and then He gives us the momentum.

Purification

One of the dimensions of Ramadan is purification, the *tazkiyah* element. Fasting purifies the heart, it purifies the intention, it purifies the soul, and it purifies the body. In Ramadan we experience detoxification of the body physically as well as spiritually.

Ramadan is the time to scrutinise our intentions under the microscope. Ramadan makes us more conscious of our intentions and actions, as we are often on autopilot. The reasons underlying our choices, decisions, or actions such as career moves, business enterprises, or our relationships with family should be assessed. Review your actions and take the opportunity to purify yourself and take stock of your life. Keeping our record in a good state helps us to purify ourselves.

Bonds are strengthened

Under normal circumstances, in Ramadan, we increase social interaction and strengthen bonds within our communities. We have the chance to reach out to friends, neighbours, extended family, and siblings and this blessed month connects the Ummah together. When you go to the mosque, you find the same people whom you saw the previous year at tarawih, and this helps to reconnect with friends and families.

We also have more opportunities to connect to the community and to our families when we share iftar and attend congregational prayers and tarawih together. We have a better understanding of the Ummah despite our differences and, across the globe Muslims come together to fast together for an entire month. This intense connection only happens during Ramadan and Hajj. We all act as one body, despite our differences of opinions or opposing views or sectarian divisions. Ramadan comes and unites the Ummah despite all these obstacles.

Ramadan is also a time for reaching out to non-Muslims and to extend our friendship circles and share the blessings of the month with our non-Muslim neighbours, colleagues and whoever we interact with in our communities in a kind, friendly way.

Closeness

Ramadan is intense and the month of special closeness that lasts for twenty-nine or thirty days. By contrast, when you go for Hajj, the actual Hajj only lasts 5 days. Salah only lasts for a maximum of an hour or an hour and a half. Yet Ramadan is an extended worship, which is more than 5 prayers, or 5 days; it is 29-30 days. It envelops you from the beginning of the day, from dawn till dusk, and Maghrib till Fajr.

Wherever we are, Ramadan stays with us. The spirit of Ramadan is like a cloud that provides us with shade, and showers us with the mercy of Allah. Not just once, but throughout the whole month. Thus it increases our closeness to Allah Almighty.

Peace

Towards the very end of Ramadan, the last ten nights are the peaceful nights, the Laylatul Qadr nights. Laylatul Qadr is often mistranslated as the ‘Night of Power’ and this is completely inaccurate as it is the Laylatul Mubarak i.e. Night of Blessings, Blessed Night or the Night of Honour and Status, **not** the Night of Power. This is further clarified in Surat Al-Dhuhan, in which Allah Almighty says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَرَّكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِّرِينَ ۚ

Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night. (44:3)

It is the night of peace. Allah Almighty mentioned in a very specific chapter in the Quran called Surat Al-Qadr, in which we are told ‘*salaamun hiya*’, ‘It is all about peace’. It helps us to achieve both inner peace and outer peace.

Release from hellfire

All of Ramadan is *maghfirah* (forgiveness) and *rahmah* (mercy), and release from Hellfire. Allah Almighty releases souls from Hell every day of Ramadan, not just in the last ten days.

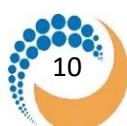
The authentic narration says:

‘In every night in Ramadan there are people whom Allah will free from Hell in each and every night in Ramadan.’ (Musnad Ahmed)

The last ten nights are blessed even more, so the number released at the end is more, but it is not exclusive to the last ten nights.

What does it mean that Allah releases souls from Hellfire?

Scholars interpret the release of the souls from hellfire in three ways:



- 1) Allah Almighty forgives their sins
- 2) Allah will accept their repentance
- 3) Allah Almighty protects them from big sins and mistakes, and from going back to that path until they die.

The souls who are released are not entirely free of mistakes, but when they make a mistake, they are quick to repent. They keep rectifying their mistakes until they die.

The souls are not currently in Hellfire. The release of souls means that the souls will not enter Hellfire once the Day of Reckoning has happened. Though Jannah and Jahannam are empty until then, the souls in the graves have a window to their final destination in their graves. As the Prophet (peace be on him) stated:

'Indeed the grave is the first stage among the stages of the Hereafter. So if one is saved from it, then what comes after it is easier than it.' (Tirmidhi)

When does Allah release the souls from hellfire?

In *Shu'ab al Iman*, it is mentioned in a sound narration that the release of souls occurs at iftar time:

'When you break your fast Allah will release many people from Hell.' (Bayhaqi)

In a hadith, the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

'Three men whose invocation is never rejected are: when a fasting person breaks their fast, the just ruler and the one who is oppressed.' (Tirmidhi)

We are encouraged to invoke Allah with supplications for forgiveness during Ramadan as we are assured in the hadith that we will be spared from the Hellfire.

How many are released from Hellfire?

Who knows who has been released? We hope that our name is on that list. Bayhaqi mentions in a narration that the number is 60,000 every night at the time of iftar. Ibn Masoud narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

At every iftar in the month of Ramadan every night – Allah frees 60,000 from the Fire, and on the day of al-Fitr He frees the same as He freed in the whole month – 30 x 60,000. (Bayhaqi in "Shu`ab Al-Iman" (3606)

On the day of Eid, Allah Almighty releases the same number as He released over the whole month on that single day, i.e. 60,000 multiplied by 30, which means 1.8 million are released on the day of Eid. Allah Almighty's rahmah is vast. He said in Surah Araf:

﴿وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ﴾

'My mercy encompasses everything.' (7:156)

In the Quran, Allah Almighty says:

﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةٌ الْمَوْتٌ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ زُحِّرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتْهُ الْغُرُورِ﴾

'Every soul will have a taste of death, and you will receive your recompense on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is rescued from the Fire, and admitted to Paradise, has won. The life of this world is merely enjoyment of delusion.'

(3:185)

There are many verses about Jannah and Jahannam in the Quran. In this verse, Allah Almighty is talking about those who will be rescued from Hell. The Prophet (peace be on him) elaborated more in the hadith on the topic of how to be rescued from hellfire.

To escape Hellfire, one must bear in mind that there are two sets of rights we have to preserve. The rights of Allah Almighty and the rights of people. These are the things that will rescue us from Hell, insha'Allah.

How to be released from hellfire

We do not know if we have been released so we must work hard to fulfil our obligations towards Allah and people. We must act with obedience to Allah and avoid the prohibitions and to ensure we fulfil people's rights, whether they are social financial or family rights.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

'He who desires to be rescued from the fire of Hell and to enter Jannah, should die in a state of complete belief in Allah and the Last Day, and should do unto others what he wishes to be done unto him.' (Muslim)

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that in the last ten nights the Prophet (peace be on him) would do three things:

'When the last ten days of Ramadan came, the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) would stay up at night, wake up his family (to pray), strive hard, and tighten his waist belt.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

He would pray during the night, refrain from intimacy with his wives, and wake his family, even by sprinkling water gently on their faces so they could share the blessings of the night and be close to Allah Almighty.

RAMADAN – A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

Ramadan is a time for transformation, a transformation of our self to become a better person. This transformation arises as we experience greater self-control in Ramadan. Control over our eating and drinking, over what we say or do not say, over how we avoid argumentation. In Ramadan this self-control is in place and helps us transform into a better person.

In line with this, you feel like you can change your habits. Ramadan provides the opportunity to extricate ourselves from set routines which seem too entrenched to change. Scientifically it takes between 21-40 days to change a habit. Ramadan is spot on in helping facilitate this change. It is a period of 30 days training – changing your old bad habits into new, better ones.

When we train ourselves to leave what we like to please Allah Almighty, then it becomes easier for us to leave what is doubtful and haram for Allah's sake at other times as well.

Food and drink and intimacy with your spouse are not in themselves haram, but Allah Almighty is training us in Ramadan to leave what is halal for His sake, to enable us to leave what is haram after Ramadan for His sake.

THE MONTH OF THE QURAN

The month of the Quran

As we are preparing for Ramadan, Muslims know that this is the month of the Quran, so we delve more into the text.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ
 وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهَدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ
 فَلْيَصُمُّهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ
 أُخْرَىٰ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلَتُكَمِّلُوا
 الْعِدَّةَ وَلَتُكَبِّرُوا أَللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَنَكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَشْكُرُونَ ١٨٥

'Ramadan is the month in which the Quran was revealed. Guidance for humanity, and clear portents of guidance, and the Criterion. Whoever of you witnesses the month, shall fast it. But whoever is sick, or on a journey, then a number of other days. God desires ease for you, and does not desire hardship for you, that you may complete the number, and celebrate God for having guided you, so that you may be thankful.' (2:185)

Do our hearts find tranquillity when we recite Quran? If they do not, then we must fix our hearts to attain tranquillity. Allah Almighty said:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطَمَّئِنُ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ
 تَطَمَّئِنُ الْقُلُوبُ ٢٨

'Those who believe, and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of God. Surely, it is in the remembrance of God that hearts find comfort.' (13:28)

Revealed to the heart

Allah Almighty revealed the Quran to the Prophet (peace be on him) in Ramadan in the Cave of Hira when Jibreel came to him. The beauty of the story which many of us do not know is that when Allah revealed the Quran, He revealed it to His heart. In Surah Ash-Shu'ara', Allah Almighty says:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ١٩٢

'Indeed this is a revelation from the Lord of the Universe;' (26:192)

١٩٣ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ

'which the truthful spirit has carried down' (26:193)

١٩٤ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُذَرِّيْنَ

'to your heart that you might become one of those who warn (others on behalf of Allah)' (26:194)

١٩٥ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ

'(a revelation) in clear Arabic language' (26:195)

In Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah Almighty says:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا
لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ٩٧

'Say to them: Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel, he should understand that he has, by Allah's command, revealed to your heart the Quran.' (2:97)

These verses confirm that the Quran was revealed to the heart.

How to fix the heart

This ayah shows us that the way to achieve a tranquil heart, a heart with *khushu'* is one that listens attentively. We must reflect on the meaning we are reciting. *Khushu'* comes through *sama'* (listening attentively) with the ears of the heart, so that the heart can feel tranquillity, be engaged, and become soft.

Listen, understand and reflect on the Quran to gain the sweetness, the barak'ah and mercy of the revelation.

Allah Almighty mentioned the effect of listening to the Quran:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ النَّبِيِّنَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا
مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا نُتَلِّي
عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتُ الْرَّحْمَنِ حَرُّوا سُجَّداً وَبُكِيًّا ﴿٥٨﴾

'These are some of the prophets God has blessed, from the descendants of Adam, and from those We carried with Noah, and from the descendants of Abraham and Israel, and from those We guided and selected. Whenever the revelations of the Most Gracious are recited to them, they would fall down, prostrating and weeping.' (19:58)

This is the sign of believers. They feel the urge to be more connected to Allah. They feel humility.

Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported, the Prophet (peace be on him) said to me: 'Recite the Quran to me'. I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Shall I recite the Quran to you, when it has been revealed to you?' He replied, 'I love to hear it recited by others'. So I recited to him a portion from Surat An-Nisa'. When I reached the Ayah: 'How (will it be) then, when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you (O Muhammad) as a witness against these people?' (4:41) He said, 'Enough for now'. When I looked at him, I saw his eyes were shedding tears. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Prepare the heart

How do we prepare the heart? By doing a lot of istighfar. This polishes the heart, so always begin recitation with istighfar. Allah is listening to us and replying to us. This Ramadan we can engage our hearts and taste the sweetness of the Quran.

The Unbroken oral Preservation of Allah's Word - The Quran

The Quran was revealed by Allah Almighty to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) by Angel Jibreel and the Prophet (peace be on him) would recite it back to Jibreel until he had perfected the recitation of the divine words. The Prophet (peace be on him) would then recite the verses to his companions in exactly the same manner. And they would recite it back to him until they too had perfected it. This has formed the chain of transmission through the generations spanning back centuries. The method of transmission from the deliverer (talqueen) and to the receiver (talaqqi).

In Ramadan shuyukh recite the Quran to their students and community who receive it from them. This is known as talqueen.

This is one of the ways in which we kept the Quran fresh authentic and accurate. While the actual letters are unchanged in our Holy Book, our oral tradition preserves the very sound of the words which were revealed.

Beautify your recitation

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

'Beautify the Quran with your voices.' (Abu Dawud)

When you recite the words of Allah Almighty with a beautiful recitation it penetrates the heart more deeply. The Prophet (peace be on him) had a beautiful voice and this projected the divine message beyond the ears. There were many companions who had beautiful voices and when we beautify our recitation, it increases our *khushu'* and connectivity with the Quran.

The sequence for connectivity

Listen and recite the Quran more in Ramadan then reflect on what you read, and finally implement what you have learnt from it.

Be the fruit

We need to practice and apply the Quran. The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

'The example of a believer who recites the Quran and acts on it, is like an utrujj fruit which tastes nice and smells nice. And the example of a believer who does not recite the Quran but acts on it, is like a date which tastes good but has no smell. And the example of a hypocrite who recites the Quran is like rayhana (sweet basil) which smells good but tastes bitter. And the example of a hypocrite who does not recite the Quran is like a colocynth which tastes bitter and has a bad smell.' (Bukhari)

Let's prepare ourselves to receive Ramadan with pure hearts engaged with the word of Allah Almighty.

The Destruction of the Oral Preservation

If we deliver it in a speedy recital without the consideration of tajweed and the proper pronunciation we are meant to receive it, this is not the Quran which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). It is a corrupted form, breaking the chain, the tradition and distorting the revelation; this recitation is haram.

FIX YOUR SALAH

There is a very sweet narration by Hudhaifah ibn al-Yaman which gives us beautiful insight into how the Prophet (peace be on him) prayed. We can glimpse the quality of his prayer.

Hudhaifah tells us of the occasion he was praying with the Prophet (peace be on him), and we see this prayer unfold through his eyes, how he expected the Prophet (peace be on him) to stop after 100 verses of Surah Baqarah. But he continued reciting, which is 286 ayahs, to his surprise, he then began reciting Surah Nisa and then kept going and recited Surah Al Imran. (You have to remember that at that time the entire Quran was not in the order we have it today, as the revelation was still descending its order was not finalised til the end.)

The Prophet (peace be on him) used to recite slowly. When he read an ayah with *tasbih* (glorification) in it, he would pause and do *tasbih*. (This was a *nawafil* prayer, not *fard*). If he recited an ayah with a command to ask a question, he would pause and ask the question; if an ayah came mentioning punishment, he would weep, and then finally, he made *ruku'* and then he made his *ruku'* the same length has he had stood.

قال حَدِيفَةُ بْنُ الْيَمَانِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا: 'صَلَّيْتُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ فَأَفْتَنَّ الْبَقَرَةَ، قَالَتْ: يَرْكَعُ عِنْدَ الْمِائَةِ، ثُمَّ مَضَى، قَالَتْ: يُصَلِّي بَهَا فِي رَكْعَةٍ، فَمَضَى، قَالَتْ: يَرْكَعُ بَهَا، ثُمَّ افْتَنَّ النِّسَاءَ فَقَرَأَهَا، ثُمَّ افْتَنَّ الْأَعْمَارَ فَقَرَأَهَا، يَقْرَأُ مُتَرَسِّلاً، إِذَا مَرَّ بِآيَةٍ فِيهَا تَسْبِيحٌ سَبَّحَ، وَإِذَا مَرَّ بِسُؤَالٍ سَأَلَ، وَإِذَا مَرَّ بِتَعْوِذٍ تَعَوَّذَ، ثُمَّ رَكَعَ، فَجَعَلَ يَقُولُ: سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ، فَكَانَ رُكُوعُهُ نَحْوًا مِنْ قِيَامِهِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ، ثُمَّ قَامَ طَوِيلًا قَرِيبًا مِمَّا رَكَعَ، ثُمَّ سَجَدَ فَقَالَ: سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى، فَكَانَ سُجُودُهُ قَرِيبًا مِنْ قِيَامِهِ'؛ رواه مسل

Hudhaifah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

I performed Salat with the Prophet (ﷺ) one night, and he started reciting Surat Al-Baqarah. I thought that he would go in ruku' (bowing posture in Salat) at the end of one hundred Ayat, but he continued (reciting); and I thought that he would perhaps recite (this Surah) in the whole rak'ah (prayer), but he continued the recitation; I thought he would perhaps bow on completing (this Surah). He (ﷺ) then started reciting Surat An-Nisa' which he followed with Surat Al-Imran. He recited leisurely. When he recited an Ayah which mentioned the tasbeeh, he would say SubhanAllah and when he recited the Ayah which tells how the Rabb

is to be asked, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would then ask from Him; and when he (ﷺ) recited an Ayah asking one to seek Protection Allah, he would seek Protection of Allah. Then he bowed and said, 'Subhana rabbiyal-azim (My Rabb the Great is free from imperfection)'; his bowing lasted about the same length of time as his standing, (and then on returning to the standing posture after ruku') he would say, 'Sami' Allahu liman hamidah,

Rabbana lakal-hamd (Allah listens to him who praises Him. Praise be to You, Our Rabb!),' and he would then stand about the same length of time as he had spent in bowing. He would then prostrate himself and say, 'Subhana rabbiyal-A'la (My Rabb the Supreme is free from imperfection),' and his prostration lasted nearly the same length of time as his standing (Qiyam). (Muslim)

We see similar narrations by 'Auf bin Malik and Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn Abbas may Allah be pleased with them all. These show us that he was reciting the Quran and experiencing it at the same time. It was not recitation for the sake of it, not a tick box exercise. He was living it. If the ayah was about rahmah, he asked for rahmah, if it was about punishment, he sought refuge. He interacted with the Quran.

This was how he prayed in his personal space, not in public, he will make in light for people. Mua'dh may Allah be pleased with him, prayed an Imam and recited Surat Al-Baqarah, but it was too onerous for the general public to pray for this length of time and concentration, so they told the prophet peace be upon him about it and he asked him no to prolong the Salah for them.

عَنْ جَابِرٍ، قَالَ كَانَ مُعَاذٌ يُصَلِّي مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ثُمَّ يَأْتِي فِي يَوْمٍ قَوْمَهُ فَصَلَّى لَيْلَةً مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْعِشَاءَ ثُمَّ أَتَى قَوْمَهُ فَأَفْتَنَحُ بِسُورَةِ الْبَقَرَةِ فَأَنْحَرَفَ رَجُلٌ فَسَلَّمَ ثُمَّ صَلَّى وَحْدَهُ وَانْصَرَفَ فَقَالُوا لَهُ أَنَافَقْتَ يَا فُلَانُ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ وَلَا تَبَيَّنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَلَأُخْبِرَنَّهُ . فَأَتَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا أَصْنَابُ نَوَاضِحَ نَعْمَلُ بِالنَّهَارِ وَإِنَّ مُعَاذًا صَلَّى مَعَكَ الْعِشَاءَ ثُمَّ أَتَى فَأَفْتَنَحُ بِسُورَةِ الْبَقَرَةِ . فَأَقْبَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى مُعَاذٍ فَقَالَ ، يَا مُعَاذٌ أَقْتَلْتُ أَنْتَ اقْرَأْ بِكَذَا وَاقْرَأْ بِكَذَا . قَالَ سُفِيَّانُ فَقُلْتُ لِعَمْرٍ وَإِنَّ أَبَا الزُّبَيرِ حَدَّثَنَا عَنْ جَابِرٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ ، اقْرَأْ وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاحَاهَا . وَالضُّحَى . وَاللِّيلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى . وَسَبَّحَ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى . فَقَالَ عَمْرُو نَحْنُ هَذَا . رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ .

Jabir may Allah be pleased with him reported that Mu'adh b. Jabal may Allah be pleased with him used to pray with the Apostle (ﷺ), then came and led his people in prayer. One night he said the

night prayer with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He then came to his people and led them in prayer beginning with Surat Al-Baqara. A man turned aside, pronounced the taslim (salutation for concluding the prayer), then prayed alone and departed. The people said to him:

Have you become a hypocrite, so and so? He said: I swear by Allah that I have not, but I will certainly go to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and will inform (him) about this. He then came to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and said: Messenger of Allah, we look after camels used for watering and work by day. Mu'adh said the Isha prayer with you. He then came and began with Surat Al-Baqara. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) then turned to Mu'adh and said: Are you there to (put the people) to trial? Recite such and recite such (and such a surah). It is transmitted on the authority of Jabir, as told by Sufyan, that he (the Holy Prophet) had said: 'By the sun and its morning brightness' (Surah Shams), 'By brightness' (Surah Al-Duha), 'By the night when it spreads' (Surah Lail), and 'Glorify the name of thy most high Lord' (Surah A'la). (Muslim).

Feel your salah and interact with the Quran

Ramadan is a private space for all of us. Let's reflect on what we are reading when we read the Quran. Feel its sweetness, and pause on what we are reciting. It is alright to read our 10 pages, or juz, alhamdulilah, but in addition we need to live and feel the verses we are reciting.

If we read verses about Jannah, we should feel inspired to be among the people of Jannah. And ask Allah to make us of those people of Jannah. If there is an ayah that makes du'a for your parents, make du'a for your parents. Don't make the Quran just sometime static you read.

Do not rush your salah

The importance of correct recitation is to actually benefit from salah. Eight rak'ahs, prayed properly with tilawah (clear recitation) and tarteel (slow speed), brings khushoo (tranquility) to the soul is much preferable to praying twenty with a Formula One recitation.

It introduces the words of Allah to their hearts not their bodies pecking the ground in a manner in which we were forbidden to pray.

People who pray behind imams who recite in this way have a duty to raise their concerns to the masjid committee and reject such recitations. They must not pray behind imams who fail to recite in the appropriate manner that we were taught from our Prophet (peace be on him).

ذَلِكَ وَمَن يُعَظِّمْ شَعِيرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ٣٢

That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts

(22: 32)

The Lack of any Validity for speedy recitation

Those who claim that they are reciting speedily in a manner known as Hadr are referring to the method in which those memorising the Quran recite the words at speed because they have to recite multiple juz daily to retain the words in their memory. This is not a permissible manner of recitation in salah or to others. Allah Almighty commanded us to recite beautifully and slowly – He says in Surah Isra to recite ‘ala muqth’ which means slowly, and in surah Muzzamil to beautify the voice. Allah Almighty told us that had He revealed His Words upon a mountain it would have trembled.

لَوْ أَنَزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْءَانَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خُشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضَرَبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ٢١

'Had We sent down this Quran on a mountain, verily, thou wouldest have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of God.' (59:21)

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِلْ الْقُرْءَانَ تَرْتِيلًا

'and read the Quran slowly with deep reflections.' (73:4)

الَّذِينَ إِنَّا هَنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقًّا تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ ١٢١

'Those to whom We have given the book they recite it, as it ought to be recited—these believe in it. But as for those who reject it—these are the losers.' (2:121)

Ibn Mas'ud May Allah be pleased with him commented on Yatlunahu haqqa tilawatih: to recite it as Allah has revealed it, and do not corrupt it.

Our priority in Ramadan is not to finish Quran in salah, but to hear its beauty, connect to its message and act upon it.

If we truly love Allah's words we have to protest against those who are reciting them inappropriately and destroying the tradition which preserves the power and beauty of the Quran.

Make it a pumping heart in your life.

If we don't do this in Ramadan, then when will we activate it in our life?

This is the month of the Quran, so it is a time of abundant mercy (*rahmah*) and blessings (*barak'ah*) and guidance, but also a book that makes us active. First we need to be active with the Quran, whether it is in our salah or out of our salah.

If you can weep in our salah it is a good sign. If not, you need to work harder on yourself, so you can feel the Quran.

I ask Allah to enable us to receive the Quran and deliver the Quran as the Prophet (peace be on him) received it and delivered it. Ameen.

THE BLESSINGS OF QIYAM AL LAYL (NIGHT PRAYERS)

Tarawih during Ramadan is Qiyam Ramadan. Qiyam and tarawih are not obligatory, but from the sunnah.

The command to pray in the night was from the earliest revelations. Allah Almighty commanded the Prophet (peace be on him) to wake in the night to pray at the very beginning of his mission. It is mentioned in Surat Al-Muzzammil which was the fourth surah to be revealed after the first revelation of Surat Al-Alaq. It was essential for the emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of the Prophet (peace be on him) to perform this night prayer. Allah Almighty said:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَمِّلُ ۝ قُمْ الْلَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝ نِصْفَهُ أَوْ أَنْقُصَّ مِنْهُ
 قَلِيلًا ۝ أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْءَانَ تَرْتِيلًا ۝ إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي
 عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا ۝ إِنَّ نَاسِيَةَ الْلَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطَأً وَأَقْوَمُ
 قِيلًا ۝ إِنَّ لَكَ فِي الظَّهَارِ سَبَّحًا طَوِيلًا ۝ وَأَذْكُرْ أَسْمَ رَبِّكَ
 وَتَبَّلَّ إِلَيْهِ تَبَّلِيلًا ۝

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful.

O you, wrapped up in clothes,

Stand at night (for prayer) except a little

Half of it, or make it a little less,

Or make it a little more; and recite the Quran clearly with tartil (in a distinct and measured tone).

'For' We will soon send upon you a weighty revelation.

Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the Word (of Prayer and Praise).

For during the day you are over-occupied 'with worldly duties'.

And remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion. (73:1-8)

Allah Almighty addresses the Prophet (peace be on him) as the one who is wrapped up in clothes 'ya ayuhal muzzammil' because when he returned home shivering after his first encounter with the angel Jibreel in the cave of Hira, his wife Khadija covered him in extra clothes.

He commanded the Prophet (peace be on him) to stand up for night prayers, not for the entire night, but for more or less half the night and to recite in a distinct and measured recitation and remember Allah and devote yourself to Him completely. This time is special, freed from all the concerns of the day, the words have more impact on the mind and soul.

The Prophet (peace be on him) therefore encouraged us to perform qiyam. Allah Almighty stressed the importance of tahajjud which is the prayer you perform after Isha in Surat al Isra. The best time for this is just before Fajr, which is suhoor time in Ramadan.

وَمِنَ الْلَّيْلِ فَتَهَبَّدُ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لِّلَّهِ عَسَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ
مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ٧٩١

And keep vigil with it during parts of the night, offering additional prayers, so your Lord may raise you to a worthy position. (17:79)

Pray tahajjud throughout the year

In Surat Sajdah Allah Almighty refers to those who perform qiyam throughout the year as the ones who abandon their beds because they seek Allah and His bounty. They sleep but not through the whole night.

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا
وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ٦١

Their sides shun their beds, as they pray to their Lord, out of reverence and hope; and from Our provisions to them, they give. (32:16)

These beautiful verses encourage us to pray in the night.

The enormous reward for praying during the dead of night

How much should we pray in the night?

وَعَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرُو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رضيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «مَنْ قَامَ بِعِشْرِ آيَاتٍ لَمْ يُكْتَبْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ، وَمَنْ قَامَ بِمِئَةِ آيَةٍ كُتِبَ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ، وَمَنْ قَامَ بِأَلْفِ آيَةٍ كُتِبَ مِنَ الْمَقْنَطِرِينَ». رَوَاهُ أَبُو دَاوُد.

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As narrated (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

If anyone prays at night reciting ten verses, he will not be recorded among the negligent (ghafileen); if anyone prays at night and recites a hundred verses, he will be recorded among those who are (qaniteen) obedient to Allah; and if anyone prays at night reciting one thousand verses, he will be recorded among (al-muqantireen) those who receive piles of rewards. (Abu Dawud)

In this hadith it says that those who pray 10 verses are not among the ghaafil (those who are disconnected from Allah and who find worship onerous and tedious).

Do 10 verses include Surat al Fatiha? Yes, it can include the Fatiha, which means that as a minimum if you recite 2 rak'ahs, and recite the Fatiha with at least 3 additional verses, it would mean that you will not be recorded as heedless.

Those who recite 100 verses are recorded from being among the most obedient to Allah.

How much is 1000 verses?

Allah knows the reward of those who recite 1000 verses, as they reach the highest level.

Here are three ways to read 1000 verses from the beginning middle or end of the Quran:

- **From the beginning of the Quran** - Surat al Baqarah til Surat Al-A'raaf (verse 157) - 8 juz.
- **From the middle of the Quran** - Surat Furqan til Surat As-Saffaat (verse 67) - 4 juz.
- **From the end of the Quran** - Surat Al-Mulk til Surat Al-Naas (995 verses) plus 5 verses of Surat Al-Baqarah - 2 juz.

Is it better to recite Quran or pray?

Praying is the highest form of worship, and reciting the Quran is also worship but a different kind. If you recite the Quran in your night prayers, that is combining the two. However, you should only do this if your recitation is fluent, even though you are reading. It is not the time to practice your reading and be spelling out the words as you read in your salah.

Prepare what you will recite beforehand. Read the translation in advance or go through the tafseer so you know the meaning of the pages you will recite. When you recite, you will then get the meaning and more khushu'. This is what we want to achieve to get tranquillity insha' Allah.

Do you have to recite the verses during salah or can you recite in the night outside salah?

This point has been discussed by scholars. Most likely it refers to reciting during the salah, but it would also be valid and in line with other narrations of the Prophet (peace be on him) that you can recite 100 verses outside the salah. Ibn Khuzaymah for instance narrated that whoever recites 10 verses in salah, but in other narration it says *man qama* - the one who stands and recites, but this could be taken to mean the one who holds firmly to the verses. Therefore it could be the one who reflects and applies the verses, as interpreted it by the scholars At-Teebi and Mubarakfouri.

We are being encouraged to reflect on the Quran and to recite it and to stand up during the night prayer with the Quran in our hearts. When we do this, we reach different levels of closeness to Allah.

Reciting 10 verses is the minimum, 100 is much better, and makes us from those who stand with tranquility and react to the verses, i.e. when they recite verses of *rahmah* they seek mercy and when they recite verse of punishment, they seek refuge in Allah.

Let's roll up our sleeves and do our best in the last ten nights of Ramadan to perform qiyam and recite the Quran. If you cannot do this, at least do the minimum. Also encourage each other to do more.

May Allah make us from the *khashieen* (those who have humility, tranquility and focus) and the *muqarabeen* (those who are close to Him) and among the *qaniteen* (those who are obedient to Allah) and the *muqantireen* (those who earn piles of rewards). Ameen

The Last ten nights

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

'Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of every night, and he says: Who is calling upon me that I may answer him? Who is asking from me that I may give him? Who is seeking my forgiveness that I may forgive him?'

(Bukhari and Muslim)

This happens every single night in the last third of the night, and the last ten nights of Ramadan are extra special, so the mercy is even more than that. Allah Almighty multiplies it.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated:

'With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) used to tighten his belt and used to stay up all night, and he would also wake his family.' (Bukhari)

There are three things mentioned here:

- 1- The Prophet (peace be on him) would tighten his belt, which is an indication that he stayed away from his home and his wives, as he did 'itikaf in the mosque, where Aisha would erect a tent made from reed mats and bamboos for him. We often think he used to do 'itikaf in the open in the mosque, but in fact he stayed in a tent in the mosque for the last ten nights. The Prophet (peace be on him) would remain in 'itikaf until Eid.
- 2- He would stay awake almost all night.
- 3- Wake up his family.

Some authentic hadith narrate with authority that the doors of supplication are open that night. This is certain.

Laylatul Qadr

In Surat Al Qadr, we are told of Laylatul Qadr, The Night of Honour and Status.

Its special feature is peace – the pinnacle of peace.

سَلَمٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

'Peace it is until the rise of dawn.' (97:5)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:



'Whosoever performs qiyam during Ramadan with faith and being hopeful of Allah's reward, will have his former sins forgiven.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

These nights provide the resources to sustain and nourish us throughout the year. We can spend from this sustenance for the remainder of the year.

This one night is greater than a thousand months. This is a special privilege from Allah Almighty to our Ummah. The scholars of tafseer mention that the reason behind the revelation of this ayah is demonstrated in the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him). Allah Almighty showed the Prophet (peace be on him) the age and deeds of the previous nations. By comparison, the Prophet (peace be on him) was aware that his people and his nation could not achieve as much. Allah Almighty revealed this ayah to inform the Prophet (peace be on him) that He compensates his Ummah by this one night, every year which exceeds what was achieved before by previous nations.

Better than a thousand months

Allah Almighty said that Laylatul Qadr is better than a thousand months. He used the word, better than, not equivalent to a thousand months.

While people often calculate a thousand months to be equal to 83.33 years of worship, in fact, the number thousand was the biggest number the Arabs knew at the time. They did not have million or billion in their vocabulary.

This means that the Quran is telling us that this one night is better than a whole lifetime.

In Surat al Baqarah Allah mentioned the description of the people who would like to live for a thousand years which did not mean a thousand, but rather forever.

وَلَتَجِدُنَّهُمْ أَحَرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الظِّينَ
أَشَرَّكُوا يَوْمًا يَوْدُ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ الْفَ سَنَةً وَمَا هُوَ
بِمُزَحِّهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُونَ ٩٦

You will find them, of all humankind, the most eager for life, even more than the associators. Every one of them wishes to live a thousand years, but to be granted a long life will not nudge him from the punishment. Allah sees everything they do. (2:96)

This shows the idea of infinite and unlimited.

Why is this night so honoured?

The first reason is that Allah Almighty sent the Quran, the second reason is that He sends the angels. They descend. We do not control these. However, the third reason is related to us and our energy and our intention. Everyone is excited. Even those who never pray or fast regularly, want to capitalise on it. They are attentive and eager to be included in those who are counted.

New record

Without doubt, the rewards are huge. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"Whosoever performs Qiyam during Laylatul Qadr (Night of Honour and Status), with faith and being hopeful of Allah's reward, will have his former sins forgiven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Once you gain Laylatul Qadr, you start again as a new born, or a Hajji returned from Hajj. Scholars have clarified that this is related to minor sins. Major sins require repentance and the rectification of what you have done wrong.

The huge gap between the input and output

When we consider what we put in on the night and what we get out, there is a huge disparity. At most we read some pages of the Quran, or pray some rak'ahs of salah, however the core of attaining this night is the broken heart, the sincerity, the full attention and focus, tears in your eyes... this elevates you in Allah's eyes. Therefore the sincerity is what Allah wants to see shine through the physical worship.

Seeking the night

In the very beginning the Prophet (peace be on him) would seek Laylatul Qadr in the first 10 days and then Archangel Jibreel visited him and said to him that what he was seeking was ahead of him. The Prophet (peace be on him) then began to do 'itikaf in the next 10 days, and again Jibreel repeated that what he was seeking was ahead of him. Hence, he began to make 'itikaf in the last 10 nights. One night the Prophet (peace be on him) was about to tell the companions when Laylatul Qadr is when some companions began to argue with each other, after which the Prophet (peace be on him) came to inform them that this information was lifted because of their conflicts, and he did not know when it was anymore but advised them to seek it in the last 10 nights. Some scholars say

that the ‘peace’ here refers to this incident. The night should be spent in a peaceful way without arguments⁴ to avoid being deprived from the goodness and peace of the night.

Some scholars also commented that one of the doors of Jannah is called ‘dar-as-salam’, so it is the home of peace, and Laylatul Qadr is like Jannah for the believers who are worshipping Allah Almighty on earth. It is like recreating the feeling of living in Jannah. This is not the only occasion we can do this. A hadith says that the Prophet (peace be on him) said that:

‘When you go across the gardens of Jannah, reap its fruits’. When the companions asked what were the gardens of Jannah the Prophet replied, the circles of dhikr, [i.e. remembrance and knowledge]. They are from Jannah. You can combine the two and have a circle of knowledge, reminders and ibadat on Laylatul Qadr such that it is a piece of Jannah. (Tirmidhi)

No matter how difficult it might be. Ask Him with certainty in your heart that Allah Almighty is listening to you and will respond, then He will. However, if you are doubtful, He will not, as He treats you, as you treat Him. Treat Him with certainty and He responds to you with certainty. Have conviction and you will get your answer insha’Allah.

Let’s make every *laylah* (night) like Laylatul Qadr - a peaceful night full of ibadah and supplications, recitation of the Quran and asking Allah Almighty to free us from the Hellfire.

Share the blessings of Laylatul Qadr with the family

The Prophet (peace be on him) wanted to share the special blessings of the night with his family, so he would go to Fatimah and Ali’s house and knock very lightly with his nails and call them to pray. Thus, they could seize the opportunity which only came once a year.

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

‘The Prophet (peace be on him) visited me and Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) one night and said, ‘Do you not observe prayer (at night)?’ (Bukhari and Muslim)

He would prepare his family for it, and sometimes he would wake up his wife by sprinkling a bit of water on her face to wake her up with kindness.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

⁴ <https://www.utrujj.org/ghazali-on-arguing/>

'The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said, 'May Allah show mercy to a man who gets up during the night and performs salat, awakens his wife to pray and if she refuses, he sprinkles water on her face (to make her get up). May Allah show mercy to a woman who gets up during the night and performs salat, awakens her husband for the same purpose; and if he refuses, she sprinkles water on his face.' (Abu Dawud)

Once you gain it, maintain it

Once you attain Laylatul Qadr, as it is better than a whole life, and you start a new record, be careful not to sully your record after that. Keep your prayers on time and not to do anything wrong. Keep your record clean. Ensure you do your istighfar and dhikr and fulfil your duties and obligations.

We ask Allah to meet this night with humility and sincerity and with full connection to Him with full forgiveness and reward. We can encourage our family and children to do their best during this time and we ask Allah to accept out good deeds.

Donating on Laylatul Qadr

There is a huge charity industry that has grown up in the last few years encouraging people to donate online and with tele-fundraisers during the last ten nights.

It was not the common practice of the companions to donate during the night. They generally donated during the day and spent the night in worship.

Though the Quran mentions donating during the night, this is a reference to donating publicly and privately, not specific to Ramadan or Laylatul Qadr.

Those who spend their wealth by night and day, by stealth and openly, verily their reward is with their Lord, and their shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (2:274)

The Prophet (peace be on him), who was the most generous person, would be in 'itikaf and would be engaged in worship.

However due to the fact that people want to maximise their giving during Ramadan they have been given the impression that donating on a particular night will increase their reward. As we have online giving it is possible to automate giving and to donate during the night.

There is no evidence that this was the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or his companions in such a manner.

It would be wrong however to make this a condition of Laylatul Qadr or to make people feel guilty if you have not given on the night you thought it was, in particular. It may be that a Layatul Qadr occurs on a different night within the month of Ramadan or even in the year as per the understanding of Ibn Mas'ud. In this case one should spread their giving throughout the entire year.

In any case it was not the practice of the companions to postpone giving to someone in need so that they could maximise their reward by giving it on a particular day. They would not say to somebody who is sick, 'Wait. I will pay you next week when it is Laylatul Qadr.'

Though the reward of giving in Ramadan is increased, it is the sincerity of your intention when giving, which is more important than scheduling it to coincide with a particular date or time.

I am not discouraging people from donating or saying it's haram to donate on that night, but it is wrong to give the impression to people as if it's a Sunnah to do so.

SECLUSION

Though we often think of Ramadan as a month of increased interaction with our family and our community at tarawih prayers and at iftars, a special feature of Ramadan is ‘itikaf – which is the sunnah in the last ten days, when the Prophet (peace be on him) would seclude himself.

The Prophet would seclude himself on the last 10 nights as he was looking forward to Laylatul Qadr, as it is about re-connecting to Allah Almighty.

Laylatul Qadr therefore has many layers of goodness. It has peace, forgiveness, and the fragrance of Jannah. This is why we should be prepared for this night. The sunnah preparation is that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to do ghusl (take a bath) before Laylatul Qadr, preparing for the very special meeting with Allah Almighty during the night prayers, and communicating and having a conversation with Allah Almighty by reciting His book.

The night for du'a

It is a special night, night of the Quran, of ibadah and supplications, when one can ask for whatever one wishes from Allah Almighty, on one condition. The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

‘Call upon Allah with certainty that He will respond to you.’ (Tirmidhi)

Do not have hesitation at all. You are asking the Almighty, who has control over everything! He is Al-Qadeer. Ask Him. This is His kingdom. Anything you want that is in line with the Shari’ah, ask for it.

The Opportunity To Reflect And Connect

Allah Almighty does not want us to go outside, but go inside. ‘itikaf is the opportunity for contemplation.

We have dropped everything and though we procrastinate all year about reflecting, we can figure out how to improve our situation. It all depends on our heart and our intention. We need to work on our heart, the main receptor of divine light and mercy and forgiveness from Allah, by decluttering and cleaning them.

Time to repair

We all have shortcomings, bad habits and have made mistakes or have issues we need to resolve. Ramadan gives us the opportunity to fix these and repair them. Just as many of us have finally done

those DIY jobs around the house that were pending for years, now we can fix those issues that have been lurking murkily in the past, unfinished, unresolved.

Repair your relationship with Allah

The first thing we need to fix is our relationship with Allah. We need to improve our worship. This is where we have to apply *iyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'een*:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝

You alone we worship and from you alone we seek help. (1:5)

When he used to go to the cave of Hira the Prophet (peace be on him) developed his closeness and bondship with Allah Almighty and this is what we should be seeking right now. The prophetic approach was to seize the opportunity to get close to Allah. To increase recitation of the Quran and become more attentive in salah. This is the right time to fix our salah before Ramadan. This is how we should prepare for Ramadan. Rather than the distracted, rushed autopilot salah.

The People of Jannah will remain in Allah's mercy forever.

Think about the akhirah. Make it your concern. If this is the case everything you do and say in dunya will take you towards a good outcome in the akhirah. You will be aware of the Day when your Book will be presented to Allah.

We ask Allah to delete all the bad records from it. Once we are forgiven our Book will be a clean record, and good record and one we are pleased to present to Allah. If He is pleased with us, He will admit us to Jannah.

The Prophet (peace be on him) is directing us to consider what our situation will be in the akhirah. Make du'a for your parents and children and loved ones, but foremost ask Allah to forgive them, so that you can be reunited with all your loved ones in Jannah, insha'Allah.

Your record will be presented to Allah so ensure you are happy with it

One of the verses mentions how you will be presented to Allah Almighty on the Day of Judgement, and you will not be able to hide anything. Your ins will be out. Your deeds, your records, your heart, your intentions – the good and the bad - will all be laid bare. Exposed.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعَرَّضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ۚ ۱۸

On that day you shall be exposed to view- no secret of yours shall remain hidden. (69:18)

In dunya you can hide this from your friends and colleagues. In the akhirah everything will be under the microscope.

Will you be pleased with your record or not?

Allah Almighty brought this scene from the akhirah to our attention. What will be your situation when your book is opened – will there be things you are ashamed of? Will there be deeds you are proud that you achieved with Allah's support?

It is food for thought. Allah is telling us to be careful. Your records will be open, so pick what you put in them. Avoid those things you will regret.

Sort out the record - delete what you don't want to be there

If you have regrets, rectify them. The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

Follow the bad deed with a good one to erase it (Tirmidhi)

If you want to delete any bad deeds, don't procrastinate. Do good deeds and erase them. Seek istighfar, repent and regret and move on. Give charity, say good words and be supportive of others, as these will wipe out the bad.

Submit in sujud

We should be begging Allah Almighty in our Sujud Who said:

نَاصِيَةٌ كَذِبَةٌ خَاطِئَةٌ ۖ

wasjud waqtarib 'prostrate and become closer'. (96:19)

The way we get closer to Allah is through submitting and prostrating. Abu Hurairah May Allah be pleased with him reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself, so make supplication (in this state). (Muslim)

Qunoot

We can establish the *nawazil qunoot*. It is not restricted to the witr prayer in tarawih; scholars say we can recite this du'a in every salah as long as the Ummah is afflicted by a huge calamity as we

have today with the pandemic. In our salah (in the fard or Sunnah) we recite the qunoot in the final rak'ah to bring ease to our Ummah.

In last rak'ah after ruku' you say:

سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمَدَهُ ، رَبُّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ

then you raise your hands and make the du'a qunoot for relief.

Repair yourself

We also need to fix our relationship with ourselves. When the Prophet (peace be on him) visited Abdullah bin Amr bin Al Aas who was young, keen and full of love for the Prophet (peace be on him) used to fast every day and do qiyam (night prayers) every night, his wife told the Prophet (peace be on him) what he did. To his surprise the Prophet (peace be on him) was not impressed and did not congratulate him for dedicating himself to so much ibadah. Instead, the Prophet (peace be on him) advised him not to do this, and explained the reason for this as well, saying:

Don't do that; fast for few days and then give it up for few days, offer prayers and also sleep at night, as your body has a right on you, and your wife has a right on you, and your guest has a right on you. And it is sufficient for you to fast three days in a month, as the reward of a good deed is multiplied ten times, so it will be like fasting throughout the year. (Bukhari)

We are not angels who can worship all the time; we need to get the balance right. We need to fix our relationship with our self.

Repair your relationship with others

We need to ensure we have good relationships with the people in our lives. When there is a conflict between the competing demands of people on our time, who gets priority? Our priority is our parents, then children and spouse, neighbours, colleagues and friends. We need to sort out priorities to ensure we fulfil the rights of others. Each Muslim has 6 rights, the Prophet (peace be on him) taught us:

The rights of one Muslim over another are six... if you meet him, greet him with salaam; if he invites you, accept the invitation; if he asks for advice, give him sincere advice; if he sneezes and praises Allah, say Yarhamuk Allah (may Allah have mercy on you); if he falls sick, visit him; and if he dies, attend his funeral. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Once we get our priorities right, Ramadan gives us a spiritual boost to be more caring and to be of more service to others. Because it is now time to reflect with this calamity we are in the midst of it, so we need to think about our mistakes and shortcomings.

We need to be people of mercy and love and care and support and promote goodness collaborate in beneficial activities.

May Allah Almighty enable us to take stock of ourselves, repair ourselves and make us of those who are close to Him and loved and supported by Him. Ameen

No Intimacy in the last ten nights in seclusion

When we read the verses of siyam (fasting), in Surah Baqarah (verses 183-187), we are told:

وَلَا تُبْشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَكْفُونَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ^{١٣}

'...And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques.' (2:187)

This means that it is not allowed to have intimate relations with your wife while you are in 'itikaf in the mosque. It nullifies 'itikaf. We all know that the technical definition of fasting means refraining from eating and drinking and intimacy from Fajr until Maghrib with the intention. This applies to the day, not the night. However, in the last ten nights, intimacy is not allowed in 'itikaf. This is because it is a special time dedicated to Allah Almighty alone. Nothing else should compete with your connection with Him. Give priority to Allah Almighty in everything at this time.

Can women do 'itikaf?

In general, women are permitted to do 'itikaf. Practically, it depends on the availability of space in the mosque. They can also do 'itikaf at home.

Have pure intention

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked if it was permissible for her to do 'itikaf in the mosque and put up her tent, however several other tents popped up beside hers. The Prophet (peace be on him) was angry, realising that the other wives out of jealousy had done the same. He asked them if they had done this for Allah Almighty's sake? This is where shaytan comes in. The Prophet (peace be on him) did not resume his 'itikaf that year. He resumed it in Shawwal, because he had committed to do it. The Prophet (peace be on him) was teaching them and us how to be sincere to Allah and not allow anything to interfere in their ibadah, including jealousy.

It was narrated that 'Aishah said:

'When the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) wanted to observe 'itikaf, he would pray Fajr then enter the place where he wanted to observe 'itikaf. He wanted to observe 'itikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan, so he commanded that a Khiba' (tent) be pitched for him. Then Hafsah ordered that a Khiba' be pitched for her, and when Zainab saw her tent she ordered that a Khiba' be pitched for her too. When the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) saw that he said: 'Is it righteousness that you seek?' And he did not observe 'itikaf in Ramadan, and observed 'itikaf for ten days in Shawwal (instead).' (Nasa'i)

SUPPLICATION

What to pray for

As Laylatul Qadr is a night of extra blessings, forgiveness, rahmah and gifts. Aisha asked the Prophet (peace be on him) what she should ask for on this night. She said:

'O Messenger of Allah! If I realise Laylatul Qadr (Night of Blessings), what should I supplicate in it?'

He (peace be on him) replied: 'You should supplicate:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

'Allahumma innaka 'afuwun, tuhibbul-'afwa, fa''fu 'anni'

'O Allah, You are the Pardoner, and You love to pardon; so pardon me.'
(Tirmidhi)

There is distinction between ghafur and 'afuwun. 'Afuwwun means that the wrong is wiped from the record and never existed, whereas ghafur is where wrongs are veiled, and also of being protected from committing further wrongs in the future.

Why this du'a?

Why did the Prophet command a simple and short du'a for forgiveness? As we fumble around our minds for which thing to ask for from the millions of things we wish for, want and plan in our lives, the one that prevails is afu - forgiveness. The answer is that it is so important because if you have Allah's forgiveness you have secured your akhirah. What a simple statement, but how deep it is.

It is disconnected with dunya. On this night, we ask Allah for akhirah. It does not mean that we do not ask for our needs in dunya, but our focus is shifted to the akhirah.

On another occasion, Al-'Abbas asked the Prophet (peace be on him) for a du'a and he was taught to ask for wellbeing, al 'afiyah, with which he seemed unsatisfied. So he returned to Prophet (peace be on him) and asked again. The Prophet (peace be on him) realised that Al 'Abbas was not convinced that this was the best du'a, so he explained the importance of well-being.

The importance of well-being

Your health is your wealth. If you are in pain, and you do not have health and well-being it makes no difference how rich you are as it does not bring satisfaction.

Al-'Abbas bin 'Abdul-Muttalib said:

*'I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, teach me something that I may ask Allah,
[Mighty and Sublime] for.'*

He said: 'Ask Allah for al afiyah (well-being).'

*Then I remained for a day, then I came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, teach
me something that I may ask Allah for.'*

*So he said to me: 'O Abbas, O uncle of the Messenger of Allah! Ask Allah for al
afiyah (well-being) in this world and in the Hereafter.' (Tirmidhi)*

This du'a shifts our focus to the most important thing. With 'afiyah (wellbeing) we secure the dunya. And with 'afw (Allah's forgiveness) we secure the akhirah. This is what secures our entry to Jannah. We have plenty of shortcomings, sins and mistakes, so without His forgiveness we are doomed. It balances our record in the akhirah as we rely on His forgiveness, and He will forgive us because He promised to answer the calls of the sincere. He said:

﴿وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ أَدْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾

'Call upon me and I will respond to you.' (40:60)

We say, Ya Allah, we are calling upon You to grant us Your forgiveness.

ZAKAT

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam, after shahadah and salah. Though we might think there are more verses on salah in the Quran, there are many more verses on zakat and spending than on salah. The word zakat itself has been mentioned thirty-two times. It is mentioned alongside salah eight times, *wa aqeemus salah wa atuz zakah* (establish prayer and pay zakat). The combination of both is something to think about. It is not just salah which is important but zakat as well, and both are obligatory.

Salah is light. Charity is proof

The Prophet (peace be on him) mentioned beautifully that salah is light. It enlightens the heart, the soul and the vision. It gives us peace and purity. This is why he said, *as-salatu nurun*. And he called zakat, proof (*as sadaqatu burhan*). Scholars asked what is charity a proof of?

Why is charity proof?

Spending in charity is proof of iman, which dictates that you spend for Allah's sake. This is your money, but because it is an obligation, you share it out of obedience to Him. In order to spend out of your wealth you have to have deep conviction (tawakkul) that Allah will replace what you spend.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "الطَّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ تَمَلًا الْمِيزَانَ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ تَمَلَّنَ -أَوْ: تَمَلًا- مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ، وَالصَّلَاةُ نُورٌ، وَالصَّدَقَةُ بُرْهَانٌ، وَالصَّبْرُ ضِيَاءٌ، وَالْقُرْآنُ حُجَّةٌ لَكَ أَوْ عَلَيْكَ، كُلُّ النَّاسِ يَعْدُو، فَبَائِعُ نَفْسَهُ قَمْعِنْقُهَا أَوْ مُوْبِقُهَا". رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ

Abu Malik Al-Harith bin Asim Al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Purity is half of iman (faith). 'Alhamdu lillah (praise be to Allah)' fills the scales, and 'subhanAllah (how far is Allah from every imperfection) and 'Alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah)' fill that which is between heaven and earth. And the salah (prayer) is a light, and charity is a proof, and patience is illumination, and the Qur'an is a proof either for you or against you. Every person starts his day as a vendor of his soul, either freeing it or causing its ruin." [Muslim]

The link between the pillars

Salah is our one-to-one connection between us and Allah, five times a day. It is our vertical dimension with Allah, and it rejuvenates us and purifies our sins. Zakat is not a vertical dimension. It is horizontal because it is between us and the community. It is an antidote against miserliness and egoism. It is the antithesis of focusing on me, myself and I. None of us is an island, and we are connected to the needy around us. We have to look after each other and support each other. The Prophet (peace be on him) encouraged believers to spend for Allah's sake. As it is not easy to spend, Allah Almighty gave us many incentives and reassurances to spend. We have the following three benefits:

1. Growth

The linguistic meaning of zakat is very deep. In Arabic we say *zaka yazku*, to grow, it is an indication that your zakat makes your money grow in two different ways: physical and spiritual. Those who have to pay zakat are those who have money which is more than the nisab (the minimum level), which is 87g of 24 carat gold (equivalent to £3863, approximately). Allah guarantees the growth of the money we spend for His sake, either out of obligation or voluntarily. This is the physical part. The spiritual part is purification and barak'ah in your wealth.

2. Purification of the soul

Allah Almighty says that spending in zakat is cleansing because by default we like to hoard, and so this is a means of spiritual purification.

حُذِّرْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةٌ تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلَّى
 عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَوةَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ وَأَللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلَيْمٌ ۖ ۱۰۳

'Take sadaqah (zakat) from their wealth, to cleanse and purify them with it; and pray for them. Your prayer is comfort for them. God is All Hearing and All Knowing.' (9:103)

3. Shade of the throne

Allah encourages us in different ways to spend because it is not easy. For example, VIP treatment is granted for those who give in secret, as they are hugely rewarded.

As Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

'Seven people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His' He mentioned the rest of the hadith, which says,

'and a man who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given.' (i.e. nobody knows how much he has given in charity).

(Agreed upon)

In another narration, 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amir (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, 'I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) say:

'Everybody will be shaded by his sadaqah (on the Day of Judgment) until judgment between people has been completed.' (Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim)

Those who shaded others in dunya, will be shaded in the akhirah.

Who is eligible for zakat?

﴿إِنَّمَا الْصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِيلِينَ عَلَيْهَا
وَالْمُؤْلَفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ
وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللهِ وَاللهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ٦٠﴾

'Charities are for the poor, and the destitute, and those who administer them, and for reconciling hearts, and for freeing slaves, and for those in debt, and in the path of God, and for the traveller in need—an obligation from God. God is

All-Knowing, Most Wise.' (9:60)

Allah mentioned eight specific categories of those who are entitled to our zakat. (*Sadaqah* can be given to anyone of them).

1. The poor (*al-fuqara'*), meaning low-income or indigent.
2. The needy (*al-masakin*), meaning someone who is in difficulty.
3. Zakat administrators.
4. Those 'whose hearts are to be reconciled', meaning new Muslims and friends of the Muslim community.
5. Those in bondage.
6. The debt-ridden.
7. In the cause of God.
8. The wayfarer, meaning those who are stranded or travelling with few resources.

Who should I give my zakat to?

I always recommend starting with your family. Those close to you maybe needy but too dignified to ask. It could be your brother. Your brother is more entitled to your charity than a stranger. As per the hadith, the reward of giving to your family is multiplied by two. It is a double charity because it is fulfilling your obligation as well as connecting blood ties. (It is simultaneously sadaqa and sila). However giving charity to one's parents, or children, or from husband to wife, does not fall under zakat. (A wife may give zakat to a husband).

Salman bin Amir al-Dabbi narrated that the Messenger of Allah said:

'Charity given to the poor is charity, and that given to a relative is two things: charity and upholding the ties of kinship.' (Ibn Majah)

How much do you need to give?

Whatever you have in savings, gold and silver, or any other valuable items, and stocks and shares, beyond one lunar year, and over the level of nisab, you have to pay 2.5% for the total, (not just the excess above nisab).

Zakat al Fitr (Fitran)

In addition, we have been commanded to pay zakat al fitr before praying Eid salah.

As Ibn `Umar narrated May Allah be pleased with him said:

'Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) enjoined the payment of one sa' of dates or one sa' of barley as Zakat-ul-Fitr on every Muslim slave or free person, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out to offer the `Id prayer.' [1 sa' = 3 kilograms approx.] (Bukhari)

Which is around £10 pounds, for each member of your family who relies on you financially.

Zakat-ul Fitri covers any shortcomings in your fasting during Ramadan.

Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

'The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) prescribed the sadaqah of fitr (alms relating to the breaking of the fast) as a purification of the fasting from useless and obscene talk and as food for the poor. If anyone pays it before the prayer (of Eid), it will be accepted as zakat. If anyone pays it after the prayer, that will be a sadaqah like other sadaqahs (alms).' (Abu Dawud)

THE VIRTUES OF EID

Recognise what you achieved

Even though we had shortcomings, may not have achieved all our goals, and felt our ibadah was imperfect, the gains of Ramadan were enormous – so much so that at the end of Ramadan we should have a clean slate.

No wonder that Ramadan is rewarded by Eid – a day of happiness, forgiveness, and acceptance.

As Mufti Taqi Usmani observed, in his book, *Dhikr to Fikr*, Eid is not a celebration of a historic event, as many other celebrations are in other faiths, but the celebration of our own personal achievements in the present.

Eid teaches us to focus on our own actions. Just as Eid al Adha is a celebration at the end of a period of worship, Eid al Fitr is a celebration of what we set out to do, how we persevered and how we reached the end of the month.

We celebrate our internal growth and our external akhlaq (behaviour) towards others – that we strengthened our connection with Allah Almighty and with each other.

The day of reward

The day of Eid is called the Day of the Prize or *yawm al ja'izah* – the day when Allah gives out the prizes to those who were fasting for His sake. The angels give the good news to those who were fasting for Allah Almighty's sake:

'You are forgiven.' (Tabarani)

It is the day of freedom and release from hellfire, which Imam Bayhaqi narrated:

'Allah Almighty releases the same amount of people from hellfire as He released during the entire month of Ramadan.'

The day of happiness

Every Eid is a day of happiness, although we have plenty of calamities in our Ummah, homes and communities, Allah Almighty says:

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَلَيَقْرَبُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ٥٨

'By the grace of Allah and His mercy, let them be happy.' (10:58)

It is not just about worldly gain but the mercy of Allah Almighty.

The day of acceptance

One of the signs of acceptance is that we follow up good deeds with more good deeds. How do we know that our good deeds have been accepted? The answer is: when we have been inspired to do more good.

'Whoever fasts during the month of Ramadan and then follows it with six days of Shawwal will be (rewarded) as if he had fasted the entire year.' (Muslim)

Be aware of your clean slate

By Eid, we should have had all our minor sins forgiven if we performed qiyam on Laylatul Qadr, fasted during Ramadan or performed qiyam in Ramadan. (And our major sins are forgiven if we did tawbah).

"مَنْ قَامَ لِيَلَّةَ الْقَدْرِ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ". رواه البخاري ،
ومسلم.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

'Whosoever performs qiyam during Laylatul Qadr, with faith and being hopeful of Allah's reward, will have his former sins forgiven.'

"مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ". رواه البخاري ،
ومسلم.

'Whosoever performs qiyam during Ramadan with faith and being hopeful of Allah's reward, will have his former sins forgiven.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

Takbeer (say Allahu Akbar) is the essence of Eid

Every Eid, it is the sunnah to do takbeer, to say 'Allahu Akbar' (God is the greatest). On Eid al Fitr, it starts after the confirmation of sighting the Hilal of Shawwal, and the takbeer stops when the Eid salah starts. However, on Eid al Adha, the takbeer starts after Fajr salah of the Day of Arafah (9th of Dhul-Hijjah) and it lasts until the 3rd day of tashreeq (13th of Dhul-Hijjah).

Takbeer is the glorification of Allah. Proclaiming that He is the greatest. It may be a simple, well-worn phrase, but its meaning is weighty and significant, for when we say there is nothing greater

than Allah, it means that He is not just great, but The Greatest – well beyond our imagination because we cannot comprehend Him.

Inward and outward takbeer

To proclaim takbeer should not be a verbal exercise as it is our 'aqeedah (belief), and it has to stem from the heart and be reflected in the actions of the limbs. We must recite it with conviction.

Takbeer has to be inward and outward, but deep in our hearts, we need to reflect on the takbeer - Allah is the greatest. No matter how difficult our situation, or the obstacles we face, Allah can take us out of them.

The surahs recited every Eid

Every Eid, the Prophet (peace be on him) used to recite Surat Al-A'la in the first rak'ah and Surat Al-Ghashiya in the second rak'ah, which are two consecutive surahs in the Quran. He recited them at almost every Eid and sometimes at Jumuah.

I was wondering why he chose these surahs on these occasions. On these days, the congregation would be as packed as possible. So why did he choose them?

I looked at the meaning of these surahs and there are some overlaps.

Themes in the surahs:

- Glory and Oneness

Both surahs glorify Allah Almighty, and mention His oneness,

Successful indeed are those who purify themselves, (avoiding polytheism). (87:14)

- Creation

Allah Almighty draws our attention to His creation of the heavens and earth and us.

سَبِّحْ أُسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى ۚ ۱ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ۲

Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High,

Who created and 'perfectly' fashioned 'all' (87:1-2)

He then instructs us to think about the creation around us.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِلَلِ كَيْفَ خَلَقْتَ ۖ ۱۷ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعْتَ ۖ ۱۸ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ۖ ۱۹

*Do they not ever reflect on camels—how they were ‘masterfully’ created;
and the sky—how it was raised ‘high’;
and the mountains—how they were firmly set up (88:17-19)*

Preserving the divine message

Surah A’la also talks about how Allah revealed the Quran to the Prophet (peace be on him) and ensured that it was preserved in his chest, so that he would be able to deliver it.

سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَأِ ٦

We will have you recite ‘the Quran, O Prophet,’ so you will not forget ‘any of it’, (87:6)

Akhirah

Both surahs mention the akhirah. Surat Al-Ghashiya talks about the rewards and fruits of your actions and deeds in dunya.

There are two groups – those who will go to Hell because of their deliberate denial of Allah’s message and His guidance:

عَالِمَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ ٣

On that Day ‘some’ faces will be downcast, (88:3)

And by contrast those with bright faces and happy faces about their actions:

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمةٌ ٨

On that Day ‘other’ faces will be glowing with bliss (88:8)

Strive

Allah shows us that the reward for those who strived in dunya is Jannah:

لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ٩

‘fully’ pleased with their striving, (88:9)

They are the ones who spread Allah’s message in the prophetic way:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ تَفَعَّتِ الْذِكْرَى ٩ سَيَذَّكِرُ مَنْ يَحْشَىٰ ١٠

So ‘always’ remind ‘with the Quran’—‘even’ if the reminder is beneficial ‘only to some’.

Those in awe ‘of Allah’ will be mindful ‘of it’. (87:9-10)

Think

The first surah started with the command to think about who created you and what is around you and what you need from sustenance. The second surah ends with thinking and reflecting. This is why the Prophet (peace be on him) used to recite these surahs.

Think about your own actions which you save in the bank of akhirah.

The five concepts

In summary, the main points are:

- 1- Your relationship with Allah: tasbeeh, oneness, Quran
- 2- Your relationship with people: remind them about Allah
- 3- Your relationship with the akhirah: thinking about it and preparing for it
- 4- The reward of your choices and deeds
- 5- The importance of reflecting on the creation of Allah

These themes are present in both surahs. They make us reflect on what we need to do in the dunya and the necessity of keeping good relations with Allah Almighty His Words - the Quran, and with people.

We have to be mindful of both during our life. Not only at Eid and Jumu'ah, but every day.



SHAWWAL

The reward of fasting the 6 days of Shawwal

Abu Ayyub Al Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

'He who observed the fast of Ramadan and then followed it with six (fasts) of Shawwal, it would be as if he fasted for a lifetime.' (Sahih Muslim)

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the fasts of Ramadan, together with the 6 days fasts of Shawwal, were like fasting a dahr. Dahr does not mean a whole year, it means a lifetime.

Many people are more familiar with this narration:

'Fasting one month equal ten months, and six days afterwards equals two months and this is one year.' (Nasa'i and Ahmad)

It is from this narration that people equate these fasts with one year of fasting. Either way, we can see that the reward is huge. So, both narrations are saying the same thing, if you do this every year it is like you have fasted the whole year all your life.

Should we make up missed fasts before we do the 6 fasts of Shawwal?

The hadith says, 'Whoever fasts Ramadan and follows it by fasting 6 days in Shawwal', and as the missing days of Ramadan are part of Ramadan, you ought to make up the missed days of Ramadan before you do the additional fasts of Shawwal. This is one opinion.

Can we make a combined intention to make up missed fasts and the Shawwal fasts?

Another opinion is that we can make the intention in Shawwal to make up the missing days of Ramadan and because we are fasting in Shawwal, we can hope that we will get the reward of fasting in both Ramadan and Shawwal. By making up the missing days of Ramadan in Shawwal you will insha'Allah get the reward of both.

Yet another opinion is that you can combine the intention of the fard which you missed and the sunnah of Shawwal, but it is disagreed upon.

Can you make the Shawwal fasts up first and then the Ramadan ones later?

The answer is Yes you can. But in general, we should fulfil our obligations before we do extra voluntary acts of worship. Just as we should pay zakat before we give sadaqah, or perform Hajj, before going on Umrah. The Shawwal fasts are less important than the fard. Though the sunnah is important it is not an obligation, hence it is preferable to make up the missing fard before doing the sunnah.

Do the 6 fasts after Ramadan have to be made up in Shawwal?

According to some scholars, it is possible to postpone the 6 fasts of Shawwal. These scholars in the Maliki school say that the 6 extra fasts can be done even after Shawwal. Though this is a matter of disagreement among scholars, even within the Maliki school. Those who follow the opinion quote Ibn Al-Arabi Al-Maliki that the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying:

Whoever fasts Ramadan and follows it with six of Shawwal'... is just as an example, and what is meant is:

Fasting Ramadan is the reward of ten months, and fasting six days the reward of two months, and that is the madhab [means the opinion of Imam Malik]. The ruling would still apply in other than Shawwal.

He said: '***This is an amazing consideration, so know it.***' (Tahdheeb al-Furuq 2/191)

While the majority of scholars in the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'i school are of the opinion that the hadith is restricted to Shawwal, this opinion gives hope to those who missed completing the six fasts during Shawwal. They can fast after Shawwal with this intention, especially ladies who may have many fasts to make up from Ramadan.

Some people feel that this opinion will make people relaxed about keeping up the momentum to fast after Ramadan. It is not my intention to discourage people who could have fasted in Shawwal from fasting, or to encourage people to postpone fasting, but it means that those who were **unable** to fast in Shawwal due to their personal circumstances, still have the hope of earning the same reward, insha'Allah as those who fasted in Shawwal.

KEEPING MOMENTUM AFTER RAMADAN

Maintaining taqwa

How do we stretch this heightened connection with Allah beyond one month, as it is not just Ramadan when we worship Allah. Allah is worthy of worship all year round. We need to keep and maintain our submission to Him and the tranquillity of our heart outside of Ramadan as well. How do we manage this?

1. Refrain

Firstly, refrain from arguments and fights. Keep controlling your tongue and eyes, which is how we practice taqwa. It is having control over your faculties, so that after Ramadan we can maintain this demeanour, and do our best to sustain it. Ramadan teaches us to control our anger, and as anything in life we become better with training,

2. Retain

To keep taqwa alive after Ramadan, we need to preserve and maintain our salah. There are people who only pray in Ramadan. That is a start, though it is better to work towards performing all the five daily prayers now and for the rest of the year. Many of us began to pray in *jama'ah* (congregation) at home during the lockdown, so let us maintain that habit.

We can also continue to perform qiyam at least once a week by waking up before Fajr and praying two rak'ahs.

After Ramadan, we can also keep the momentum by fasting once a week. It is good for your health, spirit and heart. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says that fasting removes hatred from the heart.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

'Shall I not tell you of that which will take away hatred from the heart?' He said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Fasting for three days each month.' (Nasa'i)

Thus, fasting is a psychological remedy for the heart. If you have grudges against someone, fast and it will help to take away the negativity towards them.

In Ramadan we increase giving in charity, but we can continue this outside of Ramadan, even if it is £5 or £2 or £1, and be consistent in this good habit. We must remember the importance of reciting the Quran.

3. Reflect

How did we get into the spirit of Ramadan in the first place? The answer is by attaching ourselves to the Quran. The Quran is not just for Ramadan. It is for the whole year. Allah Almighty said it is a mubarak book and we must ponder over its verses and apply them in our life.

كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ مُبَرَّكٌ لِّيَدَبَرُوا عَمَلَتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ٢٩

A blessed Book that We sent down to you, that they may ponder its Verses, and for those with intelligence to take heed. (38:29)

We might not be able to recite the same amount as we did in Ramadan, but my advice to myself and everyone is to recite daily – even if it is a couple of pages, reflect on one lesson from one page or one line of what you read. For instance, you might focus on the word ‘rahmah’ or kindness one day, and apply it in your life, by showing more rahmah to others. Or if you read the word ‘hardship’, try not to create hardship for anyone. Take one mission from the Quran a day.

Be realistic and be consistent – carry pebbles

Do not try and do too many things. Rather the best deeds are the ones you can keep on doing regularly.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) was asked about the act most pleasing to Allah. He replied:

That which is done continuously, even if it is small. (Muslim)

Do not carry boulders, carry pebbles. Keeping up a small, good deed and repeating it consistently, will have a huge impact on you, on your heart and behaviour, insha’Allah.

When you create a simple habit, you will be more likely to maintain it. When the Prophet (peace be on him) started something, he maintained it. And he recommended this to his companions. He told them to do the deeds they could handle without putting themselves in too much difficulty as explained in the following hadith.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported:

'The Prophet (peace be on him) came in when a woman was sitting beside me. He asked me, "Who is she?" I said: "She is the one whose performance of salat (prayer) has become the talk of the town." Addressing her, he said, "(What is this!) You are required to take upon yourselves only what you can carry out easily. By Allah, Allah does not withhold His mercy and forgiveness from you until you neglect and give up (good works). Allah likes the deeds best which a worshipper can carry out constantly.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

If you weigh your back down with too much of a load, you will not be able to carry it - it will inevitably fall off. You may not be able to do twenty rak'ahs every night, but you can do two rak'ahs before Fajr every day.

Spiritual Reflections on Ramadan

What is Ramadan? Why do we fast? How do we prepare for Ramadan, and how do we maintain our worship not only during Ramadan but after Ramadan too? How do we make the best of this month to make the change to our spiritual lives?

Ramadan is the month of patience ‘sabr’

Ramadan is a month of contemplation.

Ramadan brings transformation in the community supporting those in need and being more charitable giving support for those who are less fortunate.

This booklet provides spiritual reflections by Shaykh Haytham Tamim which look deeper into Ramadan, and provides the reader useful advice on preparing for Ramadan, and maintaining the momentum throughout the year.



Shaykh Haytham Tamim, the founder and main teacher of the Utrujj Foundation, has provided a leading vision for Islamic learning in the UK, which has influenced the way Islamic knowledge is disseminated. He has designed and delivered over 200 unique courses since Utrujj started in 2001.

His extensive expertise spans over 30 years across the main Islamic jurisprudence schools of thought and different Islamic denominations through highly advanced classical and religious texts. He was blessed with the opportunity to study with some of the foremost scholars in their expertise and holds some of the highest Ijazahs (certificates) in Quran, Hadith (the Prophetic traditions) and Fiqh (Islamic rulings).

